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MYSTIC AURA

MAGAZINE

INDIAN
PANORAMA
INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL OF INDIA

ZUBEEN GARG
SIGNATURE STYLE IN FASHION

HE-MAN
THE STAR WHO LIT UP GENERATIONS

CHRISTMAS IN
SINGAPORE
CELEBRATION OF HERITAGE & HEART

GOA
56th IFFI

Photographer: Abhijit Boruah
Makeup: Azmary Ahmed

Royal Radiance
A Majestic Aura Of Luxe And Grace

2025

MYSTICAURA

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From Editor's Desk



Get ready to slay the winter season with our December issue, packed with style inspo, trend reports, and festive looks to elevate your holiday wardrobe. From cozy winter layers to Aura men's fashion, we've got you covered.

We also bring you exclusive coverage of the 56th International Film Festival and articles from our talented esteemed monthly writers.

As we bid adieu to 2025, we look forward to welcoming 2026 with hope, love, and more great content.

Thank you for being a part of the Mystic Aura family.

Stay warm, stay stylish, and happy reading!

Regards

GITALI PATHAK DEKA

Proprietor & Editor-in-chief

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On the COVER

Noorjahan Begum

I'm

Noorjahan Begum,

well known as Muskan Khan, 22 year old with a dual commitment to both modeling and my academic pursuits. My heart thrives on the rhythm of dance and the art of acting, making them my cherished hobbies. However, my true aspiration lies in becoming a successful actor and sought-after model. For me, being an actor is a never-ending journey of learning and personal growth, as each role offers a fresh chance to expand my skills and understanding. I'm determined never to settle into a rut or complacency in life when there are always new things to learn, discover, and explore.

This is why I'm pursuing a career as a model and actress; it not only brings me happiness but also keeps my inner flame of curiosity and growth alive.

Additionally, I have a keen interest in dancing and painting, which further fuel my creative spirit.



MONOCHROME MAGIC

Winter Trend...

By **Sajida**, Fashion enthusiasts, Bangalore

This winter, monochrome is taking center stage, and we're obsessed. The art of dressing in a single color from head-to-toe is a timeless trend that's getting a fresh update. From sleek and sophisticated to bold and statement-making, mono-

chrome fashion is all about embracing a single hue and running with it.

Monochrome fashion is more than just a trend – it's a styling technique that creates a cohesive, polished look. By focusing on a sin-

gle color, you can experiment with different textures, fabrics, and shades to add depth and interest to your outfit. Plus, it's incredibly versatile – dress it up or down, and you're good to go.

Color of the Season: Neutrals

This winter, neutrals are reigning supreme. Beige, charcoal, and navy are just a few of the shades dominating the runways and streets. These versatile colors are perfect for creating a monochrome look that's both chic and effortless.

Soft and sophisticated, beige is the ultimate winter neutral. Pair a beige coat with beige trousers and a matching sweater for a look that's both stylish and cozy. You will look damn classy.

- ***Charcoal Glam:** Add some edge to your winter wardrobe with charcoal grey. A charcoal dress or jumpsuit is perfect for a night out, while a charcoal coat and trousers combo is great for a more formal occasion.

- ***Navy Nights:** Navy blue is a classic winter color that's both elegant and sophisticated. Try pairing a navy sweater with navy trousers and a matching coat for a stylish monochrome look.

One of the best things about monochrome fashion is the opportunity to play with texture and fabric. Mix and match different materials to add depth and interest to your outfit.

- **Knitwear:** Chunky knits, cable-knit sweaters, and ribbed hats – winter is the perfect time to cozy up with knitwear.

- **Leather:** Add some edge to your monochrome look with leather accessories like belts, bags, and boots.

Fur coats, hats, and scarves – fur is a luxurious addition to any winter outfit.

Accessories can make or break an

outfit, and monochrome fashion is no exception. Keep it simple with matching accessories, or add a pop of color with a statement piece to give a elegant and stylish look.

- **Monochrome Accessories :**

Match your shoes, bag, and belt to create a cohesive look.

- **Statement Jewelry:** Add some sparkle with statement jewelry in a bold color or metallic finish.

- Scarves and Hats of course adds a texture in different materials and patterns.

Makeup: now when it comes to makeup then obviously it should be kept simple or you can say no makeup look in other words complete your monochrome look with a makeup that's just as stylish. Focus on a single feature, like bold lips or smoky eyes, and keep the rest of your face neutral.

Try a bold lip color to add a pop of

color to your monochrome look.

- Smoky eyes are perfect for a winter night out – pair with a neutral lip color for a glamorous look.

My personal experience I am sharing with you all, if you wish you can try ...

Experiment with different shades. Don't be afraid to try different shades of the same color to add depth and interest to your outfit.

- Play with different textures and fabrics, mix and match to add depth and interest to your outfit.

- Monochrome fashion is all about simplicity, so to keep your accessories and makeup simple and understated.

This winter, give monochrome magic a try, with its versatility, sophistication, and style, it's the perfect trend to update your wardrobe.





The Last month of the year **DECEMBER**

By: **Brian La Cour**,
Author/writer/Entrepreneur, US

Every December, as the world counts down the last seconds of the year, we whisper quiet promises to ourselves. This will be the year we take better care of our skin, our mind, our boundaries, our heart. We vow to glow more, stress less, love deeper, and honor the version of ourselves we

keep envisioning but haven't quite stepped into.

But by February, many of those promises evaporate, dissolving into work schedules, family obligations, emotional fatigue, and the familiar gravity of old habits. Not because we lack desire, but because desire without direction

has nowhere to go.

And that is the truth most people never say out loud:

The real cost of starting the year without a personal growth plan is the quiet erosion of who you're becoming.

It doesn't show up on your bank statement.

It doesn't appear on your mirror.

It doesn't announce itself like a crisis.

It shows up subtly, in dullness instead of radiance, exhaustion instead of energy, survival instead of evolution.

Personal growth and beauty are intimately intertwined. Not in the superficial sense, lipstick, serums, and contouring cannot replace inner alignment, but in the deeper connection between emotional clarity and physical radiance.

When you enter a new year without intention, you begin it in a reactive state. You move from task to task, moment to moment, never quite catching up with yourself. And when life is lived in reaction, not creation, the glow that comes from self-respect and self-direction never fully forms.

You look in the mirror and see a face that is tired, not because of age, but because it is carrying too many unmade decisions.

