

# FEMINA

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## EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE

THE STORIES OF LIGHTWORKERS ACROSS INDIA  
HELPING FIGHT COVID-19'S SECOND WAVE



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# EDITOR'S LETTER



Every single person we know has been affected by COVID-19's sweeping second wave. This includes our team, as well, with many of our colleagues, and their families, worryingly, contracting the virus. We have all suffered immense loss. We share your grief, your frustration, your fears and doubts. Our stories are your stories, and vice versa. But, as we gathered ourselves and sat (virtually) together on this issue, we naturally came upon a common goal. As a collective, we chose to channel all our varied, conflicting emotions to create something that could, hopefully, cut through this miasma. Because, what we also share with you, our audience, is the desire to help.

The most extraordinary stories have emerged from different parts of the country. Stories of stunning compassion and heroism. We've watched citizens band together, providing assistance and showing tremendous empathy in times of need. There are countless tales to tell, and we spoke to a few of these remarkable people as part of our cover story, to pay homage to the greater good. We've also got a series of essays, written by beloved members of our community, dedicated to our mothers. For all of us who love, have lost, or have matriarchal figures to look up to, this is a glimpse at nostalgic joy to remind all of happier times.

We asked ourselves some poignant questions – nothing was too small – and answered them in our pages. We have a complete guide to COVID care written by a recovered member of our crew; and we address the issue of caring for your pets at this time, too. We've talked about the trauma our kids and mental health practitioners are facing, and how to deal with those tough situations. We've discussed how to deal with the virus when pregnant, or how to navigate the world if expecting. The issue also brings a conversation on meditation by a master, highlighting why it's an essential practice for our health and well-being. We also heard various conversations of what you are going through at home (stress does a number on the mind, skin, hair and body), especially living with people who have existing comorbidities. Nutrition is a key element too. Feeding yourself and your families is such a vital act of love. Since none of us can travel, we wanted to bring the world to your plates with delicious, wholesome recipes to shake things up with your larder.

Each of these aspects has been answered by a host of experts and specialists, to make sure you get all the information you might need to stay healthy and keep fighting on. To be honest, we needed this as much as you do. Stay in as much as possible, double-mask up, and be well.

THE MOST  
EXTRAORDINARY  
STORIES HAVE  
EMERGED FROM  
DIFFERENT  
PARTS OF THE  
COUNTRY.  
STORIES OF  
STUNNING  
COMPASSION  
AND HEROISM

*A.M*

**AMBIKA MUTTOO**

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# FEMINA

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ARJUN GOWDA

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## THE LIGHTWORKERS

From frontline workers to even neighbours and friends, the individuals on these pages have fought back, and provided assistance wherever they can during the COVID-19 crisis. Their actions are truly remarkable and nothing short of heroic



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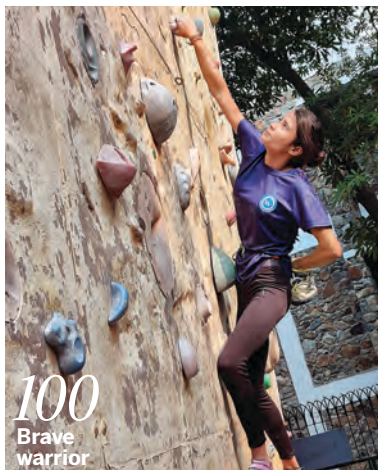
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Indulge Yourself

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FOR A HEADACHE  
BEFORE YOU  
POP A PILL

Health Check



What are you doing to keep yourself occupied this lockdown? #tweettofemina



**Aishwarya @alwaysaiswarya**

Binging on murder mysteries, reading Keigo Higashino, and eating lots of dosas!



**Priyanka Acharya @ThePriDoll**

Netflix, K-pop, BULDAK RAMYEON!!

Chopsticks and spicy food...  
Cos we got nowhere to go!!  
#tweettofemina



**DibaGhazal @DibzGhazal**

Trying to keep alive n survive this crisis...

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# WE HEAR YOU!

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Ever since I can remember, I have been using wallets and handbags from Baggit. It was a pleasant surprise to see the founder, Nina Lekhi, featured in the April 2021 issue of *Femina*. She is such a dynamic lady, and there is so much we can learn from her journey. I did not know she had authored a book; I ordered it immediately after I read the interview. Thank you, *Femina*, for always bringing inspiring interviews to readers like us. Her success shows that one should not make academic failure a hurdle in one's progress, and should always learn to march ahead, no matter what.

**Mona Parekh, Vadodara**

*Femina*, for a very long time, has been a friend I can turn to when I'm looking for inspiration. This issue, I loved reading about the cover girl – Tara Sutaria. I enjoyed her take on relationships, and her equation with her sister reminded me of my own with my sister. It's good to know that the actors we look up to are, in the end, just like you and me in many ways!

**Keerti Bopanna, Mysuru**

Being a fashion enthusiast, I'm always on the lookout for the newest trends and looks. The athleisure shoot and the watches page gave me some real-time inspiration. I think I know what to buy next!

**Saloni Dubey, Mumbai**

While the world has always struggled for gender equality among leaders and policymakers, we are slowly seeing positive changes in many ways. In this light, it was quite refreshing to read a thoroughly-researched and very



well-presented article on the women of Indian origin who are part of US President Joe Biden's cabinet. When you read it all together, you realise that Indian women are treading such diverse and important grounds globally. Makes me proud to be one! While all the other pages provided for

a good read, as always, I am a

huge fan of your pages that talk about food. They make me want to dive right into the recipes and recreate them in my kitchen. Kudos to Team Femina for bringing out an interesting issue each and every time.

**Shrina Thakkar, Pune**

In many ways, the lockdowns over the last year have taught us to value all our life experiences, even the ones that might not have lasted as long as we had thought they would. Reading *The Ex Factor* in the relationships section made me realise that my ex-husband and I have much to be grateful for, most of all, our children. The feature strengthened my resolve to further work at my relationship with my ex, so that my kids are not impacted by any more tension between us. Thank you, *Femina*, for taking on difficult issues head on.

**Manika S, Chennai**

I loved reading the fun spin on relationship takeaways from shows like *Gilmore Girls* and *Firefly Lane*. I have been a huge fan of these series, and completely related to the story. Besides, I've always been interested in what's coming up in the world of beauty, and *Femina* fulfills that curiosity every month.

**Priyanka Marathe, Pune**



# CLASSY. CONTEMPORARY. CHIC.

If you're looking for the perfect lingerie for any occasion, your search ends at Pure Chemistry!

A contemporary take on traditional chic lingerie style, Pure Chemistry is a luxury lingerie brand where class and elegant styling is contradicted by the use of bold shades and hues, as also touch of playfulness. The amalgamation of colour, fabrics and textures allows the Pure Chemistry woman to express her personality and femininity in utmost style and confidence. Coquettish sheer insets, plays of leather ties, strategically placed cross effects that show off the female silhouette... Its styles are available in a sumptuous colour palette of vibrant

fandango, wild berry, intoxicating lime, playful papaya and striking black.

Made in UK and using the finest silks to lace with gold plated components, Pure Chemistry Lingerie has been recognised and featured across many international publications. It showcases exclusively at various trade shows across the UK and in Paris. Pure Chemistry's luxurious collection is no doubt the ultimate portrayal of a dual personality - the innocent damsel and the proactive rebel. Its lingerie encapsulates the female silhouette succinctly, whilst embracing strength, sensuality and ultimate control.

The brand received an enthusiastic response from consumers, retailers and press previously during the brand's Central London VIP Pop-up. Designers Dimple Rani and Lucy Choi had a steady stream of consumers popping into the



shop to enquire about their fabulous shoe and lingerie designs. With a resounding "give-us-more" vibe from its patrons, Pure Chemistry has distinct product ranges for each and every woman to wear for different occasions.

## TAKE YOUR PICK...

### Indian Bridal Range

Meeting a need for bridal lingerie that isn't just white or ivory, the Pure Rani collection is stunning whether your bride or not! The collection comes in stunning French leavers lace and Italian tulle in descendant colours such as golds, rich reds, nudes, buttercream and fuchsia, Swarovski gems, pendants and 24ct gold-plated components. Collections have Kimono, garter, underwired bra in two styles, suspender belt, briefs and thongs. This collection will appeal to a conventional bride as well as the Asian bride.

