

JANUARY 2026, ISSUE 71 | VOL- VI

# MYSTIC AURA

MAGAZINE



Benefits Of  
Face Yoga  
Be ever youthful

Radiance  
Glow of life

NEW YEAR, NEW VIBE

Styles that inspire renewal  
and celebrate fresh beginnings

HAPPY  
*New Year*

2026



MYSTIC AURA

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# FROM THE *Editor's* *Desk*



January edition brings with it a promise of fresh starts, new beginnings, and endless possibilities.

In this issue, we are embracing the spirit of renewal with styles that inspire, uplift, and transform. From cozy winter looks to bold new trends, we're sharing our top picks to help you kickstart the year in style.

As you flip through the pages, you will be happy to go through the articles by our esteemed writers .Remember, every day is a chance to start anew, to rediscover, and to reinvent new hopes, new dreams, and the courage to chase them.On behalf of Mystic Aura team ,would like to thank all our well-wishers, our esteemed monthly writers for being part of Mystic Aura .Its all your support and love we have completed 5years of our journey and hope to get the same further.

Happy New Year & happy reading .

Regards

**Gitali Pathak Deka**

Proprietor & Editor-in-chief

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# THE COVER FRONT



Model : Ashita Chellengg

Mua : Mahendra Gupta

Photography: Maya Singh Panwar

## VERY CHARMING ACTRESS & MODEL

# ASHITA CHELLENGG

I am from Assam. I love traveling and I have a dream to travel the world someday. I wish to explore life and want to learn about new things.

My journey - My journey started when I was still a teenager when I used to take part in shows under my mother's guidance. Later, my interest shifted towards fashion and modelling and with time i started loving modeling and took part in fashion shows. When i was in college I started joining beauty peagants and over time I got the opportunity to take part in shows outside my home town. That's how I entered the fashion industry.

My childhood - My childhood was really a very memorable time of my life. My mom, dad and my siblings have me alot of memories and these memories always encouraged me to never give up.

My passion - I have a passion for fashion and martial arts since I was a child.

My challenges -My challenges in life are work stress and breaking negative patterns.

When my name was announced as perfect Miss of India 2025, I was shocked as I never expected that I'd win, it took me a while to take the info that I won and when I did i was over the moon and could not hold my joy.

I would describe this word as miraculous as I've always dreamed about winning such a beauty peagant and never expected in my wildest dreams that I'd win this peagant.

I've always been a little inclined towards the fashion indians took Aishwarya Rai as my role model, as time passed , i decided to enter the world of peagantry.

The most challenging moment during my journey was that i was unable to take out time for my education but somehow managed to balance both peagantry and education together.

When I saw several beautiful women beside me, I somewhat doubted myself but my will to win kept me going.

I want to redefine the word perfection as people nowadays think it's only about physical appearance but no, it's about physical, mental, and emotional health of a person.

Yes imperfections can be a women's greatest strength as they define what a person is.

On stage i mostly like dressing formally and elegantly but off stage i prefer comfortable style.

Elegance beyond beauty and appearance shows the harmonious blend of internal qualities and the external presentation.

Aishwarya Rai inspires my sence of grace and strength.

I want to pursue greater opportunities after this win. I hope to see myself in a better place five years from now, both professionally and personally.

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# The Year Doesn't Change Until You Do

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



**E**very New Year arrives carrying promises. People decide to wake up earlier, eat healthier, read more, think positively, or finally transform their lives. Gyms get crowded, notebooks fill with resolutions, and motivational quotes flood social media timelines. Yet, within a week - or at best, a month - most of these decisions quietly fade away.

This isn't because people lack dreams or ambition. It's because decisions without deep intention and consistency are fragile.

The truth is simple, yet often ignored: The year doesn't change until you do.

## WHY MOST NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS FAIL

Many people treat New Year's Day as a magical switch - as if change is tied to a calendar date. They postpone action, convincing themselves, "I'll start from January 1," or "From next month, I'll be serious." But growth does not respect calendars. Life doesn't wait for

Mondays, month beginnings, or new years to offer transformation.

When a person genuinely wants change, they don't wait for symbolic moments. They act the moment awareness strikes. A goal set on New Year's Day without inner

intention is like planting a seed without watering it. Intention gives direction. Consistency gives life. Without both, even the most well planned resolutions collapse.

## INTENTION IS MORE POWERFUL THAN TIMING

Instead of asking, "What should I start this New Year?" A better question is, "Am I ready to accept discomfort, discipline, and responsibility?" Because real change demands effort. It demands sacrifice. It demands courage. If you feel today is the right moment to take a step - then this moment itself is perfect. There is no greater

time than now. Waiting for ideal conditions is often another form of fear disguised as planning.

Procrastination doesn't protect us; it delays destiny.

## CONSISTENCY: THE SILENT FORCE OF GROWTH

Progress doesn't come from dramatic beginnings. It comes from showing up repeatedly - even when motivation fades and excitement disappears. Consistency aligns thoughts with actions. Without it, even the most brilliant ideas fail. With it, even small efforts compound into powerful transformation over time.