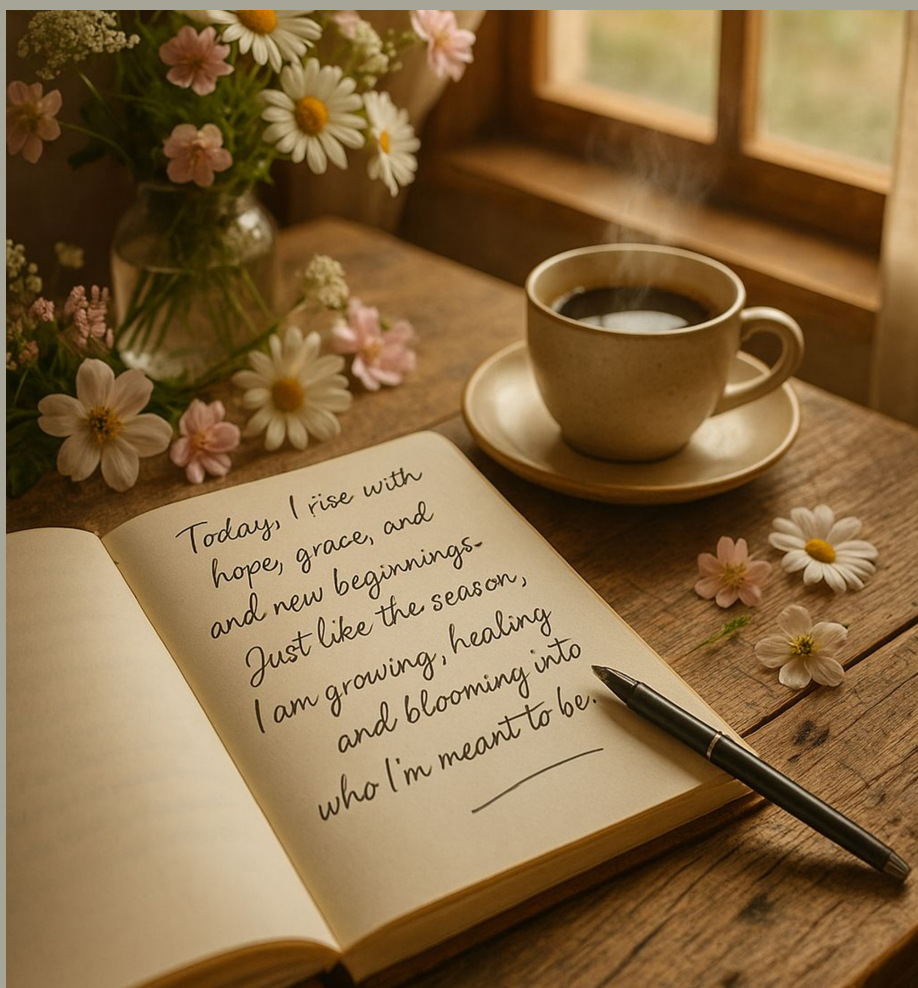
The most expensive moments in life are often the quiet ones.

Not heartbreak, drift.

Not chaos, stagnation.

Not failure, unfulfilled potential.

Entering the year without a personal growth plan invites emotional drift.



You feel overwhelmed but can't articulate why.
You feel behind but don't know what you're chasing.
You feel restless but can't explain what's missing.

This emotional fog steals more from us than we realize. It dulls intuition. It suppresses creativity. It numbs ambition. It even shows up physically, interrupting sleep patterns, spiking cortisol, and dimming the natural vibrancy of the skin.

The connection between emotional clarity and physical beauty is real, and for many, deeply underestimated.

When we talk about the "cost" of an unplanned year, we often think

of time. But the deeper cost is identity.

Without direction, you unintentionally repeat last year's patterns:

The same habits
The same doubts
The same emotional triggers
The same version of yourself

We get so comfortable carrying the weight of who we were that we never make room for who we could be.

A personal growth plan isn't just about goals, it's about identity design. It's about choosing, with intention, the evolution you want to experience. Without that clarity, another twelve months pass, and you remain largely unchanged.

Time isn't the thief.

Lack of direction is.

Motivation is beautiful but unreliable. It shines brightly in January, then flickers as the world grows louder.

A personal growth plan is the architecture that protects your evolution. It offers:

- **Clarity:** What do you truly want this year to feel like?
- **Boundaries,** What needs to stay behind?
- **Supportive habits:** What nourishes your mind, body, and spirit?
- **Rituals:** Morning routines, journaling, skincare, movement, reflection.
- **Focus:** Who are you becoming, and what choices honor that?

A plan is not pressure.

A plan is permission, permission to prioritize yourself in a world that constantly tries to distract you.

The beauty industry has spent decades teaching us how to enhance our outer glow. But the world is shifting. Beauty today is holistic, grounded, and soulful. It's about energy as much as aesthetics. Presence as much as product. Intention as much as innovation.

This year, you deserve to enter your evolution deliberately, not through chance or patterns inherited from last year.

Because the most expensive thing you can lose...

is the version of yourself you were meant to meet.

Build your plan. Shape your year. Design your glow from the inside out.

Your future self is waiting, and she is breathtaking.



BORN TO CREATE

Why India Needs a New Generation of Entrepreneurs.

By **Jishnu Vijayan Nair**, Actor/Writer/Motivational Speaker, Kerala

India stands today at a rare moment in history - a moment when our population, creativity, and technological strength are aligned like never before. We are the world's most populous nation, the 4th-largest economy, and home to some of the brightest young minds on the planet. Yet, even with all this potential, many of our youth continue to dream only of "getting a job," preferably one that pays six digits and offers stability. But in a rapidly

changing world, this mindset is not enough.

We don't merely need job seekers. We need job creators.

A Shift in Mindset

Every generation is shaped by its surroundings, its education, and its experiences. These three factors silently build our confidence, fears, and dreams. For decades, Indian families have encouraged children to study hard to "get a good job."

The intention was never wrong - security mattered deeply to parents who grew up in difficult times. But today's India is different. The opportunities are bigger, broader, and more global. And the world is watching us - not just as workers but as innovators. That is why the mindset must change. Our children should not be raised with the dream of earning a salary; they should be raised with the courage to give salaries to six people. Entrepreneurship



is not merely a business choice; it is an attitude. A way of thinking. A way of believing, "I can build something that did not exist before."

The World Wants Our Talent - But at What Cost? In this digital and AI-driven era, multinational companies are racing to hire India's smartest talents. They want our engineers, our designers, our analysts, our coders. But in the process, they often mold our brightest minds into quiet followers of their own agendas.

A recent example says everything. When the Indian government instructed mobile manufacturers to pre-install the Sanchar Saathi app - a secure, citizen-friendly tool designed to protect Indians from cyber frauds - many multinational giants disagreed. And eventually, the government rolled back its decision.

What does this show?

That even a sovereign nation can be challenged by corporate power. There is only one true way to prevent this imbalance: India must build its own giants. Giants that are born here, run by our people, and

created for our future. Giants that protect our interests, not compromise them and for that, we need entrepreneurs. Thousands of them. Lakhs of them.

A Nation Rising - Powered by Its Own Startups

We are already witnessing the spark. During Operation Sindoor, several Indian startups contributed technologies that were once unimaginable:

ideaForge - Tactical drones

IG Drones - Real-time surveillance

Pixxel - Satellite intelligence

QNu Labs - Quantum encryption

Kawa Space, Raphe mPhibr, EyeROV - Advanced drone and underwater reconnaissance systems

None of these companies were born from traditional job-seeking mindsets. They were born from courage, curiosity, and national pride. And this is exactly the spirit the new generation needs.

Entrepreneurship Must Begin in School

If India wants to shape entrepre-

neurial minds, we must start early. Just like mathematics or science, entrepreneurship should be taught from upper primary classes.

Not as a chapter. Not as a moral story. But as a skill -

How to think independently. How to understand problems.

How to convert ideas into action. How to face failure without fear.

Children should learn that risk is not dangerous; it is necessary.

Failure is not the end; it is preparation. And dreams are not unrealistic; they are responsibilities.

A Generation Leaving - and a Generation That Can Stay We all see the new trend: young Indians going abroad, studying abroad, settling abroad.

There is nothing wrong in exploring the world. But when our brightest talents leave forever, we lose not just people - we lose possibilities. Entrepreneurial thinking can change this. When young people believe they can build something meaningful here, when they feel empowered to innovate, when they know entrepreneurship is respected - they will choose India.

Not because they have no option, but because this is where their ideas can truly create impact.