### Pure Chemistry- Mainline

Bright and Bold colours from lime green to papaya in Pure Silk, Chantilly lace, sheer mesh, and 24ct gold-plated rings and sliders. This collection includes a wider range of sizes. Styles are now available in 30" backs and DD cups.

### Love Laboratory- Gifting and Diffusion Line

Love Laboratory offers a range of colourful bralettes, briefs and thongs packaged in a test tube, ideal for generating add-on sale. This collection comes in a range of colours including powder pink and bold red, with contrasting black Chantilly lace trim, a black Swarovski pendant and 24ct gold-plated components.

### Roshni - Asian bridal collection

#### Sunkiss you wedding adventure!

This latest collection offers bespoke designs that combine a fusion of cultural classics with a modern twist of luxury trims and colour. The silk georgette sari adorned with ruffle hems and influential gold tones is at the heart of the collection and the other offerings in the collection include kimonos, night slips, facemasks, bralettes, suspenders, thongs and more.

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DR. GLOSSY SABHARWAL



SARANSH GOILA

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# THE LIGHTWORKERS

Since 2020, we have seen citizens across India do the most extraordinary things to help their communities and the country as a whole. During COVID-19's crushing second wave, it is a combination of pure compassion, formidable grit, and the will to serve that has mobilised people to fight back, and provide assistance wherever they can. The individuals on these pages are remarkable and their actions during this time are nothing short of heroic. But they all share one common thought: we're in this together. And they are not alone. From the frontline with our nurses, doctors and volunteers, to our mental health professionals, chefs, NGO's, our neighbours, friends and families — the stories in the following section are representative of your stories



KHAALID AHAMED

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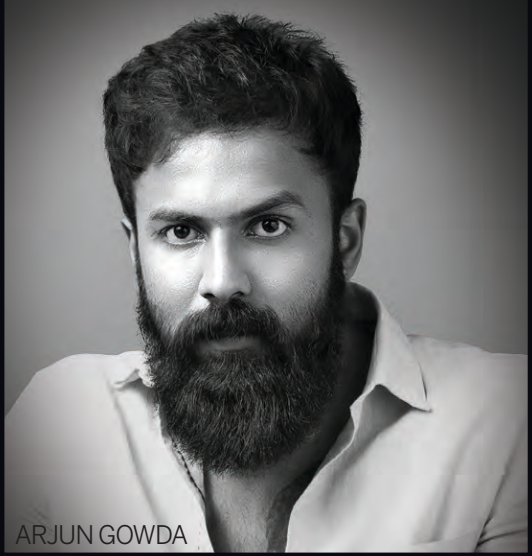
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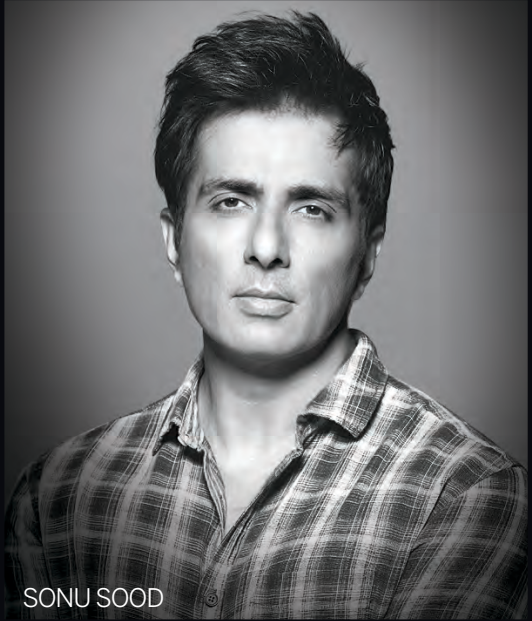
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FAYE D'SOUZA

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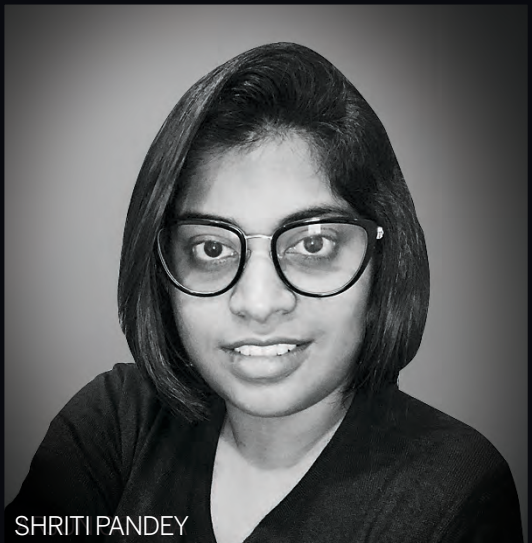
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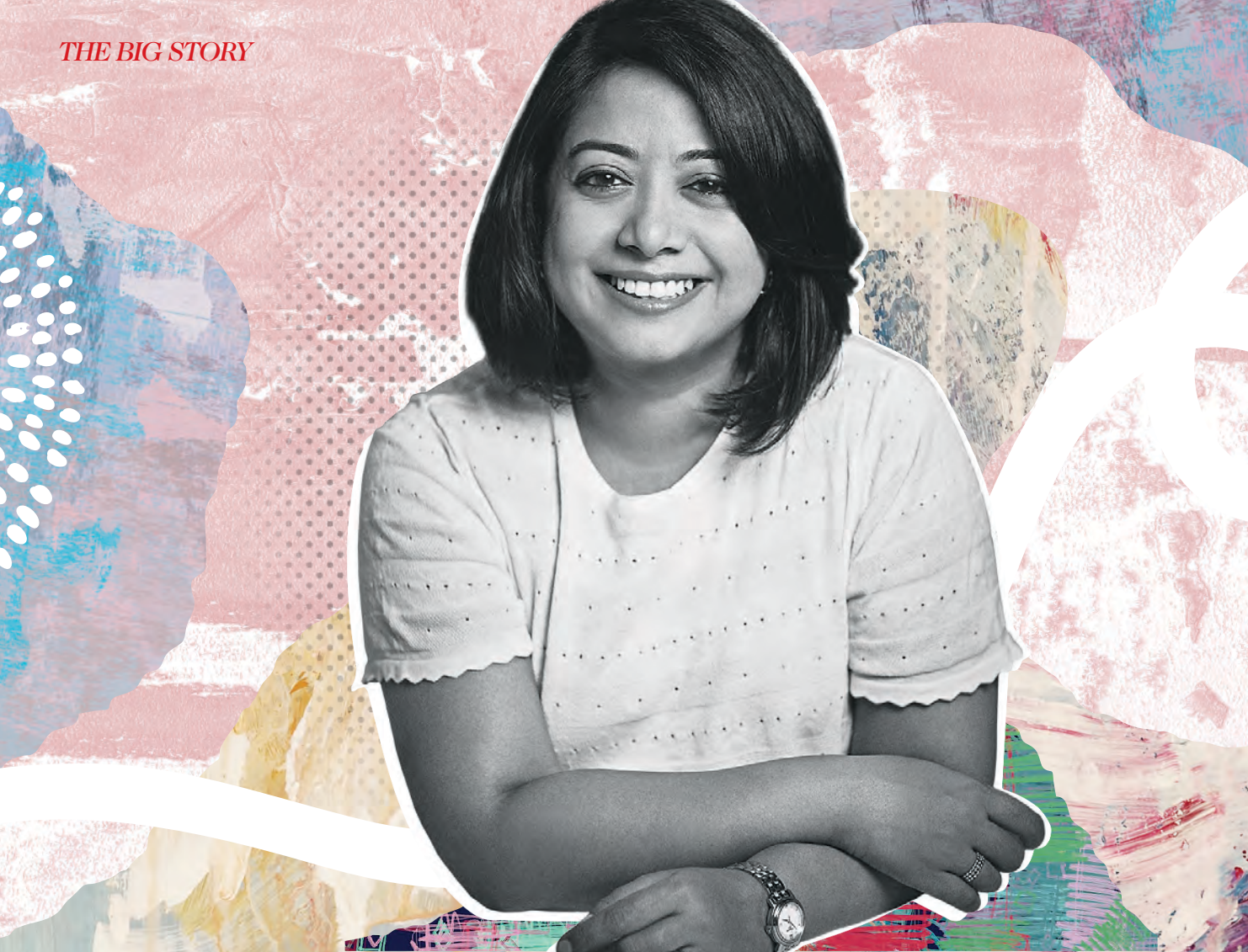
DR. ANAMIKA GIRI

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SHRUTI PANDEY

▲



# FAYE D'SOUZA

## JOURNALIST

The dynamic Faye D'Souza, with her team, ensures that citizens are well informed with authentic, verified news through her social media posts and daily bulletins

“I don't know where you are getting your news about the current COVID crisis, but I strongly recommend checking out all the videos by Faye D'Souza.”