A person who takes one conscious step every day will always move ahead of someone who waits for inspiration once a year. Growth is not accidental; it is the result of intentional repetition.

Consistency builds trust - with yourself. And once you trust yourself, momentum follows naturally.

## YOU ARE NOT WAITING FOR ANYONE - YOU ARE THE CREATOR

One of the biggest traps in life is waiting:

- Waiting for support
- Waiting for approval
- Waiting for the right opportunity
- Waiting for someone else to change
- But no one else is responsible for your transformation.

You are the creator of your destiny.

The moment you realize this, excuses lose their power. Responsibility may feel heavy at first - but it is also liberating.



Because when you take ownership of your life, you gain control over your choices, actions, and direction.

Stop outsourcing your future to circumstances. The power to change has always been within you.

## CHALLENGES ARE NOT STOP SIGNS - THEY ARE INVITATIONS

When you begin something meaningful, obstacles are guaranteed. Resistance is natural. Fear will appear. Doubt will question your decisions.

But challenges are not signals to quit.

Think of them as mountains on your path. You are not meant to carry the mountain on your shoulders - you are meant to climb it.

Every challenge refines you. Every setback prepares you. In many ways, the universe - or the Almighty - is testing your patience and resilience. Testing whether you are capable of handling the success that awaits you.

Do not mistake difficulty for rejection. Often, struggle is preparation in disguise.

## THE JOURNEY IS THE REAL REWARD

We are taught to believe that happiness exists only at the destination. But life gently teaches us otherwise. The destination may satisfy you - but the journey transforms you.

It builds resilience. It shapes character. It gives stories, lessons, and depth. Every failure sharpens wisdom. Every fall strengthens resolve.

Life itself is a precious gift from the universe. Every step - even the painful ones - adds meaning to that gift.

So do not abandon your journey midway just because the path feels uncertain or difficult.

Stay. Learn. Adapt. Move forward.

## LET THIS YEAR BE A TURNING POINT - NOT BECAUSE IT'S NEW, BUT BECAUSE YOU ARE

Don't wait for the year to change your life. Don't wait for permission. Don't wait for perfection.

Start when awareness arrives. Continue with consistency. Persist through challenges. Trust the journey.

Because time will move forward regardless. Transformation happens only when you move inward - and then act outward.

The calendar will change automatically. But your life will change only when you decide - and stay committed.

And that decision does not belong to January 1.

It belongs to now.



# Fashion's January Reset

What We're Actually Wearing in 2026

By **Vanesssa Jacqueline Dcruz**

Loani Chairperson, Singapore

Forget the runway.  
Forget the mood boards.  
This January, we hit the  
streets of Singapore to  
discover what people  
are genuinely putting on  
their bodies when the  
holiday glitz fades and  
the humidity returns.



## The Tropical Wardrobe Reality

At Raffles Place during lunch hour, Sarah Lim, 31, emerges from the MRT in what she calls her "survival outfit": a linen blend shirt from Uniqlo (\$39), wide-leg cotton trousers from Charles & Keith (\$89), and leather sandals that transition seamlessly from office to hawker center. "In Singapore, you're dressing for three climates: outdoor heat, arctic aircon, and sudden rain," she laughs. "Nothing synthetic. Everything washable."



This practical approach defines fashion in the Lion City right now. January 2026 hasn't brought dramatic trend shifts but rather a collective wisdom about what actually works in 1.4 degrees north of the equator.

## Investment Pieces That Earn Their Keep

Along Orchard Road, Marcus Tan, 28, reveals his strategy: quality basics in breathable fabrics. His Japanese cotton tee from Muji (\$25) is one of five identical ones. His chinos from local brand In Good Company (\$150) have survived two years of daily wear. "I used to buy cheap clothes that looked wrinkled after one train ride," he says. "Now I spend more but buy less. These trousers still look crisp at 6 PM."

The humidity has taught Singaporeans what mainlanders are still learning: fabric quality matters more than brand names. Linen, cotton, Tencel, and technical blends dominate real wardrobes, while polyester fashion purchases languish unworn.



## The Shophouse Aesthetic

In Tiong Bahru, creative director Mei Ling Wong, 42, embodies what locals call "relaxed sophistication." She pairs vintage batik-print pants from a Haji Lane boutique (\$120) with a simple white tank and woven bag. "Singaporean style isn't about looking overdone," she explains. "It's about looking comfortable and intentional in the heat."

This aesthetic, born from climate necessity, has evolved into something distinctly Singaporean: elevated casual that respects both tradition and modernity. It's fashion that photographs well but, more importantly, feels good at 32 degrees.

## Generation-Spanning Sense

Perhaps most striking is the cross-generational agreement on practicality. At Bugis Junction, 24-year-old student Priya Krishnan and her mother, 53-year-old banker Lakshmi, are both wearing loose linen dresses, though from different retailers. "We've both learned the same lesson," Priya says. "In Singapore, comfort isn't lazy. It's smart."