The Future Belongs to the Builders. This is the time for India to rise as a nation of creators, thinkers, innovators, and leaders. A nation where parents proudly say, "Don't study to get a job...study to create one."

If the new generation embraces entrepreneurship - not as a trend but as a responsibility - India will not just participate in the global race; India will lead it. Because the future does not belong to those who wait. The future belongs to those who build.

Aura Beauty Touch

WINTER MAKEUP

Model
Amisha Chaliha

Designer
Pallomi Naiding

Makeup artist
Mamina Thousen

Photography by
Rihaan Photography



CHRISTMAS in Singapore's Eurasian Community A Celebration of Heritage and Heart

By **Vanessa Jacqueline Dcruz**
Loani Chairperson, Singapore

In the multicultural tapestry of Singapore, the Eurasian community brings a distinctive flavor to Christmas celebrations, blending Portuguese, Dutch, and British traditions with Asian influences. For this close-knit community,

comprising descendants of European and Asian unions, Christmas is more than a religious observance—it's a cornerstone of cultural identity and family bonding.

How Eurasians Celebrate Christmas

Eurasian Christmas celebrations in Singapore are characterized by their warmth, inclusivity, and deep-rooted traditions. The festivities typically begin weeks in advance, with families meticulously planning elaborate feasts and decorating their homes with twinkling lights, nativity scenes, and Christmas trees adorned with heirloom ornaments passed down through generations.

Christmas Eve holds special significance. Many Eurasian families attend midnight Mass at historic churches like the Church of Saints Peter and Paul or the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd, dressed in their finest attire. The service is often followed by a grand reunion dinner that extends into the early morning hours, filled with laughter, caroling, and storytelling. It's common for Eurasian homes to remain open throughout the Christmas season, welcoming friends and neighbors of all backgrounds—a testament to Singapore's multiracial harmony.

The tradition of caroling remains vibrant in the community. Groups gather to sing traditional carols in English and Kristang, the Portuguese-based creole language still spoken by some Eurasian families. This musical heritage connects younger generations to their ancestral roots while spreading Christmas cheer throughout neighborhoods.

The Feast: Traditional Eurasian Christmas Cuisine

The heart of any Eurasian Christmas lies in its extraordinary culinary spread—a mouthwatering fusion of European and



For Eurasians in Singapore, Christmas transcends religious ritual and feasting—it's the anchor of their cultural identity. As a minority community numbering around fifteen thousand, these celebrations serve as crucial moments for preserving heritage and strengthening communal bonds.

Christmas represents continuity and connection. It's when dispersed family members reunite, when traditional recipes are passed to younger cooks, and when the Kristang language echoes through homes. The holiday reinforces values central to Eurasian identity: hospitality, generosity, and the celebration of diversity.

In Singapore's fast-paced modern landscape, Eurasian Christmas traditions offer something increasingly precious—a pause to honor ancestry while creating new memories. The open-door policy during the season reflects the community's historical role as cultural bridges in Singapore, welcoming all to share in their joy.

Ultimately, Christmas means belonging. It's when Eurasians celebrate not just the birth of Christ, but the resilience of their unique heritage in Singapore's ever-evolving society.

Asian flavors that has evolved over centuries. The centerpiece is often a succulent roast turkey or baked ham, glazed to perfection and accompanied by an array of distinctive dishes.

Feng, a fragrant pork stew cooked with cinnamon, cloves, and vinegar, is considered essential to the Christmas table. This Portuguese-influenced dish showcases the sweet-sour-savory balance that defines Eurasian cooking. Equally important is Devil's Curry, a fiery dish typically made with leftover Christmas meats, potatoes, and cabbage in a rich, spicy gravy—so named because it's "devilishly hot and sinfully good."

Sugee cake, a buttery almond-semolina cake soaked in brandy, is perhaps the most iconic Eurasian Christmas dessert. Families guard their recipes jealously, with each household claiming their version is the most authentic.

The preparation is labor-intensive, involving days of soaking almonds and careful beating of butter and sugar, making it a true labor of love.

Other festive staples include beef smore—a spiced beef stew with tamarind—and shepherd's pie with an Asian twist. The elaborate spread reflects hours of collaborative cooking, with multiple generations working together in the kitchen, sharing techniques and stories.

The Deeper Meaning of Christmas





Zubeen Garg's signature style & Fashion





the collection to live music by Jintu Kakati and his band, "The Highlights", performing Zubeen Garg's songs.

The evening began with a heart-felt tribute by Dipankar Kashyap, followed by a special dance performance by Pratyusha Hazarika. Jaipur-based designer Alok Agarwal also presented 15 exclusive garments, adding to the event's grandeur.

Celebrity hair stylist Bhaskar Saikia styled the models, while Saurav Ravi Dutta hosted the evening. Zubeen Garg, a cultural icon and musical legend, has left an indelible mark on Assam's music scene with his soulful voice, diverse talent, and commitment to social causes.

Dipankar Kashyap, most popular designer of India unveils his new collection in memory and honor of the legendary singer "ZUBEEN GARG" at an event organized by Spriha Production on, Zubeen Garg's 53rd birth anniversary on November 18th 2025. The event took place at the Gauhati Town Club, surrounded by distinguished guests and admirers of the iconic artist.

The collection featured 16 unique men's garments inspired by Zubeen Garg's signature style, incorporating traditional elements like gamucha, arnai, and other scarves. The designs included imaginative attires, headgears, hats, harem pants, colorful shirts, short kurtas, loose pajamas, and jackets, accessorized with stylish ear studs and neckpieces.

Dipankar Kashyap described the collection as "a Swan Song" dedicated to Zubeen Garg. The event featured 18 male models walking the ramp, choreographed by Harsh Gautam, a renowned fashion choreographer from Delhi, showcasing





Goodbye 'He-Man'

The Star Who Lit Up Generations

— Neelim Akash Kashyap

(The writer is one of the award winning novelist of Assamese and Indian English literature. He is an inhabitant of Nalbari in Assam.)

Few stars have carried the weight of an era on their shoulders the way Dharmendra did. His name alone could fill theatres, lift stories, and stir emotions across generations. Born Dharam Singh Deol on December

8, 1935, in a quiet Punjabi village, he would go on to become one of Indian cinema's most beloved and enduring icons—a symbol of strength, sincerity, and timeless charm.

Dharmendra grew up in a modest Sikh household, where the values of simplicity and hard work shaped his character long before fame did. As a young man, he nurtured a silent dream—to stand before the camera, to live inside stories, and to carve out a future no one around him could have imagined. His life changed when he won a prestigious talent contest in Bombay. That single victory opened the gates of the film world for a young man who had only his determination to rely on. In 1960, he stepped into cinema with 'Dil Bhi Tera Hum Bhi Tere'. The film may not have been a major commercial success, but the sincerity in his eyes and the honesty in his craft announced the arrival of an actor with rare promise.

The 1960's saw Dharmendra's steady rise as he delivered one memorable performance after another. With films like 'Shola Aur Shabnam', 'Anpadh', and 'Aye Milan Ki Bela', his presence grew stronger and more assured. His breakthrough came with 'Phool Aur Patthar', where he brought raw intensity to the screen, setting himself apart from the romantic heroes of the time. Soon, his versatility became his signature—he could play a lover, a fighter, a comedian, or a man burdened with ideals, each with equal conviction. By the end of the decade, he was one of the most sought-after stars in India.