“She's given me perspectives to ponder.”

“You're setting the bars for today's journalists. More power to you.”

“Faye! We are just blessed to have you! Thank you for doing what you do!”

While testimonials like these flow in from her viewers constantly, journalist Faye D'Souza is disturbed about one thing – no matter how much you can do, you constantly feel that is it not enough. “At this point, a lot of people are feeling like that,” she says, “and, no



D'Souza consumes an inordinate amount of information on a daily basis to finalise her bulletin. "It is one of the most difficult aspects of the job, from the sanity point of view. I personally read and process extremely distressing information in order to decide that you, the reader, do not need to know something this disturbing. I spend most of the day doing that so I can protect you from the pain!" she says. She often reaches a point where that very painful nature of the news gets to her, but always soldiers on.

Apart from the distress of the news, the unavailability of verified information also poses a huge challenge to D'Souza and her team. Starting with the fact that information is difficult to come by, and that it has to be personally verified, she and her team are always on their toes to put out the best quality they can. She has recently collaborated with actor Alia Bhatt for that very purpose. "We are putting out the news every day in a fashion that is not partisan or biased in any way. There is no opinion or shouting involved. We do this as a free service right now, because being informed at this point of time is crucial as there is so much misinformation going around," she informs.

Although her YouTube videos and news bulletins have thousands of likes from her viewers, as a journalist, D'Souza is troubled by the fact that government representatives are not available to answer her

questions. "So far in the pandemic, even just for information, we've mostly had doctors come in and answer queries and clear doubts with regards to the nature of the virus, what one can do, how one can care for loved ones, how to get vaccinated, and things like that. Getting official people from the government to answer questions at this point, when accountability is so tough to come by, has been a challenge. This is especially applicable in terms of the decisions

**"IT (TROLLING) IS VILE AND VERY OFTEN OF A SEXUAL NATURE, AND IT AFFECTS YOUR MENTAL HEALTH. ON SOME DAYS, IT GETS ME DOWN"**



being made and whether the said decisions have the appropriate outcome," she states, sadly.

Another major problem that D'Souza also faces, like all women who are on the internet, is abuse in the form of trolling. She can attest to the fact that it is definitely more prominent for journalists. "It is vile and very often of a sexual nature, and it affects your mental

health. There is definitely a gender difference in how people react to male journalists as opposed to female journalists, which is particularly difficult to digest. There are days when it really gets me down," she admits, while speaking of what has unfortunately become part of the territory.

To try and maintain some sanity amid all of this, D'Souza, apart from regularly talking to her therapist (and she believes each one of us should have someone on whom we rely on constantly to talk), takes some time off when it gets too overwhelming. "I obviously have not done a very good job with that in recent times, but I just give myself an hour, say, on a Sunday, or when I need it. For that hour, I won't look at my phone or read the news," she says. It might not be ideal, but it works for her. An hour off and on is all she has, as in a personal capacity too, she is busy connecting those with needs to those who might have leads for resources at that time in that particular city. The positive outcome of it all is what keeps her going.

In the future, she hopes to expand her team of five to put out a larger quantum of verified content in multiple languages for a larger reach across the country, but, for now, she is focussed on keeping us informed. "Since vaccination is a must, please ensure you register all your help who do not have access to the net!" she reminds us, as we sign off.

**By Shraddha Kamdar >**

matter what, you have to power through and do your bit."

D'Souza does not need any introduction to the country and its citizens; she is part of multiple lists stating where one can get reliable and unadulterated news from. And she is on your computer, phone – any screen you own, really – every evening, offering you news bulletins in a respectable and easy-to-understand manner. No shouting is involved, and the viewers' intelligence is not taken for granted.

With the grim situation the country is faced with,

# SONU SOOD

## ACTOR AND PHILANTHROPIST

Sonu Sood's name is synonymous with a helping hand. A crucial force for good during this crisis, the actor firmly believes he's just doing his duty

**E**ven for someone who has provided invaluable help with the COVID crisis from the very beginning, it is hard not to feel that things could've been better, or that more lives could've been saved. But, actor and philanthropist Sonu Sood simply can't afford to give in to feelings of self-doubt. "Every day is a challenge. Every day comes with its own set of histories, tragedies, and miracles," he says. "But I can't let these feelings assail me. If they get to me, I simply won't be able to work."

For the effective implementation of assistance, Sood credits his extensive network of doctors, drivers, hospital cleaning staff, and almost

any stakeholder you can possibly name. For him, they are all equally responsible for getting that oxygen cylinder or that one vial of Remdesivir to a patient in need. "If I call a hospital head to arrange a bed, it is not enough. Because the ground realities might be different. So, I also need to personally call everyone from the ambulance driver to the person arranging the stretcher. It is only realistic to do so," explains Sood. Now, imagine the volume at which Sood has those conversations on a daily basis. It's only natural to have the utmost respect for the service he does (and has been doing over the years.)

Just 10 minutes into this conversation, Sood gets an emergency call; something





he had cautioned us about as his phone never stops ringing.” Yes, Govind, everything okay?” He seems to be speaking to one of his staff members on the ground. “Yes, give him the phone. Hello, Nitinji? Sonu Sood speaking. You had promised at least six vials of Remdesivir. Please arrange them,” he says with a smile on his face. Nitinji seems to find it hard to believe that it really is the actor on the other end of the line, so the actor obliges with, “Yes, it’s me. Oh, love you too, bhai. You can take my number from Govind, for sure.” That is it. Just two minutes of effective coordination with a smile, professionalism, and a positive demeanour, and Remdesivir has been arranged. Lives have been saved.

“They all want my phone number. It’s sometimes

their condition for dispatching medicines. I happily oblige. My phone number is available in the public domain. I consciously signed up for this,” he says, laughing.

Initially when people accused him of fine-tuning his political entry under the garb of helping people, Sood did not let the talk affect him. In fact, some of those critics have now started working with him. “There are eight of them. I haven’t even met them yet. But they probably saw the work on the ground and are now on board. It’s all good,” he smiles. Sood does not hold any grudges.

He was “deeply humbled” when he saw his picture on an Air India aircraft recently. But he wishes his parents were there to see him this way, with gratitude and respect pouring in, pan-India, across generations. “They would have been the happiest ever to see my picture on the aircraft. But, somewhere sitting in the heavens, they are making all this happen,” he says.

Discussing the other faces on this particular cover, he also says, “It is truly special to be a part of this cover where I am on the same page as other people who didn’t think about themselves, only others.” Sood truly lives by these words as his timely, unselfish actions have proven to be a godsent for thousands.

**“PEOPLE WANT MY PHONE NUMBER. IT’S SOMETIMES THEIR CONDITION FOR DISPATCHING MEDICINES. I HAPPILY OBLIGE. I CONSCIOUSLY SIGNED UP FOR THIS”**



**By Arman Khan >**

# ASHA

## SOCIAL HEALTH ACTIVISTS

The women-led workforce of ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) is fighting hard to ensure the safety and health of people in Kerala

**O**f the one million ASHA workers in the country, Kerala has 27,000, trained in various avenues

of healthcare. The ASHA initiative, which falls under the National Health Mission, was launched in India in 2006. “Tasks assigned to the workers include creating awareness about nutrition, basic sanitation and hygienic practices, pre- and post-natal care, immunisation and contraception,” says Bindu MA, General Secretary of Kerala Asha Health Workers Association. “We also help facilitate access to health services available at villages or primary health centres, and accompany pregnant women and children if needed. We provide care for ailments, administer first aid and palliative care,





## “THE INITIAL DAYS WERE A BIT OF A STRUGGLE, BUT PEOPLE SEE US ON-GROUND DOING EVERY POSSIBLE HEALTHCARE SERVICE AND THEIR OUTLOOK TOWARDS US HAS CHANGED FOR GOOD”

and document births and deaths in the village, apart from carrying out other duties,” she adds, saying that now, ASHA is being asked to intervene even with issues that are to be addressed by hospitals.