The data supports this convergence. Local retailers report that their best-sellers



aren't trend pieces but timeless silhouettes in natural fabrics, versatile enough for our multi-cultural, multi-occasion lifestyle.

## The Neighbourhood Influence

What emerges from conversations across Singapore's diverse neighborhoods, from the CBD to Katong to Geylang, is a fashion philosophy shaped by our unique context: tropical climate, multicultural aesthetics, efficient urban living, and a pragmatic approach to consumption.

The common threads? Natural fabrics



that breathe. Colors that hide the inevitable humidity effects. Silhouettes that work in aircon and outdoors. Footwear that survives sudden storms. Style that transitions from kopitiam to cocktail bar without a complete change.

As we settle into 2026, global fashion magazines might be pushing winter coats and leather boots. But here in Singapore, people have mastered the art of looking polished while staying cool, both literally and figuratively.

The real trend? Understanding that great style isn't about following what works elsewhere. It's about knowing what works here.



# AURA

## Style



Model : Dr .Sangeeta Das

KAUSHIK BRAHMA PHOTOGRAPHY



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“

Radiance, then, is not something to chase. It is not a trend or a standard to maintain. It is a byproduct of wholeness....”

”

# RADIANCE

## The Glow of Life

By Brian La Cour

Writer/Author, United States

**F**or a long time, we have mistaken radiance for something applied. A finish. A formula. A final step. We have been taught to believe that glow lives in bottles and procedures, in the architecture of routines designed to correct what life has altered. But true radiance does not begin at the surface, it begins the moment the body is no longer asked to survive.

There is a particular posture the body assumes when it has been under strain for too long. Shoulders rise without permission. Breath shortens. The face tightens in places no mirror can quite capture. Science names it chronic stress; the body experiences it as vigilance. Cortisol interferes with collagen. Inflammation lingers. Sleep becomes shallow. Hair thins. Skin dulls. None of this is failure. It is adaptation.

The body, when forced into

endurance, simply reallocates its resources. Beauty becomes secondary to protection. Survival, after all, is efficient. It is not concerned with glow.

And yet, the body is patient. It remembers what safety feels like, even when we have forgotten.

Healing does not arrive with fanfare. It is not cinematic. There is no clear before and after. Instead, it announces itself quietly: deeper sleep, softer mornings, a nervous system that no longer braces at the sound of its own thoughts. The mirror reflects something familiar again, not younger, not untouched, but present.

This is where science and soul converge. As the nervous system settles, blood flow improves. The skin barrier begins to repair itself. The face releases its grip. Radiance emerges not because something was added, but because something was finally allowed to rest.

In this context, beauty rituals shift their meaning. They are no longer tools of correction or control, but signals of safety. A slow facial massage tells the body it can soften. Warm water lowers stress hormones. Intentional skincare, practiced without urgency, becomes an act of reassurance rather than judgment. Across cultures and centuries, healing has always been accompanied by ritual oils, steam, silence, and touch. What we are rediscovering now is that these practices were never indulgent. They were regulatory.

Softness, long dismissed as weakness, reveals itself as strength of the highest order.

We recognize healed people not by their perfection, but by their ease. Their faces rest differently. Their eyes are no longer scanning. Their presence feels unforced. Lightness, it turns out, is simply the absence of armor.

This is not the beauty of erasure, of smoothing away history or pretending life has not marked us. It is the beauty of integration. Of a body that no longer needs to guard every edge. Of a woman who trusts her own rhythm again.

Healing does not return us to who we were before life intervened. It introduces us to who we are now. Wiser. More embodied. Less interested in performing wellness and more invested in inhabiting it.

Radiance, then, is not something to chase. It is not a trend or a standard to maintain. It is a byproduct of wholeness, of rest earned, of gentleness practiced long enough to be believed.

Moving forward is not about reclaiming the past. It is about choosing presence over pressure, listening over fixing, and allowing beauty to emerge naturally when the body is no longer asked to endure.

From survival to radiance is not a transformation.

It is a return.



# FACE YOGA

## YOUTHFUL LOOKS

UNLOCKING A MORE RADIANT YOU

By **Seema Debi,**  
**Orissa**



**A**re you tired of looking tired? Want to turn back the clock and get that youthful glow? Face yoga is the answer. This ancient practice combines breathing techniques, meditation, and physical exercises to relax and strengthen your facial muscles, giving you a more radiant and refreshed appearance.

Face yoga, also known as facial exercise or facial gymnastics, is a holistic approach to maintaining a healthy and youthful appearance. It involves a series of

exercises that target specific facial muscles, improving their tone and elasticity.

**1. Reduces Wines and Fines Lines:**

Regular face yoga practice can help relax facial muscles, reducing the appearance of wrinkles and fine lines.

**2. Tones Facial Muscles:** Face yoga exercises strengthen and tone facial muscles, giving your face a more defined and lifted appearance.

**3. Improves Skin Elasticity :** Face yoga increases blood flow and collagen production, improving skin elasticity and firmness.

**4. Relaxes Facial Tension :** Face yoga helps release tension in facial muscles, reducing stress and promoting relaxation.