The 1970's crowned Dharmendra as a phenomenon. From the emotional resonance of the 'Mera Gaon Mera Desh' to the joyous chemistry of 'Seeta Aur Geeta', he proved that he could anchor

any genre with ease. Then came 'Sholay'—the film that sealed his immortality. As Veeru, he became part of the most beloved duo in Indian cinematic history. His humour, vulnerability, and effortless charm made the character unforgettable. Hits like 'Jugnu', 'Chupke Chupke', 'Dharam Veer', and 'The Burning Train' only strengthened his legacy.

The 1980's and 1990's saw him transition smoothly into stronger and more mature roles, while the later decades brought heart-warming appearances in films like 'Life in a... Metro', 'Johnny Gaddaar', and 'Yamla Pagla Deewana' series with his sons. Even in the final chapters of his film journey, he shone brightly with roles in 'Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani' and 'Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya', reminding audiences of the warmth that defined him.

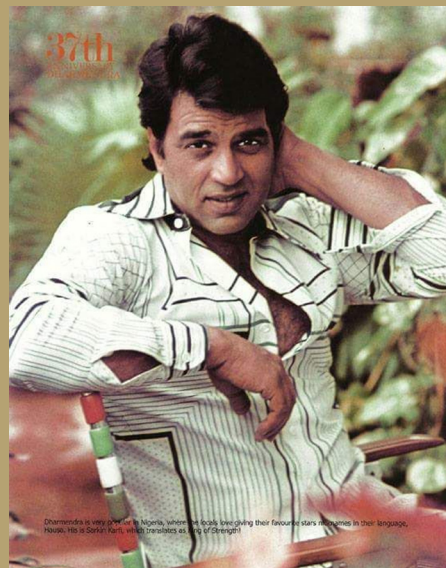
If we want to see Dharmendra's contributions extended beyond cinema, we see that he served as a Member of Parliament, and his humility won as many admirers as his films. In recognition of his work, he was honoured with one of India's highest civilian awards, the Padma Bhushan. At home, he was a devoted family man—father to six children and a pillar of strength to a family that continues to shape Indian cinema.

In numbers, Dharmendra acted in more than 300 films—but numbers cannot measure his impact. He was not just a screen hero—he was a cultural presence, a symbol of honest masculinity, and a reminder of an era when films were built on emotion, simplicity, and heart. His passing leaves a silence that



feels strangely heavy, a chapter that feels too early to close. Yet his laughter, his dialogues, his iconic scenes, and the kindness people remember him for will continue

to echo for decades. Dharmendra may have bid farewell to the world, but the legend remains—vibrant, eternal, and deeply loved.





Where Earth Floats and Time Dreams **THE MYSTIQUE OF LOKTAK LAKE**

By **Manikangkana Devi**, Writer, Poet, Artist & Translator

In the emerald heart of Manipur, where hills fade into clouds and morning light rests softly upon rippling waters, stretches Loktak Lake—mystical, ancient, and alive. This shimmering expanse, the largest freshwater lake in Northeast India, is a world where land floats, stories breathe, and time seems to slow into a dream. Scattered across the water are curious green circles called **phumdis**—floating masses of vegetation and organic life that drift like soft thoughts beneath the sky. They are not just unusual formations; they are homes, habitats, and the essence of life around the lake.

Loktak is a place of movement. Nothing here stays rigid—not water, not land, not even the communities that live upon it. Fishermen at dawn glide across the silver surface in slender wooden boats,

their paddles slicing through water with unhurried grace. Nets rise and fall like slow breathing. Reflections shimmer, bending the horizon into a watercolor of gold, blue, and green. The air carries the scent of wet earth and lilies, and silence hums like an ancient song. For those who arrive, the lake offers not just sight but sensation—an invitation to step into a rhythm older than cities and clocks.

The floating phumdis are marvels in themselves. Thick during the monsoon, thinning in the dry season, they change with time yet endure through generations. Entire households exist upon them—huts anchored by bamboo stakes, cattle grazing atop spongy soil, children running fearlessly across a ground that sways beneath their footsteps. The people of Loktak embody adaptability; roots need not

touch the earth when life learns to float. Their relationship with the lake is symbiotic—water gives sustenance, and in return they honor its rhythm.

Deep within this watery realm lies **Keibul Lamjao National Park**, the world's only floating wildlife sanctuary. Here lives the rare **Sangai**—the brow-antlered deer, often called the dancing deer of Manipur. Its slender steps are light, cautious, almost poetic, as it moves over phumdis that cradle rather than support. The Sangai is more than an animal; it is a heartbeat of the Manipuri identity, symbol of resilience and grace. Watching the deer wander across grasslands afloat on water feels like witnessing myth in motion, fragile yet enduring.

Loktak holds countless stories. Folklore speaks of spirits dwelling



this floating world is both duty and devotion.

Loktak teaches lessons beyond geography. It shows harmony between nature and human life; it reminds that strength can coexist with fragility, and that survival does not always require solid ground. Here, water and land dance as one, and existence floats between certainty and wonder.

Those who leave Loktak carry something intangible—memories like ripples that linger long after the lake disappears from view. One remembers the golden mornings, the Sangai's gentle gait, children laughing atop trembling earth, boats drifting beneath a sky full of stars. Loktak is not merely visited—it is experienced, breathed, remembered.

In the end, Loktak Lake is a floating poem, written in water and wind. It is proof that magic still lives in the world—hovering where phumdis drift, where deer dance lightly upon liquid earth, where stories travel across moonlit waves. Somewhere in Manipur, beneath a sky that leans close enough to touch, a world continues to float—waiting for those who believe that nature still whispers, and that some places are not conquered, but cherished.

in its waters, of lovers who met under moon-bright nights, of fishermen guided by ancestral wisdom passed through song. As evening approaches, floating homes glow like scattered lanterns, their warm light mirrored in water that darkens into liquid ink. Stars appear overhead and below, turning the lake into a bowl of constellations. The hush of nightfall blends with distant lullabies and the rhythmic dip of oars returning home. In such moments, Loktak feels enchanted—a place where reality thins and imagination stirs awake.

Yet this beauty is delicate. The lake has weathered changing times, development pressure, and ecological strain. Phumdis shrink, water patterns shift, and livelihoods

face uncertainty. But hope remains rooted deeply, like reeds gripping floating soil. Local communities, conservationists, and nature lovers work to protect what centuries have nurtured. To them, Loktak is not merely water—it is family, identity, and legacy. Preserving