The pandemic’s issues are not alien to these grassroots level workers as they went through a similar emergency in 2018, when they braved the Nipah virus. With COVID, however, ASHA workers mastered the art of contact tracing, which helped Kerala to track patients and their probable contacts who needed to be in home isolation. The state witnessed the country’s first COVID patient who travelled to India from Wuhan, China, last year. They have, since, worked tirelessly, monitoring the patients, handling their medications, and going door-to-door to check in on the vulnerable. “We have round-the-clock duty irrespective of the pandemic, as four ASHA workers are given

a ward with 1,500 houses to monitor,” says Vinimol Hariprasad, an ASHA worker from Trivandrum. These ASHA workers have set duties for each day – nutrition classes, checking blood pressure of those who are 50 years of age and above at Primary Health Centres, and home visits to spread awareness on communicable diseases. The workers inspect the surroundings, and set vaccination days for children below the age of five. Ever since the start of the pandemic, ASHA workers have been working overtime, including Sundays. Some of these workers are working without pay or risk allowance. She adds that COVID duty is over and above their regular workload and can’t be skipped.

Even though ASHA workers come in contact with people who are quarantined at home, they are yet to be provided with masks, equipment, gloves and hand sanitisers. “We provide medicines

and food to patients who are in home isolation. We monitor their condition and keep updating the hospitals and serve as a connection between them and the health officials. We also facilitate the RT-PCR test for them,” says Vinimol, adding that many workers tested positive for COVID due to unavailability of protective gear. “Our work is tiring and drains us. But that does not stop us from going out into the field every day,” she says. “The initial days were a bit of a struggle, but people see us on-ground doing every possible healthcare service and their outlook towards us has changed for good,” she adds. After working with ASHA for over two years, and, quite literally, giving hope to people, Vinimol requests that they be paid better and provided with safety equipment. “The government should understand the hard work we do,” she concludes, simply.

**By Kayalvizhi Arivalan >**

# ARJUN GOWDA

## ACTOR

Kannada actor Arjun Gowda has taken on a new role – driving COVID-19 patients to the hospital, and ferrying the bodies of patients who lost their lives to the deadly disease, and helping with their last rites

**D**ue to the lockdown, film shoots and anything related to the industry came to a standstill. That's when 27-year-old, from the Sandalwood film industry, Arjun Gowda, decided to involve himself in voluntary social work. "Every day, a lady supplied milk to our house. I missed seeing her for a few days, and heard the shocking news of her demise from her grandson. He requested me to fund the ambulance ride to take her body to the crematorium," recalls Gowda. He was shocked to hear that it cost ₹12,000-₹15,000 for the ambulance ride alone. "That's when I realised that most of them were being fleeced, with people taking

undue advantage of their helplessness in the current situation. I approached a few NGOs and volunteered to drive an ambulance for COVID patients, free of cost. That's how it started," says Gowda. He started driving ambulances for a few NGOs and later bought one, in which he supplies oxygen, carries medical equipment, drives, patients to hospitals, and helps them get beds. Out of both necessity and compassion, he also performs the last rites of the deceased.

Many have taken to social media to thank the actor for his courageous acts of kindness. While thanking his followers, he also talked about the training that he had undergone before starting this healthcare

service. "I have taken all necessary precautions and also necessary training. Am overwhelmed by your wishes, this means a lot to me. It's my commitment and my honour to serve and work for the people of KARNATAKA," he wrote on his Instagram account. For Gowda, Bengaluru is currently a very desolate place. "Every day I'm driving patients on an emergency to the hospital, shifting bodies to the crematorium; I've paid last rites to people of all religions and all age groups. My phone has not stopped ringing, and every single day the pictures I see break my heart," says Gowda, who adds that, while people use to erect commercial buildings on vacant plots, it has changed

**"I REALISED THAT MOST OF THEM WERE BEING FLEECEED, WITH PEOPLE TAKING UNDUE ADVANTAGE OF THEIR HELPLESSNESS IN THE CURRENT SITUATION"**





to building crematoriums.

Gowda is living away from his family ever since he started driving ambulances. “Initially, my parents were not okay with what I was doing. I moved out and stayed at my friend’s place. I visited them to collect home-cooked food whenever I had time,” says Gowda, who was hailed as a hero in the media, which served to convince his worried parents of the good he was doing, even at great personal risk. “My relatives and friends started calling my parents and conveyed their wishes for me. My mom spoke to me, checked on my safety and insisted that I take all precautions and do not stress over anything.”

He wants to share an important message for his fans, requesting them not to compare film stars as each one is doing his/her bit during these difficult times.

“People trolled Bollywood and other industry stars for enjoying vacations abroad and not being on-ground. But that is not the true picture,” he says. Gowda adds that stars can’t step out on the road to serve the people. It might lead to unnecessary crowding and breaking of social distancing norms. “Imagine if Sallu *bhai* comes out on the streets, do you think people can keep calm? A star is a star for a reason and will continue servicing the needy behind the scenes,” he clarifies. The actor assures *Femina* that, so far, things are going smoothly. He requests citizens to stay indoors, practise all safety precautions, “Stay home. I don’t want to cremate more.”

**By Kayalvizhi Arivalan >**

# SARANSH GOILA

## CHEF

The popular chef has tried to ensure that no patient suffers from a lack of access to nutritious food, through the timely creation of Covid Meals For India

**A**s hospitality professionals, we are always taught that the guest is God; now, we need to serve them,” says Chef Saransh Goila. “It is only natural.” Goila’s tech-based initiative – Covid Meals For India – connects food volunteers with patients unable to cook for themselves. It has been nothing short of a life-saver.

Goila, whose Goila Butter Chicken is legendary in Indian metros, acknowledges that his relationship with food is now need-based, and it was this paradigm shift in his approach to the culinary arts that helped get this platform going. “Serving food is our duty; it is not a favour of any kind,” he explains.

“You could be the best chef in the world, but, once you start seeing hunger around you and see people struggling for a basic meal, you realise that, ultimately, you are here to cook. And, if you can’t fulfil this basic duty, it says nothing for your profession.”

For Goila, it all comes down to one essential need: feeding people. Changing times call for a changed approach. But there is another aspect to this initiative. The way Goila sees it: “Most COVID patients have lost the sense of taste and smell. But, even then, in those 15 minutes when you are having a meal, there is no distraction. Nothing can go wrong in those 15 minutes.” That period of time, for a patient, is crucial, according to

Goila. “You are feeding your body,” he explains. “There is a sense of comfort there. It is also a mood lifter. You simply can’t lose that.”

The future of dining, in Goila’s eyes, will also reflect the same ethos. The importance of having a basic home-cooked meal will always be the need of the hour. “Regional restaurants have already started populating the scene, and will continue to do so in the future. This is because regional cuisine is synonymous with home-cooked food. Now that we realise its worth, you will see people thronging to these restaurants. Basically, to taste home, to taste comfort,” he states.

The biggest learning for Goila, during this time, which also led him





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to actively work on this initiative, was the day he saw things beyond the purview of privilege. “Initially, when I’d see people asking for food, I would wonder why they couldn’t simply order it,” he admits. “I’d wrongly assumed everyone had access to this. I had forgotten that there was an India that exists beyond the hubbub of cities.”

It was this realisation that pushed Goila to also widen the reach of the initiative – whether it is feeding a government official in the remotest part of Kashmir or serving a family in a small town in Andhra Pradesh. “As a COVID patient, you are perpetually scared, even scared of visiting a hospital. And, in these moments, you need food to keep you going. We are simply a medium to achieve this goal,” he says.

By Arman Khan >



# DR. MADHUMITHA GOMATHINAYAGAM

## HR PROFESSIONAL

Dr. Madhumitha Gomathinayagam is the first transgender HR professional in India. She goes door to door in the slums of Chennai to provide essentials and conduct awareness campaigns



## “MY MOTTO IS TO REACH THE UNREACHED. WHAT IS THE USE IN PROVIDING HELP TO PEOPLE WHO ALREADY HAVE SURPLUS?”

kids a few extracurricular subjects in a village school,” she recalls. “Kids never had a problem with my gender; they easily accepted me, which boosted my confidence.”