**5. Boosts Confidence :** A more radiant and refreshed appearance can do wonders for your self-confidence!

**6. Natural and Non-Invasive :** Face yoga is a natural, non-invasive way to maintain a youthful appearance without resorting to surgery or toxins.

**7. Improves Breathing and Posture :** Face yoga combines breathing techniques and physical exercises, improving your overall posture and breathing.

## TO GET YOU STARTED :

Smile as wide as you can, hold for 10 seconds, and release. Lift your eyebrows as high as you can, hold for 10 seconds, and release.

- **The Forehead Smooth:** Place your fingers on your forehead, smooth out wrinkles, and hold for 10 seconds.
- Smile and lift your cheeks towards your eyes, hold for 10 seconds, and release.
- **The Jaw Relax :** Open your mouth, relax your jaw, and hold for 10 seconds.

But at the same time while doing you need to keep in mind few points .. here we go ..



### Tips and Precautions

- **1. \*Start slow\*:** Begin with simple exercises and gradually increase intensity and duration.
- **2. \*Be consistent\*:** Practice face yoga regularly for best results.
- **3. \*Listen to your body\*:** Stop if you experience discomfort or pain.
- **4. \*Consult a professional\*:** If you have any underlying medical conditions, consult a healthcare professional before starting face yoga.

In conclusion, face yoga is a natural and effective way to unlock a more radiant and refreshed you. With regular practice, you can reduce wrinkles, tone facial muscles, and improve skin elasticity. So, give face yoga a try and get ready to glow .

Try once in your free time to keep your ever youthful looks alive.

# AURA

## Beauty

Model : **Dissaa Deka**

Mua : **Zeenat Makeup Studio**

Photography: **Artikul**



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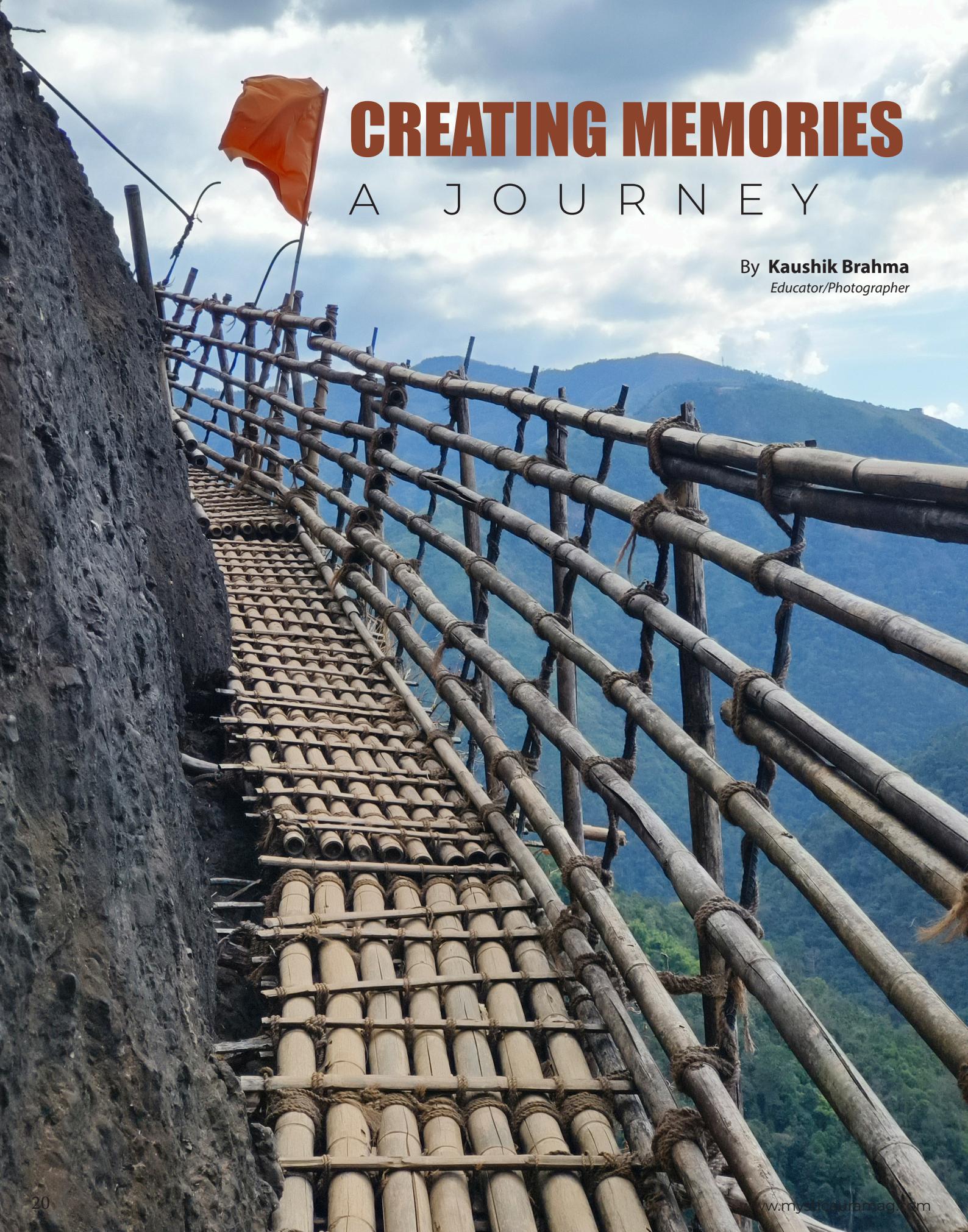
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# CREATING MEMORIES