FILMY CHAKKAR collection

Actor: Shah and Mimangshi Baruah

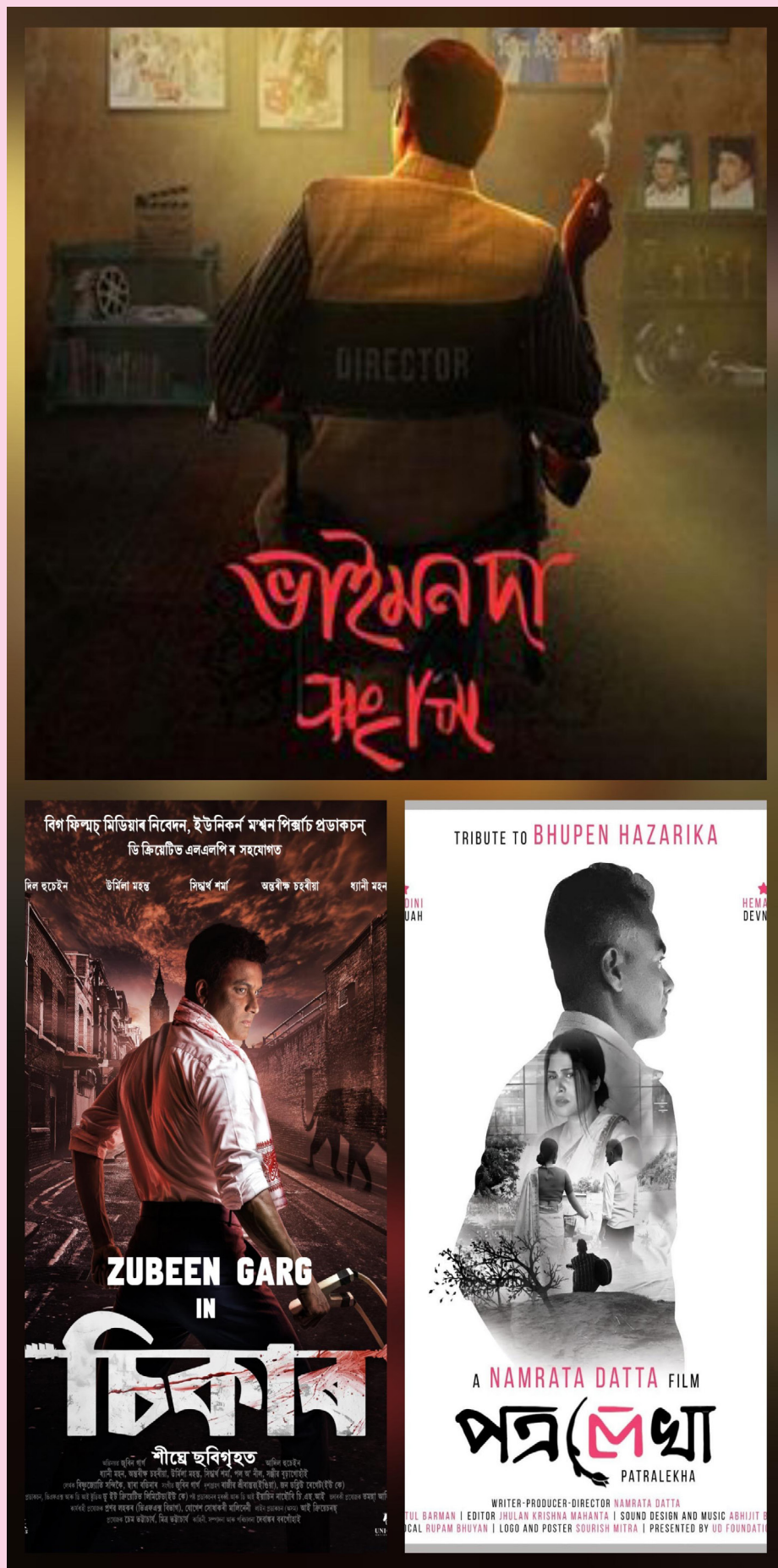
Styling : Dipankar Kashyap

Photography: Shahil Siddiqui

Makeup Lakme academy powered by Aptech







International Film Festival of India

Indian Panorama and Assamese Films, 2025

Dr. Dipsikha Bhagawati
Film Critic | Translator | Published
Author | Member, FCCI

The International Film Festival of India (IFFI) holds the distinction of being the only festival in South Asia recognized by the International Federation of Film Producers Associations (FIAPF). Since its inception in 1952, the festival has served as a significant gathering for filmmakers, cinephiles, film critics, and creative professionals from various parts of the continent, effectively facilitating the convergence of the best of world cinema for Indian audiences. IFFI embodies the belief that the intersection of diverse individuals and cultures fosters the generation of innovative ideas, leading to the development

of a profound art form like cinema. Every edition of the festival presents a diverse array of films that are intellectually stimulating, culturally enriching, and thoughtfully curated by experts in the field. Set against the scenic backdrop of coastal Goa, IFFI has been a permanent fixture since 2004, supported jointly by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, National Film Development Corporation (NFDC), and Goa Entertainment Society. A distinctive characteristic of IFFI is its inclusive and culturally embracing environment, symbolizing the unification of India's rich and diverse traditions under the ethos of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat.'

The Indian Panorama holds a significant role as a dedicated and influential section of the International Film Festival of India. It is a major component of the festival, focusing on selecting the best contemporary Indian films to promote the art of cinema. Introduced in 1978, the Indian Panorama was incorporated into IFFI to highlight Indian cinema, culture, and heritage through the cinematic medium. Since its inception, this section has remained committed to showcasing the finest Indian films of the year. The National Film Development Corporation, under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, organizes the Indian Panorama. Its primary objective is to select feature and non-feature films known for their thematic and



aesthetic excellence, promoting the art of cinema. Additionally, the Indian Panorama arranges for the non-profit screening of selected films in the following events and festivals:

1. International film festivals in India and abroad.
2. The Indian Film Week is a bilateral cultural exchange programme outside the Cultural Exchange Protocol and held under the aegis of Special Indian Film Festival.
3. Special Indian Panorama Festival of India.

The 56th Indian Panorama focuses primarily on two themes:

1. Films that have premiered globally, internationally, in Asia and India
2. Best Debut Film of an Indian Director

The 56th Indian Panorama has a total of four sub-sections:

- a. Feature Film: A maximum of 26

shortlisted feature films, including the film that won the Best Feature Film award at the 72nd National Film Awards, 2024.

- b. Non-Feature Film: A maximum of 21 shortlisted non-feature films, including the film that won the award for Best Non-Feature Film at the 72nd National Film Awards, 2024.

- c) 5 debut films of young filmmakers from across the country, selected by the jury to showcase different narratives and important film genres and to promote new and young talent.

- d) New Horizons (Feature Films) Feature films from the above selections which are premiered for the first time anywhere in the world, on an international platform, in Asia or in India. In addition to the feature films recommended by the Panorama Jury, this sub-section includes a maximum of 5 feature films selected specifically for the purpose of this



sub-section, outside the scope of Indian Panorama may be included.

There is no separate or specific award for the films included in the Indian Panorama of IFFI. To get selected and screened in this category itself is a special achievement for a film, that opens multiple windows for their global screenings.

The first Assamese language film to be selected for the Indian Panorama was auteur director Dr. Bhabendranath Saikia Sir's oeuvre "**Sandhyarag**." "**Sandhyarag**'s infallible human melody has forever captivated its audience.

This year, i. e. 2025, a total of three Assamese language films, including feature and non-feature, have been selected in the Indian Panorama of IFFI.

1. **Bhaiman Daa** (Feature Film Category, Director: Sasanka Samir)
2. **Patralekhaa** (Non Feature Section, Director: Namrata Datta)
3. **Sikar** (Mainstream Film, Director: Debangkar Borgohain)

Munin Barua, the beloved showman of Assamese cinema, has left an indelible mark with his compelling films such as **Dinabandhu**, **Pahari Kanya**, **Pita Putra**, **Ghar Sansar**, **Daag**, **Hiya Diya Niya**, **Sonamina**, and **Nayak**. He expressed his vision for Assamese cinema, stating, '**Cinema is a vast affair. I always want to see Assamese cinema in this vastness, I will place it in this circuit... won't succumb.**'

Young director Sasanka Samir has brought Munin Baruah's legacy to life through the evocative portrayal in the biopic **Bhaiman Daa**, capturing the grandeur, originality, research and depth of his contributions to Assamese cinema. **Bhaimon Daa** is the directorial debut of Sasanka Samir.