Dr. Gomathinayagam is a well-known face with NGOs in Chennai, and has been a force for good during the pandemic, providing dry rations to people in need and advocating social distancing norms. Her work, over many years, has focussed on a variety of issues, including blood donation, platelets donation, road safety, and inclusion and diversity awareness. She also helps with the plantation of trees, inscribing or reading for visually challenged students, and cleaning up of beaches, rivers, lakes and forests, and offers free education and career guidance. She has also worked tirelessly

for animal welfare, while continuously inspiring people with motivational and awareness speeches, providing free training in yoga, meditation and personality development for young people, and making grocery donations for impoverished people. Her training as a certified first-aid provider has come into good use over the past two decades.

During the first wave of COVID last year, there was a great shortage of masks, sanitisers and grocery kits, while, this year, the focus is more on medical needs, feels Dr. Gomathinayagam. “A pandemic and a nationwide lockdown were completely new to many,” she recalls. “People below the poverty line, especially daily wagers and migrant workers, were affected initially with no place to go and no food to feed

their families. Along with a few NGOs, I organised rations that included an elaborate kit of at least 20 kilos worth of groceries, sufficient for a family’s needs, and distributed these across North Chennai.” The grocery kits comprise rice, pulses, wheat flour, vermicelli, sugar and hygiene products such as adult diapers and sanitary napkins. She also conducted many awareness campaigns in the slums of Chennai, when she realised that awareness about social distancing and the importance of wearing masks was negligible. She saw people gathering in groups and kids playing on the streets without wearing masks. “It was an alarming situation that needed immediate attention and reinforcement of the rules,” says Dr. Gomathinayagam, who also distributes sanitisers and masks during her awareness campaigns. She has also planned an academic kit with books and stationery for children for when online schooling resumes. “My motto is to reach the unreachable,” she maintains. “What is the use in providing help to people who already have surplus? That is why I reach out to the masses in slums and areas that require our urgent help.”

By **Kayalvizhi Arivalan** >

**A** social activist and volunteer with many reputed NGOs in Chennai, the multifaceted Dr. Madhumitha Gomathinayagam has been helping a vast cross-section of people – children, the elderly, the differently-abled and the trans community – for over 22 years. “Right from my college days, I have involved myself in social work; I started teaching

# DR. ANAMIKA GIRI

## DOCTOR

Young Dr. Anamika Giri pulls 12-hour shifts daily to help patients fight COVID in a town grappling with the virus

**W**ardha is a quiet town in Eastern Maharashtra, and its history spans eras. The Mauryas ruled the region for almost a decade. Then came the Sultanate, the Bahamanis, and the Marathas. It also served as the location for the annual meeting of the Indian National Congress in 1934. It is now an area under seige. Nobody saw COVID coming, and the villagers are still getting

accustomed to what has befallen them. Dr. Anamika Giri works with one of the COVID hospitals in the district, and she certainly wasn't ready either when the monumental responsibility of being on the frontline fell on her shoulders. But, because duty called, she dove in, head first.

"Initially, during the first wave, the protocol was that only senior doctors would handle COVID patients, but, then, as things got worse, we needed all the

hands we could find," says Dr. Giri. She still remembers the first day she started attending patients in the COVID ward. "It was plain scary. Our seniors were literally teaching us how to wear PPE kits."

But the second wave has brought with it new challenges and problems to tackle. "Almost 80 per cent of my batch mates have had COVID, including me, and half of them have been re-infected too," she reveals. She tells us that, from the initial 200 patients of the

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first wave, they now have to handle almost 600 patients on a daily basis. And, for Dr. G. Girija, who is now posted in the casualty ward, the reality of the situation is very stark.

“During the second wave, I have seen perfectly healthy young people with no comorbidities succumbing to COVID,” she says. “I have had to start counselling, because it is hard to get rid of the images in your mind. But one does what one has to do and keeps going.” On paper, Dr. G. Girija and her colleagues are supposed to work only for eight hours, but they are now pulling 12-hour shifts on a daily basis, with no breaks. “Wardha is a small town. There is little to nothing keeping us sane. I am privileged that I still manage some time to access therapy. Most of my senior colleagues can’t. But giving up has never been and will never be an option,” she states.

Dr. G. Girija just recently turned 24, and her resilience is emblematic of the entire medical community. Towards the end of the conversation with *Femina*, she is called to check on a patient whose oxygen levels have dropped drastically within a few minutes. “I’m afraid I’ll have to go,” she says. “Hope you have a safe day ahead,” and, then, after a moment’s pause: “Stay strong.”

**By Arman Khan >**

# SHRITI PANDEY

## CIVIL ENGINEER

A civil engineer from Gorakhpur, Shriti Pandey built COVID hospitals using stubble in a span of two months. She was also featured on the Forbes 30 Under 30 Achievers' 2021 list

**S**tubble burning has been a cause of concern across North India as it causes air quality to deteriorate, resulting in an increase in respiratory illnesses among people. Shriti Pandey, a 29-year-old civil engineer, found an alternative solution by eliminating the issue from

the ground up. "I quit my job in the US and came back to India and got selected for the SBI Youth For India Fellowship programme, in which we had to spend 13 months in a village and develop a project that helps the villagers in their livelihood and enhances their earning capacity," she recalls.

Pandey happened to see

a lot of stubble burning in and around Punjab and Haryana. Later, she witnessed the same in Madhya Pradesh as well, which made her realise that this was a national level issue. "The by-product of crops such as wheat, paddy, corn and sugarcane is either burned, which results in carbon dioxide, or it is left to decompose, resulting

in methane gas emission. Either way, the situation means an emission of greenhouse gases," explains Pandey, and adds that there was no proper way of channelling this waste. It seems almost baffling given the many environmental issues and health risks that mushroom because of it.

"I realised there was a lot of potential to compress this straw. The



**PANDEY'S MOST RECENT  
CONSTRUCTION HAS BEEN A 6,000SQ FT,  
75-BED COVID HOSPITAL,  
WHICH WAS BUILT IN 80 DAYS IN  
A SMALL VILLAGE NEAR PATNA**





fibres are very similar to wood in terms of their internal composition. So, once the binding vision was figured out, the material was compressed and made into panels,” she says. On completion of her fellowship programme, Pandey registered her company and started building small houses (350sq feet) from the material created.

Later, hospitals, homes and childcare centres etc were added to her portfolio. The most recent construction has been a 6,000sq ft, 75-bed COVID hospital, which was built in 80 days in a small village near Patna. “Last year, SELCO approached us to build a cost-effective, eco-friendly, sustainable COVID hospital in Patna for its partner NGO. Since

it was during lockdown, we took special government permissions to travel and successfully executed the project,” explains Pandey. The panels were made within two months and the hospital was fully ready in less than three months. A key takeaway from this method of construction is that zero water is used to build the facility, and the processes are run

entirely on solar power!

The hospital is fully functional and has separate rooms for patients who require oxygen cylinders and ventilators. The hospitals built earlier by her are being used as COVID centres. Currently, Pandey and her team are working on building a 200-bed COVID hospital, which is to be completed in 30 days.

**By Kayalvizhi Arivalan >**

# DR. GLOSSY SABHARWAL

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## DOCTOR ON CALL

Dr. Glossy Sabharwal was recently felicitated with a COVID Warrior award by the Delhi Medical Association for her tireless work with a free online COVID consultation service



**W**hen Parul Gaur and Gurpreet Singh Bindra of the Vasant Vihar Welfare Association

(VVWA) in New Delhi came together to form a free, 24x7 online consultation platform for all the residents, Dr. Glossy Sabharwal knew exactly what she was signing up for. With a team of five other doctors – Dr. Gunita Singh, Dr. Shikha Sharma,

“THE PHONE IS NEVER ON SILENT. WE CAN’T AFFORD THAT. EVERY CALL MEANS A VERY REAL POSSIBILITY THAT SOMEONE’S WORLD IS AT RISK”



Dr. Reetika Sharma, Dr. Deepika Logani, and Dr. Neelu Guglani – who voluntarily came on board, she knew this was going to completely take over their lives.

“I also have my own hospital, Jeevan Mala Hospital at Karol Bagh, but one can’t carve out boundaries now; extraordinary times mean extraordinary measures,” Dr. Sabharwal says. The initiative, apart from free online consultation, also ensures that CT scan facilities and COVID-19 testing facilities are available round the clock to the neighbourhood.