## A JOURNEY

By **Kaushik Brahma**  
*Educator/Photographer*





***“Some friendships don’t fade with time; they only grow richer with memories.”***

Childhood school friends are truly special. They are the ones who grow with us, laugh with us, and remain part of our lives even when time and responsibilities pull us in different directions.

I — Kaushik, along with Sandip, Prasun,

Gokul, and Manoj — shared everything during our school days. From reading together and sharing notes to doing mischief and cycling across every road of Kokrajhar, we were inseparable. “Those carefree days may be gone, but the bond remains unchanged.” Thirty-one years have passed since then. Life has taken us on different paths. Manoj is now a college lecturer,

I am in teaching along with studio and fashion photography, Sandip runs a business of motor parts and accessories, Gokul is a medicine seller and supplier. Yet, despite our busy lives, our friendship stayed alive. In recent years, we decided to reconnect through travel — to relive old memories and create new ones together. Last year, we managed a short one-night trip to Amalarem and Shonongpaden in Meghalaya, though Manoj couldn’t join us then.

This year, we were determined to travel together.

#### The Plan Begins

As a photographer, I often travel across Meghalaya for shoots, so I suggested a few destinations. We finalized our plan from 20th to 22nd December 2025.

Manoj traveled from Siliguri and reached Kokrajhar a night earlier, staying with Sandip and Gokul. Early next morning, they boarded a train and reached Guwahati around 10 a.m., arriving at my house while I was still at school for the pre-Christmas celebration.

After finishing my duties, I rushed home by 11 a.m. We had a quick lunch and dropped my family at Kamakhya Railway Station, as they were heading to Kokrajhar for a family birthday celebration. Amidst this rush, I misplaced my car key — a moment of panic followed — only to find it safely tucked inside my laptop bag.

“Every journey has a small chaos at the beginning — it only makes the story better.” Finally, around noon, we started our journey.

#### Roads, Music, and Memories

We took the scenic route through Rani, a beautiful stretch leading into Meghalaya. Happiness filled the car — after a long time, we were together again. Old childhood stories flowed endlessly, accompanied by our favorite songs from school days.

The winding roads led us to Mairang, a small town on the way to Nongstoin. Surrounded by gentle hills and green meadows, Nongstoin felt peaceful. By nightfall, we were driving through dark green hills with no one around. The silence and mist made the surroundings feel like a scene straight out of a ghost movie.

#### A Cozy Night in Nongstoin

We finally reached our homestay and were greeted by a young, friendly manager. He guided us to a beautiful triangular wooden house, warmly decorated and spacious enough for all of us.



Sitting together on the floor, we cooked khichdi, potato fry, and fried omelette. The food tasted heavenly in the chilly weather — the temperature had dropped to around 5°C.

I played karaoke music on my Bluetooth speaker, and soon the house echoed with songs, laughter, and even a little dancing. “Cold nights feel warmer when shared with old friends.” Though I had planned for a campfire, the biting cold convinced us to stay indoors. Exhausted and happy, we slept early.

#### **Sunrise and Floating Clouds**

Manoj, our early riser, woke us up before dawn to witness the sunrise. From the balcony of our triangular house, we watched the sun slowly rise, painting the sky with soft colors.

Later, we visited Nongkhnum River Beach, famous for its riverine island connected by two hanging bridges. The calm blue water and open views were refreshing.

After returning to the homestay, we cooked breakfast, packed our bags, and bid goodbye to our gracious host.

#### **Nongjrong: A Sunrise Like No Other**

Our next destination was Nongjrong, renowned for its magical sunrise. We checked into a nearby homestay by evening and prepared dinner. A separate vegetable curry was made for Sandip, while the rest of us enjoyed chicken and rice.

The cold night wrapped us into deep sleep. At 4:00 a.m., Manoj woke us again. With mobile torchlights, we carefully trekked through rocky steps toward the viewpoint. The darkness, cold wind, and silence made us shiver.

Slowly, the horizon began to glow scarlet. “When the sky turns red and the world wakes up silently, you realize how small yet lucky you are.”

Below us, what first appeared to be rivers turned out to be floating clouds filling the valleys. As the sunlight grew stronger, the clouds looked like cotton candy rivers, glowing under the sunrise. It was breathtaking — something I had never experienced before in my life.

#### **The Bamboo Trail Adventure**

After breakfast, we headed for our final adventure — the bamboo trail trek, one of the most dangerous in the world. The journey itself took about three hours. Along the way, we stopped to cook noodles, hungry and tired.