The year 2025 marks the birth centenary of the bard of Brahmaputra, Dr. Bhupen Hazarika, and as a soulful tribute to this timeless icon of the planet, director Namrata Datta has endeavoured to

depict the unfulfilled love story of a couple through her short film **Patralekha**, inspired by one of Hazarika's timeless compositions- "**Tumar dekhun naam patralekha, patra tumi nilikha hola/ Hoitu mur purona thikona tumar monot nai** (Your name carries the grace of an epistolist, yet the letters have ceased—perhaps my old address has slipped from your memory). The film portrays the poignant journey of a couple separated by life's challenges, with the woman immersed in village life as a devoted school teacher while caring for her ailing mother, and the man finding solace in art in the city, their emotional interdependence transcending the norms of marital relationships. **Patralekha** captures the emotional nuances of unrequited love, silent endurance, and the enduring power of memory and art, reflected in its climactic scenes set against contrasting backdrops of a high-altitude village and an urban dusk.

Sikar, an Assamese action thriller featuring Zubeen Garg and Adil Hussain, revolves around Shankar, a tea estate worker who employs his hunting skills to rescue his fiancée in London. The growing representation of Assamese language films in the Indian panorama bodes well for the film industry of Assam, signaling a positive trend in the broader cinematic landscape.

International Film Festival of India- Celebrate the Joy of Cinema!



From a Silver bear to a haunted Vacuum Cleaner

An experienced film critic's chronicle of world cinema, chaos and conversations during 56th IFFI 2025 © Lalit Rao (FIPRESCI) [lalitmax2022@gmail.com]

56th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) 2025 proved to be an experience of striking contradictions for me. As a film critic and member of film critics' organization FIPRESCI (India), I managed to watch 23 films from the 'World Cinema' section. Of these, 10 were genuinely good, 5 were mediocre, 5 were outright disappointing, and 3 left me emotionally and intellectually indifferent. This imbalance perfectly reflected the festival itself—rich in promise but marred by avoidable dysfunction.

The most serious drawback was the festival's technological infrastructure, especially the ticketing application. Frequent crashes and technical failures made it impossible to secure seats for some of the most anticipated films. As a



result, I missed seeing major titles such as *Sirat* (Oliver Laxe), *No Other Choice* (Park Chan-wook), *Silent Friend* (Ildikó Enyedi), *Sentimental Value* (Joachim Trier), and *Left-Handed Girl* (Shih-Ching Tsou). The absence of repeat screenings further deepened the frustration. A film festival risks losing its very purpose when accredited film critics and journalists are denied access to its most important films.

Despite these structural shortcomings, the festival offered rich intellectual rewards through interactions with filmmakers. I had the privilege of engaging in meaningful discussions with directors and producers namely Diane Kurys, Simón Mesa Soto, Anshul Chauhan, Matt Noonan, Kei Ishikawa, and Masaki Nishiyama. Watching the Japanese horror film “*The Invisible Half*” beside its young director Nishiyama was among the most unforgettable experiences. His six-year journey to complete the film and its successful premiere at Raindance film festival illustrated the dedication and passion that define true cinema.

However, not all moments reflected such respect for filmmakers. A deeply embarrassing incident occurred when Japanese director Kei Ishikawa was denied entry to the VIP lounge due to poor crowd management. Such moments harm not only the reputation of IFFI but also India’s global image as a culturally hospitable nation.

56th IFFI 2025 introduced a refreshing parade-style opening ceremony with creatively designed floats celebrating Indian cinema, which struck the right note. In con-



trast, the closing ceremony leaned heavily toward Bollywood and commercial spectacle. While honoring Rajinikanth’s 50-year contribution and Rishab Shetty’s *Kantara*: Chapter 1 was appropriate, actor Ranveer Singh’s use of the platform to promote his upcoming film ‘*Dhurandhar*’ felt like a breach of the festival’s cultural dignity. A national film festival should amplify independent, regional and world cinema, not serve as a publicity stage for already powerful commercial industries.

Among the positive initiatives, CMOT (Creative Minds of Tomorrow) and Waves Film Bazaar 2025 showed promise. However, the continued sidelining of the media

at the Film Bazaar remains unacceptable. A credible international film market cannot exist without giving journalists free and professional access.

Structurally, IFFI urgently needs reform. The digital ticketing system failed critics and journalists. Reintroducing paper tickets and reserving seats for media professionals are no longer luxuries but necessities. Retrospectives of great masters of cinema—once a vital part of IFFI—were completely absent, depriving the festival of its educational soul.

The opening and closing films were among the highlights. Gabriel Mascaro’s Brazilian film ‘*The Blue Trail*’,



有用的鬼

A Useful Ghost

林金伟

Ratchapoom Boonbunchachoke

2025年第78届戛纳电影节影评人周单元 影评人周大奖
Cannes 2025, Critics' Week - AMI Paris Grand Prize

2025 | 剧情 Drama | 130min

国家/地区: 法国、新加坡、泰国

Countries/Regions: France, Singapore, Thailand

WHFF

Among the ten films that truly impressed me were *El Conserje* (Mexico), *A Poet* (Colombia), *The President's Cake* (Iraq), *Karla* (Germany), *Orphan* (Hungary), *Gorgona* (Greece), *Sham* (Japan), *Mother's Baby* (Austria), *K-Poper* (Iran), and *A Useful Ghost* (Thailand). These films stood out for their originality, political insight, emotional depth, and formal boldness.

In conclusion, the 56th IFFI 2025 was a festival suspended between brilliance and breakdown. Its curatorial ambition and global outlook were undeniable, yet its organizational failures—especially in ticketing, media treatment, and basic respect for filmmakers—severely undermined its potential. With structural reforms, better media integration, and a renewed focus on world and independent cinema, IFFI can genuinely evolve into one of the world's great film festivals. Until then, it remains a festival of enormous promise struggling under the weight of its own mismanagement.

winner of the Silver Bear at Berlinale 2025 and Brazil's Oscar entry, was a haunting dystopian journey of resilience and freedom. The Thai closing film 'A Useful Ghost' by Ratchapoom Boonbunchachoke was equally striking—an audacious and surreal story of a woman who returns as a spirit inside a vacuum cleaner after dying from dust pollution, blending grief, environmental anxiety, humor and romance.

Apart from cinema, the games of chess provided me with a mental refuge. I participated briefly in the FIDE Chess World Cup 2025 event at Arpora, which refreshed my spirit amid the festival fatigue. Equally memorable were informal breakfast conversations at Taj Vivanta with respected figures of Indian cinema such as Sibi Malayil, Muzaffar Ali, Shivendra Singh

Dungarpur, Vishal Bhardwaj, Raja Bundela and Anupam Kher. These discussions on cinema and storytelling were among the most enriching moments of the festival.





Zubeen's Collection

Designer & Styling Dipankar Kashyap

Aura
Fashion





Whispers of Hope ...!

By Hanief Bin Aziz

The dawn of the new millennium brought with it a fragile sense of renewal to Kashmir, a land still trembling from the echoes of the 1990s—a decade that had etched its scars into our collective memory. My family, like so many others, had weathered the storm of violence, displacement, and loss. Booba, my mother,

and Abaajaan, my father, clung to the fragile hope that education would be our compass out of the darkness. Study hard, beta, Abaajaan would say, his voice heavy with unspoken fears. The world is changing. You must be ready. Their dreams for me were practical: engineering, medicine, or perhaps civil services—paths they believed

would anchor our family to safer shores. But my heart had already been stolen by the written word.