When *Femina* called her for this interview request, Dr. Sabharwal picked up the phone before it could even ring. “It is a reflex reaction now,” she explains. “The phone is never on silent. We can’t afford that. Every call means a very real possibility that someone’s world is at risk. We have promised 24x7

availability, no matter what. And we have to ensure we keep our word. That’s the bare minimum we can do.”

For her selfless service, Dr. Sabharwal was recently felicitated with a COVID Warrior award by the Delhi Medical Association, which functions under the aegis of the Indian Medical Association (IMA). “It feels nice to be validated and acknowledged by your peers,” she smiles. “Our work here is certainly beyond what we were normally expected to do, and the entire medical community has unanimously risen to the clarion call. That is very heartening.”

But her eight-year-old son is worried – little Samarvir’s father is a doctor too. “He knows we haven’t slept. He sees both of us poring over medical reports and on limitless Zoom calls. In the middle of the night, he wakes up and tells us to sleep. He tracks our sleeping hours too. Just yesterday, he told me that my husband and I had slept barely two hours. I can’t imagine the toll it takes on him,” she says.

More than anything, Samarvir misses comforting hugs from his parents. Not the toys, nor the football games, just hugs. “And that’s the one thing we can’t afford to give him, so we just make do with flying kisses every night,” she smiles. Little Samarvir knows how much he’s loved, even in a socially-distanced world.

**By Arman Khan >**



# KHAALID AHAMED

## FOUNDER – URAVUGAL TRUST

The Uravugal Trust in Chennai, started by Khaalid Ahamed, provides unclaimed bodies with a dignified burial. The trust has performed the last rites of many who have died due to COVID, free of cost

**W**hat started as a small initiative with 10 friends in 2017 has grown into a full-fledged NGO with 500 volunteers. Khaalid Ahamed, the 25-year-old founder and president of the Uravugal Trust, says that life and death both deserve dignity. It was with that thought that the friends started the trust, which helps with the burial of unclaimed corpses and homeless people. “I saw a homeless man die in front of my eyes,” Ahamed recalls. “We rushed him to the nearby hospital, informed the police station, but no one came to claim his remains.

That really upset me. How can someone not have anyone around them when they are dead? Isn't that the least one can expect?”

Ahamed and his team have carried out the final rites of more than 2,000 deceased souls, of which over 1,500 died due to COVID. During the lockdown period, his team looked after many homeless people and treated the injuries they sustained. They also helped patients reach their hometowns. “We have our own ambulances for this purpose, to attend to the medical needs of homeless people, take seriously-ill patients to hospital for free, carry out cremations and burials,” says Ahamed who, at times,

has broken his Ramzan fast at the crematorium. “Work is a priority; my phones have not stopped ringing since the start of the pandemic,” he reveals.

The word ‘Uravugal’ means ‘relationship’ in Tamil, and the trust has nearly 500 volunteers, out of which nearly half are women, and first-year college students. “We work with police officers and hospitals across Chennai; we receive calls from them if there is an unclaimed body, for which we then carry out the final rites,” Ahamed explains. “We consider ourselves their son or daughter, or a sibling, and perform the rituals according to the religion they belong





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to.” The team carries out the cremation of COVID patients donning PPE kits, masks, and gloves, with the use of sanitiser. All the cremations are performed in electric crematoriums, but the possibility of getting infected is still high, he admits. A few months into the service, he tested positive for COVID-19. After his quarantine period and recovery, he went back to serving the needs of the dead. “No matter how wealthy or famous you are, death is inevitable,” he concludes as he rushes away to attend to an emergency call. “Every life ends in the same way – that is my greatest learning from my work.”

**By Kayalvizhi Arivalan F**

# WHEN COVID COMES CALLING...

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**VRUTIKA SHAH, WHO HAS BATTLED THE VIRUS HERSELF, OFFERS A COMPLETE GUIDE TO MANAGING THE SITUATION, WITH ADVICE FROM EXPERTS ON THE DOS AND DON'TS OF QUARANTINING**

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**O**n March 24, 2020, India went into a complete lockdown due to the miasmic spread of COVID-19. Exactly a year later, I thought I was one of the lucky few who had not contracted the disease. I was so proud of my body.

## **I spoke too soon.**

A week later, my fiancé's sister tested positive. A couple of days after that, I felt a headache come on at night. To calm myself, I held my lack of sleep responsible, but, deep down, I knew something was wrong. The next day, at breakfast, all I could taste of my lemongrass and ginger tea was the sugar. I called a doctor friend, who asked me to test my sense of smell. I applied some perfume on my wrist and, sadly, I had to literally dig my nose into my wrist to find the scent. I knew then that I had most likely contracted the virus.

After failed attempts at booking an at-home RT-PCR or antigen test, my fiancé and I went to a nearby hospital and got ourselves tested. The antigen results that came after about four hours were just a confirmation. We were both positive.

We went into isolation for 14 days. Over the course of this time, I developed more symptoms such as weakness, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea and digestion issues. My fiancé had a 101° fever one night and lost his sense of smell and taste. Our oxygen levels remained stable throughout, and we experienced no major discomfort.

Yet, we found ourselves calling doctors every time a new symptom emerged, or when we had questions about living in close quarters with our parents and another COVID patient. Sadly, with the load on the healthcare system in the country, often no doctor is free to answer every question. Which is why this guide might help, at least to some extent... >



WAITING FOR SYMPTOMS  
TO DEVELOP COULD **MEAN**  
**NOT GETTING TREATMENT**  
**EARLY** ON AND THE  
RISK OF MORE SERIOUS  
SYMPTOMS DEVELOPING

## WHEN SHOULD YOU GET TESTED?

The symptoms of being hit by the coronavirus are headaches, loss of smell and taste, fever, fatigue and body pain, among others. The more serious symptoms include anything from pneumonia to loss of speech and movement. This obviously differs from person to person, but the important thing is to quarantine yourself at the first sign of illness. Yes, even as you wait to get tested, which you should, at least within the first three days. Waiting for symptoms to develop could mean not getting treatment early on and the risk of more serious symptoms developing.

“If someone is symptomatic but is unable to book an RT-PCR because of the long wait period, just assume that it is COVID and take all steps accordingly, which include isolation, oxygen monitoring, and contacting your physician,” says Dr. Trupti Gilada, a consultant physician in infectious disease from the Prince Aly Khan Hospital and Masina Hospital in Mumbai. She recommends opting for a 15-minute antigen test instead. “Do keep in mind, however, that the Rapid Antigen Test is a test with lower sensitivity compared to the RT-PCR,” she cautions.

## TESTED POSITIVE: WHAT TO DO NEXT?

Once you’ve taken the test, or even before, quarantine yourself. If like me, you have been exposed to somebody who has tested positive, you should isolate yourself even if you are negative. This, I was told, can help break the chain of transmission. Basically, your immunity could be strong enough for you to not contract the virus, but every person you come in contact with might not be as lucky. The day I tested positive, I got a call from the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC). They asked who I lived with, about my symptoms and for other information. Over the next 14 days, I received automated calls every day that listed symptoms; I had to confirm whether I had them or not. They also gave me an emergency helpline number to contact.

### NOTES TO CAREGIVERS

IF YOU ARE LOOKING AFTER A PATIENT, THESE ARE THE BASIC HYGIENE PROTOCOLS TO BE FOLLOWED

①

#### Wash Laundry Separately

Keep the patient’s used clothes in a different bag, and wash them separately in a bucket in warm to hot water; don’t forget to add disinfectant.

②

#### Keep A Separate Toilet For The Patient’s Use

The best way to avoid transmission is to not use the same bathroom and toilet as the patient. If that’s not an option, any surface that the patient would come in contact with should be thoroughly sanitised after each use.

③

#### Take Care With Food Handling

The patient’s meals should be left outside their room. Their plates, crockery and cutlery must be kept separately, washed with warm to hot water, and sanitised after washing. The patient should not enter the kitchen, unless absolutely unavoidable.

④

#### Wash Your Hands Thoroughly And Regularly

It is very important that you are conscientious about washing your hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling any item the patient has used. This is both for your own safety as well as that of the rest of the household.