The trek ticket cost ₹100 per person. The trail led us downhill to a stunning blue river, across hanging bridges, and then upward through bamboo pathways and ladders fixed to rocky cliffs.

As we climbed higher, fear set in — especially for me, as I have a fear of heights. The bamboo bridges clung to steep rock faces, and the height felt terrifying.

“Adventure tests not just your strength, but your courage.”

We reached the first resting point, and considering the time and our return schedule to Guwahati, we decided not to proceed further. The experience itself was intense and unforgettable.

#### **Farewell, But Not Goodbye**

We rushed back toward Guwahati and managed to reach Kamakhya Railway Station around 7 p.m. The train was delayed by an hour, giving us time to share a final dinner together.

As I dropped them at the station, we said our goodbyes — promising to meet again soon.

“School friends are not just memories; they are a part of who we are.”

This journey didn’t just take us through the hills of Meghalaya — it took us back to our roots, our laughter, and our unbreakable bond. Some friendships are truly timeless, and this trip reminded us that no matter how far life takes us, childhood friends remain forever close to the heart.



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# MAGH BIHU

## AND THE QUIET FADING OF TRADITIONS

By **Manikangkana Devi**

*Writer, Poet, Artist & Translator*



**M**agh Bihu is often called the festival of warmth, though it comes wrapped in the coldest days of winter. It was never meant to be loud or showy. Its strength lay in fire that gathered people together, in food that was shared without counting, and in traditions that were lived rather than announced. Today, Magh Bihu is still celebrated across Assam, yet many of its age-old practices are slowly fading—not vanished, but growing quieter with time.

There was a time when the approach of Magh Bihu could be felt days in advance. Villages buzzed with preparation. Bamboo was cut, straw collected, and dry leaves gathered from fields and courtyards. The

Meji was built patiently and collectively, guided by elders who knew the correct balance of material and meaning. Every hand that worked carried a sense of belonging. In contrast, many modern celebrations see the Meji built hurriedly or symbolically, and in some places, the task

**Today, many know  
Magh Bihu as a holiday,  
a celebration, or a social  
media moment...**

is left to a few rather than shared by all. The tradition remains, but the collective spirit that once defined it is slowly fading.

Uruka night was once the heart of Magh Bihu. Families cooked together, neighbors joined without invitation, and people slept near open fires under the winter sky. Stories flowed naturally—stories of old harvests, floods survived, and winters endured. Children learned history not from books, but from voices warmed by firelight. Today, Uruka night often ends early. Meals are prepared quickly, fires burn briefly, and conversations compete with mobile screens. The tradition is still observed, yet its depth is gradually thinning.

The food of Magh Bihu tells a similar



story of fading traditions. Til pitha, narikol laru, ghila pitha, and sunga pitha were once prepared at home through a long process that required time, skill, and cooperation. The kitchen became a space of cultural transmission, where elders passed knowledge silently through practice. Now, while these foods are still enjoyed, many are bought from markets, neatly packaged but detached from the experience of making them together. The taste survives; the process slowly fades.

The dawn of Magh Bihu carried a sense of reverence. Lighting the Meji at sunrise, offering pitha and rice, and applying ash on the forehead were acts filled with humility and gratitude. They reminded people of their dependence on nature and the cycle of life. In many places today, these rituals are still performed, but often hurriedly. Photographs are taken quickly, rituals completed formally, and the

deeper reflection that once accompanied them is reduced.

Magh Bihu was also a festival of equality. The warmth of the fire erased differences of wealth and status. Everyone gathered at the same Meji, shared similar food, and participated in simple games rooted in agrarian life. Some of these traditional games and practices have faded due to changing lifestyles, regulations, and urban influence. What remains is a simpler, quieter version of a once vibrant communal experience.

It is important to note that these traditions are not entirely lost. In many villages across Assam, Magh Bihu is still celebrated in its true spirit. There, the Meji is built with care, Uruka night stretches late into the cold hours, and food is still prepared collectively at home. Elders continue to guide, children continue to observe and participate, and the fire still

gathers the community together. These villages stand as living proof that tradition survives where community bonds remain strong.

The real concern, however, lies in the fading transmission of meaning. Earlier, children learned Magh Bihu by living it—by helping gather straw, listening to elders, and understanding why each ritual mattered. Today, many know Magh Bihu as a holiday, a celebration, or a social media moment. The practice remains visible, but the understanding behind it grows faint.

The traditions of Magh Bihu are not disappearing suddenly. It is slowly fading in places where time, convenience, and modern habits overpower shared living. Yet fading does not mean finished. To preserve Magh Bihu is not to reject change, but to protect its essence community over convenience, warmth over display, memory over neglect. As long as fires continue to burn in village courtyards and people choose to gather rather than isolate, Magh Bihu will endure, quietly warming both winter nights and cultural memory.