It was AK Kakh, a storyteller with a voice like gravel and eyes that held the secrets of a hundred valleys, who first kindled my love for stories. I knew I wanted to chase the magic he had left behind, even if it meant defying Abaajaan's wishes. English literature? He had sighed, rubbing his temples. What will you do with that? But Booba, ever the silent warrior, squeezed my hand. Let him dream, she murmured. The world needs dreamers too.

My younger sister, Sidra, was the pragmatist of the family. At ten, she'd already mapped her future: a white coat, a stethoscope, and a resolve to heal the wounds our valley could not forget. She Loved Rumi which Abaa had read to her during morning times and Faiz by herself. You'll write our stories, she told me once, her voice steady beyond her years. And I'll mend the bodies. Between us, maybe we'll fix something.

In the autumn of 2002, I enrolled at the University of Kashmir, a sprawling campus where the scent of Chinar Leaves mingled with the ink of textbooks. At twenty, I carried the weight of my family's hopes like a second skin, but also a quiet rebellion, a determination to carve a life that was mine. My elder brother Haris didn't make it beyond matriculation. Haris would help father in household chores. Abaa was a learned man who choose to live on its own rather than join a govt job. He would teach in a private school and do farming. His most favorite pastime

was reading books. At university the corridors buzzed with debates about postcolonial theory and poetry of Wordsworth, and I felt alive in a way I hadn't dared imagine.

Then, on a crisp September morning, I saw her.

She sat across from me in a sunlit classroom, her head tilted slightly as she scribbled notes in the margin of *Wuthering Heights*. Waheeda. Her name, I'd learn later, meant unique or singular in Arabic—a fitting title for someone who seemed to carry her own gravity. Her eyes, dark and luminous, flickered with a curiosity that mirrored my own. A crimson hijab framed her face, contrasting with the olive tones of her skin, and when she laughed at a classmate's joke, the sound was warm, unhurried. I found myself inventing reasons to linger near her desk: a borrowed pen, a question about symbolism, anything to hear her thoughts.

Are you always this nervous on the first day? She asked during a break, her smile teasing but kind. I fumbled with my notebook, suddenly aware of my frayed sleeves and the way my voice shook when I spoke. Only when surrounded by future Nobel laureates, I replied, earning a laugh that felt like a small victory.

We became unlikely allies, two souls of a wounded land, tethered to stories. Waheeda, it turned out, had fled Srinagar with her family during the peak of the insurgency, returning only when the guns fell silent. Stories kept me sane, she confessed one afternoon as we shared chai under a chinar



tree. When the world outside was chaos, I'd hide in my closet with a torch and Dickens. It felt like armor.

Her words echoed my own heart. In her, I found not just a friend, but a reflection a reminder that beauty and resilience could bloom even in the rockiest soil. Together, we dissected Shakespearean sonnets and debated the politics of translation, our conversations weaving between Urdu couplets and postcolonial theory.

Yet, beneath the camaraderie,

something deeper stirred. The way her fingers brushed mine when passing a book, the hours lost in the library as dusk painted the mountains gold, it was a slow, tender unravelling. I hadn't expected love to find me here, between the pages of Eliot and the shadow of conflict. But Kashmir had taught me that life was a mosaic of contradictions: violence and beauty, loss and hope. But that autumn, as the campus maples blazed red and the Himalayas stood sentinel in the distance, we were simply two students daring to believe that



a battered world could still hold space for dreams. And sometimes, that was enough.

The holidays in Lolab Valley were a bittersweet respite. By 2003, Srinagar still simmered with tension—occasional gunfire echoed in alleyways, and the spectre of vanished faces haunted every corner. But home, nestled in the arms of snow-dusted peaks and Deodar forests, felt suspended in time. Yet, without phones or letters, the distance between Lolab and Srinagar became a chasm. Each trip home left me hollow, my mind tethered to a sunlit classroom and the girl beneath the chinar tree.

Abaa and Booba noticed the change. Beta, why do you stare at the mountains as if they've stolen your soul? Abaa would ask, his brow furrowed as he sipped kehwa. Booba, ever perceptive, added softly, The city hasn't swallowed your laughter, has it? I'd shrug, mumbling about exams or fatigue, but my lies were as transparent as the streams cutting through our valley. How could I explain that my heart now beat to the rhythm of a stranger's voice, or that Waheeda's absence felt like a phantom limb?

Sidra, now 12 and sharp as a scalpel, saw through me instantly.

You're in love, she declared one afternoon, cornering me as I sulked on the porch with Novel. Don't deny it. You've got the same look Booba had when Abaa used to recite Jaun Elia under her window. I swatted her away, but her laughter lingered a reminder that even in a land scarred by loss, joy persisted in the smallest corners.

Lolab itself felt emptier. Childhood friends—boys who once raced me through walnut trees and skipped stones at the pond—had vanished into the militant folds of the conflict, their mothers left to clutch faded photographs. AK Kakh, the storyteller who'd ignited my love for tales, was now just another ghost in the mountains. Some days, I'd wander to the pond where he'd once spun myths of djinns and star-crossed queens, the water reflecting skies as blue as Waheeda's dupatta. Should I have followed you? I'd whisper to the silence, torn between the pull of the unknown beyond the peaks and the anchors of home.

But there were new rhythms, too. Abaa, once hardened by years of strife, had rediscovered poetry. Evenings now found us by the hearth, him reciting Ghalib's verses, me daring to share snippets of Keats or Gandhi. Hard work alone isn't enough, beta, he'd say, his voice softer. You must also tend to the garden inside. In those moments, I glimpsed the young man he'd been—a dreamer who'd traded his pen for a plow when survival demanded it.

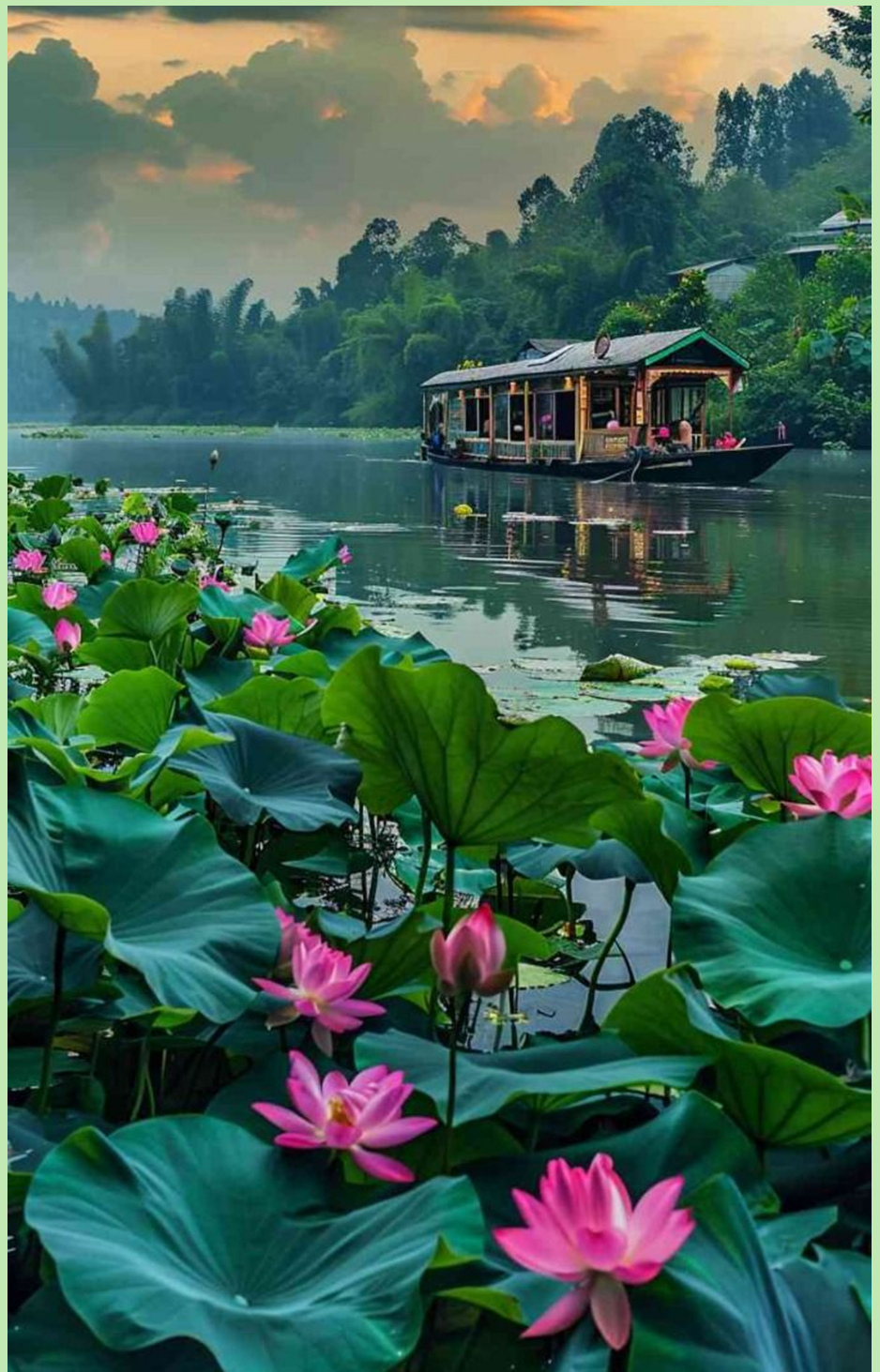
Yet, my thoughts always spiralled back to Waheeda. Did she trace the same constellations over Srinagar? Did her fingers linger on