## IT’S ALSO IMPERATIVE TO KEEP IN MIND THAT YOU MUST INFORM YOUR DOCTOR OF ANY NEW SYMPTOMS EVERY DAY

Dr. Gilada further suggests that you ensure “very strict masking for other negative people in the household, while also ensuring good ventilation. Monitor the oxygen saturation at rest and after six-minute walks. This should be done every four to six hours. A drop in oxygen saturation to 93 or below is one of the first signs of involvement of the lungs in COVID-19 enough to require hospitalisation and oxygen. And do not self medicate – please contact your doctor.”

It’s also imperative to keep in mind that you must inform your doctor of any new symptoms every day, even if it’s something as small as a mild headache or back pain. Don’t dismiss anything as too insignificant to report.

Still, it’s also important to stay calm in situations like this. Arouba Kabir, mental

health counsellor, wellness coach, and Founder of Enso Wellness, recommends patients journal their day, to help highlight the good parts of the day and bring a smile to your face. “Stop checking news portals and social media every hour,” she suggests. “Yes, it’s grave out there, but, for now, you need to take care of yourself. The need of the hour is to draw a boundary.”

## MEDICINES TO TAKE EVERY DAY

My fiancé and I were recommended a 30-day course of zinc and vitamin C supplements. These basically help build up your immunity. Since my symptoms were a little more severe, I was also asked to go on antibiotic and steroid courses of five and three days, respectively. It’s best to check with a doctor about which medicines to take based on your symptoms; do ask them to also prescribe an antacid to help with the digestive distress the antibiotics would cause.

About seven to eight days after you’ve tested positive, your doctor might ask you to take a blood test to determine your infection levels. For this, it is preferable to book a home test, and an advance booking could help. This test is essential to determine whether your treatment so far has worked and to determine the next steps.



## NUTRITIONIST-APPROVED SNACK IDEAS FOR A COVID PATIENT



Nut and seed trail mix



Roasted makhana



Laddoos made with dry fruits, jaggery and seeds



Healthy energy bars



Boiled or roasted peanuts with lime, onion, capsicum and tomato



Homemade soups and clear broths



Healthy whole grain breads with nut butter



Malted grain porridges

Dr. Gilada explains, “We must understand that the immunity of the body cannot be built up overnight. So, instead of gulping down multivitamins, it’s better to have a balanced meal full of vegetables, fruits and proteins.” However, if you’re somebody who already takes vitamins on a daily basis, she suggests you continue doing so, adding, “Vitamins are not necessarily going to prevent the illness, but one vitamin that everybody can always refuel on is vitamin D.”

## WHAT TO EAT, WHAT TO AVOID

If, like me, you suffer digestive distress while infected, you will probably lose your appetite. But keeping yourself well-fed and hydrated during this time is extremely important. Abhilasha V, Head of Department – Nutrition at Cloudnine Hospital, Bengaluru, says: “The ideal approach is to stick to fresh, homemade food. Ensure that the patient’s meals are fresh, protein-rich and easy to digest. Each meal should be served with good amounts of fluids as well. Ensure something is consumed every two to three hours to keep energy levels steady. It can be a meal followed by a soup or snack or a bowl of steamed vegetables. Smaller, frequent meals and snacks work better than the three-large-meals pattern. A fluid intake of three to four litres is essential to maintain hydration. Easy-to-have options include *khichdi*, *pongal*, *curd rice*, *kadhi-chawal*, *kanji* and soups with grains in them for comfort and warmth.”

Keeping yourself hydrated when you’re COVID positive is essential. Abhilasha V stresses on the need to consume liquids to replace fluid loss. She suggest drinks like coconut water, lime juice, clear soups, herbal teas and *jeera* or *ajwain* water for soothing the tummy.

As for foods to avoid, Abhilasha V says, “It is essential to avoid all outside foods and junk foods as the nutrient density of these foods is very low, and these are known to be harder to digest. Sugary drinks and sugar-laden foods can also trigger inflammation. Deep-fried and spicy foods stress the digestive system, so it is important to avoid them. Any foods that are too heavy can make one’s system sluggish and cause a feeling of uneasiness.” >

## WHEN DOES A COVID-19 PATIENT NEED A HOSPITAL?

Not all COVID-19 positive patients need to be rushed to a hospital. You should only seek one out either if the patient's O2 levels drop below the 93 mark or if they're experiencing breathless. Here are factors to keep an eye out for...

### 1. OXYGEN LEVELS

The patient's O2 levels must be checked every three hours. Saturation levels must be above 93 (taken with an oximeter), and the pulse in the 60 to 90 range. Inform your doctor immediately if either of these levels are breached.

### 2. BODY TEMPERATURE

Check body temperature twice or thrice a day. The patient might feel feverish; there is no reason to be alarmed as long as the temperature doesn't cross the 99<sup>o</sup> mark.

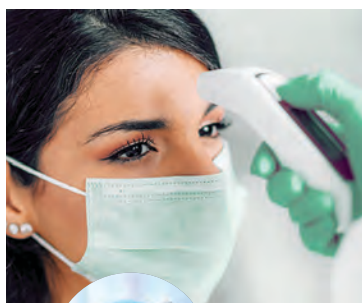
### 3. THE 6-MINUTE WALK TEST

Once again, using the oximeter, measure oxygen levels and pulse after walking for six minutes at a fast pace. Oxygen levels should not dip below 95 even after this activity.

## WHEN TO GET TESTED AGAIN

Dr. Hitav Someshwar, who was at the frontline at Mumbai's Somaiya Hospital, says that a COVID-19 patient might test positive long after their quarantine ends. "Unless required for official purposes, a patient with mild symptoms need not be tested again for the virus if their 14-day isolation has been completed and they no longer have any major symptoms." Dr. Gilada agrees. "Both national and international guidelines do not recommend testing with RT-PCR after COVID-19. RT-PCR can often pick up the dead virus and give a false positive test, even when the person is no longer infectious."

**RECENT REPORTS  
HAVE CONFIRMED  
THAT CORONAVIRUS  
ATTACKS ARE MILDER  
AFTER TWO DOSES OF  
THE VACCINE**



## DONATING PLASMA

Plasma is the yellow, liquid part of blood that contains antibodies, which are proteins made by the body in response to infections. While the FDA suggests that a patient can donate plasma 14 days after being cured of all symptoms, Dr. Someshwar suggests that one should wait 30 to 40 days for the antibodies to develop fully.

To donate plasma, the former patient should be between 18 to 60 years of age and weigh more than 50 kilos. If the donor is a woman, she should never have been pregnant. Hypertensive and diabetic patients can also donate if their levels are under control. However, patients with HIV, cancer and tuberculosis cannot donate. If the patient has undergone a kidney transplant, undergone surgery or had a tattoo done in the last six months, they are also deemed ineligible.

## WHEN CAN YOU GET THE VACCINE ONCE YOU'VE BEEN COVID POSITIVE?

Recent reports have confirmed that coronavirus attacks are milder after two doses of the vaccine. Studies show that a former COVID-19 patient's immunity against the virus increases for 60 to 90 days of having been positive, due to the presence of antibodies, but it is imperative to get vaccinated to keep this prophylactic effect in place. However, there is a correct time for this too.

A report in *The Times Of India* suggests that former patients of the virus can take the jab about two to eight weeks after their 14-day quarantine ends. It's a good idea to get yourself tested for antibodies two weeks after your quarantine period to ascertain the level of antibodies in your body. Based on that number, your doctor will help you decide when you should get vaccinated.

Dr. Gilada suggests that most former COVID-positive patients can get the vaccine six to eight weeks after they experienced the first symptom. **E**



Ssarita Singh

# PURSUIT OF PERSEVERANCE

ENTREPRENEUR, EDUCATIONIST, MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT EXPERT, AND PROLIFIC SOCIAL SCIENTIST. SSARITA SIINGH HAS MADE HER MARK IN WHATEVER SHE DOES – FROM TEACHING TO FILM-MAKING, FROM BEING AN EDUCATIONIST TO BEING A COUNSELLOR. HER DILIGENCE AND DETERMINATION IS WHAT SETS HER APART.