TRENDING NOW MEDIA  
PRESENTS

# Illyish

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# ILISH

Dr. Dipsikha Bhagawati

Film Critic | Published Author | Translator | Member, FCCI



*"How did the fish taste? Good?  
No, it didn't, the fish was a bit soft; actually, small Ilish is not that tasty..."*

Director Himjyoti Talukdar's Assamese language short film Ilish, adapted from a short story by Riju Hazarika, locates its narrative power in an incident so minor that it risks being overlooked altogether. Yet it is precisely through this ordinariness that the film articulates a quietly unsettling critique of middle-class domestic life, hospitality, and gendered sacrifice within Assamese society. What unfolds is not an event-driven drama but an affective study of calculative happiness—a fragile, carefully budgeted joy that can be undone by a single, unthinking presence.

Fish, a central element of the Assamese culinary and cultural imagination, operates here as a loaded metaphor. The hilsa is not merely food; it is aspiration, deferred pleasure, and emotional investment folded into household accounting. For a family sustained by a single income, the decision to buy Ilish becomes an ethical and economic negotiation. The film sharply contrasts this careful economy with the reckless entitlement of the uninvited guest, whose consumption functions less as individual rudeness and more as a structural violence inflicted upon middle-class restraint.

Talukdar's use of diegetic sound, the fish seller's bicycle bell, street calls, domestic conversations—anchors the

film firmly within lived reality. These familiar sounds do not simply establish atmosphere; they construct a sonic realism that renders the disruption more jarring. The opening domestic exchanges between husband (Dipjyoti Kakoti) and wife (Aparna Dutta Choudhury), framed through close and medium close shots, foreground a household perpetually engaged in calculation: wedding gifts, expenses, and small compromises. This continuous arithmetic of survival becomes the emotional grammar of the film.

The narrative tension reaches its quiet climax not in confrontation but in absence, specifically, the absence of fish on the homemaker's plate. After the guest's excessive consumption, what remains for her is only gravy and plain rice. This moment is devastating precisely because the film refuses melodrama. Her silence, acceptance, and continued performance of hospitality expose the deeply normalized erasure of female desire within the middle-class home. The husband's final remark—"small Ilish doesn't taste that good anyway" is a transparent lie, and the audience recognizes it as a gendered act of consolation rather than truth. The film thus implicates not only the guest's insensitivity but also the family's internalized ethics of sacrifice.

Ilish is particularly effective in

resisting the temptation to moralize its outsider. Unlike films that frame the guest as a caricature or comic villain, Talukdar presents him with unsettling neutrality. This refusal to psychologize the intruder redirects critical attention toward cultural codes that sanctify hospitality at the cost of self-effacement. In this sense, the film quietly interrogates the romanticization of Indian hospitality, revealing its asymmetrical burden—one disproportionately borne by women.

The mise-en-scène is meticulously constructed through recognizable middle-class objects: a net-covered television, a modest wooden sofa, insurance receipts, an old radio, a VCD player, a small table fan. These elements do not function as nostalgic décor but as material signifiers of a life lived within limits. The domestic space feels both intimate and claustrophobic, reinforcing the emotional compression that defines the film.

Visually, the persistent use of close frames generates a subtle anxiety, as if the characters are always slightly trapped within their own politeness. The soundscape, dominated by everyday noises and unembellished dialogue, occasionally overwhelms rather than comforts, mirroring the psychological strain of maintaining social decorum.

Thematically, Ilish recalls Ashwini Dhir's film, 'Atithi Tum Kab Jaoge?' (2010), but where the latter employs satire and exaggeration, Talukdar opts for restraint and understatement. The result is a film that is far more disturbing in its realism. Hilsa does not critique urban alienation or modern chaos; instead, it turns inward, exposing the quiet violence embedded in "normal" domestic arrangements.

Ultimately, Ilish is a deceptively minimalist film that derives its strength from what it withholds—conflict, resolution, and overt judgment. Through its simple aesthetic and emotionally precise storytelling, it offers a poignant reflection on middle-class life, gendered labour, and the ethics of hospitality. Talukdar's film reminds us that sometimes the most profound losses are not dramatic ruptures but small, everyday denials, served silently, on a plate without fish.



AN ADITYA DHAR FILM

# DHURANDHAR



In contemporary Hindi cinema, the spy thriller has increasingly become a conduit for exploring national anxiety, political memory and geopolitics. *Dhurandhar* (2025), directed by Aditya Dhar, positions itself firmly within this tradition. More than a conventional action film, it is a work that consciously aligns genre spectacle with a clearly articulated worldview.

The film's banning in six Gulf countries — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE — inevitably frames its reception. While censorship often claims moral or diplomatic justification, in this case it highlights how geopolitical

narratives are selectively permitted or suppressed. The silence surrounding this external ban within liberal discourse in India is equally revealing, suggesting that freedom of expression is frequently defended situationally rather than as a universal principle.

At a cultural level, the ban also affects the Indian diaspora in the Gulf, for whom Hindi cinema serves as a vital link to language, memory and identity. Denial of access thus becomes not merely regulatory but exclusionary.