the chinar's bark, remembering our debates about Ghalib? Most haunting of all: Did she ache for me too? In the absence of answers, I clung to memories, the way her eyes crinkled when she laughed, the scent of saffron tea on her breath, the unspoken electricity when our hands brushed.

One twilight, as I trudged back from the pond, Sidra intercepted me with a tray of noon chai. Write to her, she said, no teasing left in her voice. Even if you can't send it. Words have a way of reaching. That night, by the flicker of a lantern, I filled pages with fragments of my heart: Waheeda, the mountains here are lonely. The chinar must miss us. Do you?

By the time I returned to Srinagar, the city's streets felt both familiar and foreign. But there she was waiting beneath our tree, a book in her lap and autumn leaves tangled in her hair. Her smile, when she saw me, was a quiet rebellion against the world's chaos. No words were needed. In that glance, I found my answer.

In Kashmir, love and loss were twin flames, forever intertwined. By 2004, the war had carved its scars so deep into my soul that even joy felt like betrayal. Every laugh, every stolen glance with Waheeda, was shadowed by a whisper: This too will be taken. How could I let myself love her when the valley's ghosts clung to my bones? I had already buried Uncle Sameer, I'd mourned Grandfather's family, their home reduced now a ghostly figure. AK Kakh, the storyteller who taught me to dream, had dissolved into the mountains like smoke. Now,



Waheeda, her laughter, her quiet strength, felt like the last fragile thread holding me to hope.

One brittle afternoon beneath the chinar tree, its amber leaves trembling in the wind, I unravelled. The words spilled out like shrapnel: I've lost too much, Waheeda. This war, it feeds on what we love. Her

hand tightened around mine as I named the ghosts, Sameer's unfinished jokes, Grandfather's walnut orchard, Kakh's stories swallowed by the mist. You're all I have left, I choked, my voice splintering. If I lose you too, I'll—

She said nothing. Tears traced silent rivers down her cheeks, her

eyes reflecting a sorrow too vast for eighteen. She had seen it all the fathers dragged from homes at dawn, the daughters buried in white shrouds, the way Srinagar's streets could turn to graveyards between sunrise and sunset. When I begged her to stop crying, she pressed her forehead to mine, her breath ragged. Don't you see? She whispered. We're already living on borrowed time.

We parted without another word, the weight of the unspoken hanging between us. I replayed that moment all night in my hostel room, clutching the copy of the book she'd lent me, its margins filled with her looping Urdu notes. I should have told her she was my compass. I should have kissed her. But the war had taught me to ration words, to love in whispers.

Then, the sirens.

Shouts ricocheted through the university corridors the next evening: Firing near Lal Chowk. Civilians caught in crossfire. My knees buckled. The air thickened with the metallic scent of memory, Uncle Sameer's blood in Grandfather's courtyard, Grandfather's last breath hissing through bullet-torn lungs. I stumbled into the courtyard, clutching strangers' sleeves. Who was it? Who? Students hurried past, eyes downcast, as if grief were contagious.

When Ubaid, our classmate, finally found me, his face was a funeral shroud. It's Waheeda, he said. She was buying books for tomorrow's lecture.

The world folded In half.

I don't remember collapsing. I

remember the gravel biting my palms, the sky spinning like a child's top, the cacophony of gasps and prayers around me. Someone screamed a raw, animal sound and only later did I realize it was my own voice. They said her body lay wrapped in a white cloth at SMHS Hospital, her crimson dupatta stiff with blood. They said her father carried her home, reciting Quranic verses to drown the sobs.

But all I saw was the chinara tree. Our tree. Its branches empty now, its shadows stretching like skeletal fingers over the bench where she once argued that love wasn't madness, but a mirror of our own fractured land. We're all a little broken here, she'd said, tucking a leaf into my notebook. That's why we need stories.

That night, I tore the pages from her books, her annotations blurring under my tears. I hurled them

into the Dal Lake, watching the river swallow her words, the last fragments of a girl who believed bridges could be built from pain.

When I returned to Lolab, Sidra found me at the pond, staring at the peaks where AK Kakh had disappeared. She didn't tease this time. Write her, she said, pressing a pen into my hand. Write her until the world hears.

But the ink had dried up. All I could scribble were the same three words, over and over, until they lost meaning:

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Years later, when I'd publish my first novel—a tapestry of our valley's whispers, I'd dedicate it to her. For Waheeda, the inscription would read, who taught me that stories are not escapes, but bridges.



MERRY CHRISTMAS

All the months are gone.
December the last month is here.
A beautiful month of showing that we care.
Sharing beautiful gifts and honouring The Christ Child.
The Christmas air is everywhere.
Christmas tree decorated shining tall and beautiful.
Santa getting ready with the sleigh.
The stockings hanging waiting for the gifts.
Every child dream gifts from Santa.
Bells ringing and the sweet familiar sound of carols singing.
Hark! It's Christmas!
A time to be merry and loving.
A time to show the path of peace and happiness.
Yes! Christmas is floating in the air.

- Monali Hazarika

Vas K.

THE MIST

Is it the winter mist,
or the mist of love?
Come, let us slip inside it
our hearts entwined as one.
Let us wander through its softness
quenching our quiet desire
sipping the droplets of splendor
that tremble in the air.
It is the mist of love
Sweetness dissolving around us
Clinging softly to the window
Filling hearts with glow
The mist a silent whisper
murmuring our togetherness
Of our never-ending love days
Wrapped in winter's haze.
In this dreamy mist
let us together drift
Be lost forever
In eternal celestial bliss.

- Vijaylaxmi Sarmah

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