Narratively, "Dhurandhar" functions as a classical espionage thriller. Actor Ranveer Singh plays Hamza Ali Mazari,

also known as Jaskirat Singh Rangi, a RAW operative entrusted with the covert "Mission Dhurandhar." His task is to infiltrate Pakistani gangster networks that double as logistical arms of terrorism, relay critical intelligence and neutralize high-value threats. The film resists romanticizing espionage, portraying it instead as psychologically corrosive, morally ambiguous and perpetually dangerous.

Gory violence, that is often criticized by detractors, is integral to this film's representational logic. Terrorism, organized crime and covert warfare are systems sustained by brutality. "Dhurandhar" neither aestheticizes nor apologizes for this violence; it presents it as structural reality. To sanitize such a world would be to misrepresent it.

Technically, the film demonstrates notable craft. Composer Shashwat Sachdev's music functions as emotional modulation rather than narrative intrusion. The soundtrack balances contemporary appeal with restraint, maintaining a life beyond the film — an increasingly rare achievement in genre cinema.

Cinematographer Vikash Nowlakha's visual strategy reinforces the film's thematic concerns. Controlled camera movement, low-key lighting and a careful balance between close-ups and long shots establish paranoia, spatial threat and moral ambiguity. The cinematography serves narrative immersion rather than spectacle for its own sake.



## DHURANDHAR

Production design is among *Dhurandhar*'s most impressive achievements. The recreation of Karachi's Lyari neighborhood — built on a six-acre set in Bangkok using 500 workers over 20 days — is executed with striking authenticity. The environment feels oppressive and lived-in, transforming space into narrative force. Lyari becomes not just a backdrop but a character, embodying lawlessness and entrapment.

Structurally, the film is divided into eight chapters, from 'The Price of Peace' to 'Et tu Brutus'. These chapters function as thematic markers rather than discrete episodes, lending narrative discipline and rhythm without fragmenting momentum.

Performances are uneven but often effective. Actor Ranveer Singh delivers a physically intense and psychologically grounded portrayal, convincingly conveying the toll of prolonged undercover existence.

Sanjay Dutt's performance, designed for immediate audience reaction, leans toward excess, while Akshaye Khanna relies heavily on mannerism rather than depth.

R. Madhavan emerges as the film's moral and intellectual anchor. As diplomat Ajay Sanyal, his understated performance introduces restraint, credibility and emotional equilibrium. His dialogue delivery allows patriotism to emerge organically rather than rhetorically. Rakesh Bedi, as corrupt Pakistani politician Jameel Jamali, further reinforces the film's reliance on solid character acting.

The film's weaknesses lie in tonal inconsistency. A romantic subplot between the Indian spy and a Pakistani politician's daughter feels forced and narratively redundant. A late-stage dance number disrupts tonal coherence, revealing the tension between commercial convention and narrative integrity.

Critics who have dismissed *"Dhurandhar"* as a propaganda film often conflate ideological clarity with manipulation. The film's politics are explicit rather than covert. Audience reception suggests that viewers primarily engage with it as a tightly constructed spy thriller rather than ideological instruction, highlighting a gap between critical accusation and popular experience.

With *"Dhurandhar"*, director Aditya Dhar further consolidates a recognizable authorial voice marked by narrative control, technical assurance and thematic consistency. His use of genre cinema as a framework for ideological exploration places him within a lineage of filmmakers who treat popular cinema as culturally consequential.

By referencing events such as the 2001 Parliament attack and the 26/11 Mumbai attacks, the film also participates in the cinematic transmission of historical memory, particularly for younger audiences.

Ultimately, *"Dhurandhar"* is an unapologetic work of genre cinema. Its success in India and traditional overseas markets such as the US, UK, Canada and Australia demonstrates that conviction and commercial viability are not mutually exclusive. Within contemporary Hindi cinema, it stands as a confident example of how popular form can intersect with political consciousness without disavowing entertainment. Those who have appreciated *"Dhurandhar"* eagerly await its second part that would release in March, 2026.

**By : Lalit Rao**

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# THOUGHTS HAUNTED

If I saved you this beautiful Kanchan  
amongst all the odds.

Would you let me feel the warmth of my old hometown?

It has been lost somewhere

Bare and cold

Decorated with machines, mannequins and tall concretes.

Life and warmth missing somewhere.

Cremated in the graveyard .

I came in search of the warmth breaking through the thick Fog.

Brushing away the cold air.

Just to breathe in the fragrance of my childhood .

A cold air pierced my heart,

Feelings which words fail,

Tears dried in my eyes.

I returned with just a sigh

Thick Fog surrounding me..

**MONALI BHUYAN**

# Years

Where do years get lost  
Leaving only memories' silver drops  
The scent of the seasons  
The fallen buds and blossoms  
All the songs of the Sun  
All the glitter of the Stars  
Quietly disappears  
The moments of the day in sun and rain  
Wrapped in love or frittered in vain  
Dreams of the heart or promises made  
Smiles and tears withhold or exchanged  
Treasured fondly in nostalgia's cherished chest  
Seasons march ahead through time's swift trail  
Carrying the seeds of life and death  
A new year begins the old one leaves  
Some dreams sleep some once more sings.

*By Vijaylaxmi Sarmah*

# AURA

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