Ssarita Siingh started her journey as a teacher then went on to work in the publishing industry before making her mark in the media and entertainment industry. She is also an entrepreneur, educationist, and social scientist. She has achieved what she has through her own hard work and drive to succeed. Hailing from a conservative Rajput family, she notes, "Women in my family and around were not allowed to go out, or work, or make their mark in any profession. But I was quite rebellious. So at around 16, after

a lot of convincing my family, I started working as a teacher's assistant." At the age of 21, when she couldn't convince her family on not getting her married off, "I left home with a suitcase and Rs 2000 in hand and went to Mumbai. With no idea where to go, late in the night, I spent the whole night sitting at Dadar bus stop, all scared, but determined to move ahead. That was the first milestone of my life," she recalls.

Perseverance has always been a major driving force for her. It is evident through what she calls her second major milestone. The movie, *The Black Widow*,

that she was part of faced blockades at the censor board because of the subject – gang rape and prostitution. Despite others thinking it a lost battle, she persevered and filed a case in the tribunal to help pass the movie. After 22 cuts, it was ready; but due to budget constraints, it had to be shelved. All this was happening at the same time of her pregnancy! It was her grit and determination that made her fight for what she believes in, despite all odds.

Talking about the pandemic and lockdown, Siingh shares with us that she's had to make changes in how she works, just like everyone. "Most of my work is being carried out from home. Being a single mom, responsibilities increased as most chores fall onto my lap. But the most that concerns me is how the pandemic has changed the lives of students in and around," she explains. She believes that in this volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world, only education will make the difference. Her future institution is based on the principle of empowerment, communication, collaboration above division, and sustainability above short-term gain.

Siingh states that this is the time when our health needs to be in good condition so we can fight this pandemic. "One thing that I have added is breathing exercises because it keeps our mind and body rejuvenated and gives power to our lungs and heart which is the need of the hour. Right now, boosting our immune system is our priority for our health, and the right kind of diet and exercise only can do it," she points out. She adds, "I try as much as possible to listen to, talk to and counsel people who are around me, or around the people that have contacts with me. I have kept my communication lines open, told people around me to talk to me if need be, and even the people who are not directly related to me. Sometimes I get calls from people because they are depressed or have lost someone in this ordeal, or not being able to cope up with all the stress and negativity around. As human beings, we know we can't be there for each other physically, but we have to be there for each other in however way we can."

## MOST FREQUENTLY-REPORTED SYMPTOMS IN CHILDREN WITH LONG COVID-19

'Long COVID' is a term used to describe effects of COVID-19 that persist for weeks, often months, beyond the initial illness. As high as 76% of young patients were found to have persistent symptoms six months after the initial diagnosis.

18.6%  
Insomnia

14.7%  
Respiratory symptoms (including pain and chest tightness)

12.4%  
Nasal congestion

10.8%  
Muscle pain

10.1%  
Concentration difficulties

6.9%  
Joint pain

26.5%  
Miscellaneous



**T**he second wave of coronavirus has shown a sudden surge in the number of cases among children. Doctors feel that the recovery rate will be faster with kids, but there is also the fear that the impact or effects of the virus might have a longer haul. They also urge parents to not take their children out because that could expose them. If your child tests positive for the virus, here's a guide to what you can do...

### Cause and spread

Last year, during the first wave of COVID-19, not many kids were affected and the numbers were negligible. This didn't seem to be the case when

## Child Tests **POSITIVE?**

If your child shows any signs of COVID-19 such as fever or cough, contact a pediatrician, says **Kayalvizhi Arivalan**

the second wave started in February this year. Dr Sindhura Koganti, pulmonologist, Fortis Healthcare, says social negligence, improper ways of wearing masks, and not following social distancing rules are most likely the main reasons for COVID spreading among children. "The T-cell immunity and absence of ACE inhibitor in the throat passage, which protected the children during the

first wave, seems to be of no help to children during the second wave," she says. COVID-19 variants in the second wave have affected children of all ages, right from newborns to infants and teenagers, where the group of five to 12 years is more susceptible, feels Dr. Koganti.

### Stay positive

Actor Sameera Reddy and her kids tested positive for the virus and she had shared her experience dealing with the infection on her social media feed. "Hans had high fever, headache, body ache, upset tummy and severe fatigue. It lasted for four days. It

was very unusual. So, we tested him and he was COVID positive. I have to admit, initially, I did panic because, however much you think you are prepared, you just never completely are for something like this. Immediately, (her younger daughter) Nyra started showing symptoms. She had fever and an upset tummy. I gave her cold compresses and paracetamol on SOS,"



wrote Reddy on social media. She also mentioned that the second wave has impacted a lot of children, but doctors believe that they >



have milder symptoms in most cases. “It’s important to remember that even though your kids might get asymptomatic in a few days, they still have to be isolated from people who haven’t been affected for 14 days to make sure it is not transmitted. Luckily, my mother-in-law was not exposed and is living separately. She has tested negative,” she added. Sameera and her husband Akshai tested positive soon after the kids. They started with medication, steam inhalation, salt water gargles, breathing exercises, *pranayama* and eating wholesome meals while diligently followed their doctor’s recommendations. “This is the time to be smart and focus on what helps. Not negative, not fearful. Just be alert to protect yourself and others. We have to be mindful of this

## THE RED FLAGS

1. Fever
2. Running nose
3. Cold for a day or two is common
4. Diarrhea is the next common symptom

### The alarming symptoms to be watched out for are as follows



Redness of face and body



Skin rashes and allergic reactions



High grade temperature



Breathing difficulty



Dehydration



Reduced diet



Extreme tiredness



Fever in those with seizures or fits



Notice these? Call for help ASAP

**Dr. Sindhura Koganti, pulmonologist, Fortis Healthcare, Chennai**

and it is the only way. Stay strong, stay safe,” Reddy concludes.

### Don't panic

If a child tests positive, be cautious but don't stress too hard, says Dr. Koganti. Irrespective of their age, isolation is definitely needed to prevent spread of infection to others present at home (especially other children and the elderly). If the signs are not alarming, basic home care is good enough to beat the infection. “Ensure hydration by encouraging adequate intake of water, juices, coconut water, and ORS in case of diarrhoea is advisable. Temperature for a day or two can be managed with paracetamol – regular fever medicine. If the child has a running nose, cold and cough symptoms, they need to start on mild antibiotics such as azithromycin,” she added.

If you think your child has symptoms of COVID-19, call your doctor. Continue wearing a mask and ensure your child wears one too. Practise social distancing, wash hands well and often. Avoid large crowds, busy places and public indoor spaces. Make sure your kids get all prescribed vaccinations as per their vaccine chart for other infections, like the flu and measles.

Make sure the child eats nutritious meals and drinks plenty of water. It is necessary to keep oneself well hydrated even while at home. Don't forget to sanitise their toys too. This is also the best time to inculcate positive hygiene practices in your children. **■**



Keep an eye out for even the mildest of symptoms



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**A**s India faced what was just the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, misinformation and hoardings across the city led to hundreds of pets being abandoned on the streets overnight. Today, as we face the deadly second wave, the situation has only gotten worse. With multiple people testing positive for the virus, pet parents, until recently, were clueless about where to board their pets while they quarantine. Luckily, there are pet boarding services now that have volunteered to take in pets of COVID-positive owners across the country. Read on to understand the precautions you need to take while living with a pet.

### Susceptibility and precautions

Contrary to misguided notions, companion animals are not all carriers of the virus. “Companion animals like cats and dogs can be

infected with SARS-CoV-2, but we don't yet know all of the animals that can get infected,” says Dr Rajesh Rohi, Hospital Registrar (Surgery), Mumbai Veterinary College. “Face mask and gloves should be worn at all times around them. If the animal has signs of illness—contact a veterinarian immediately, and notify the public health veterinarian or state animal health official. Stay at least six feet away from your pet, and always wear gloves when touching their toys or dishes,” advises Dr Rohi.

### Pets testing positive

Although pets and animals are not the source of the current strain of coronavirus, you still need to take some precautions around them. “There have been reports of animals infected with the virus worldwide. Most of these animals became infected after contact with people with COVID-19,” adds Dr Rohi. In such a scenario, he suggests isolating the pet from others at home. “Do not bathe or wipe your pets with chemical disinfectants, alcohol, and hydrogen peroxide. Be sure to alert your vet if your pet faces breathing issues. Although most pets only have mild symptoms or no symptoms, we are still learning about how they are affected by the virus,” he adds. “Avoid contact with the pet, including, petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked, and sharing food or bedding,” Dr Rohi instructs. >

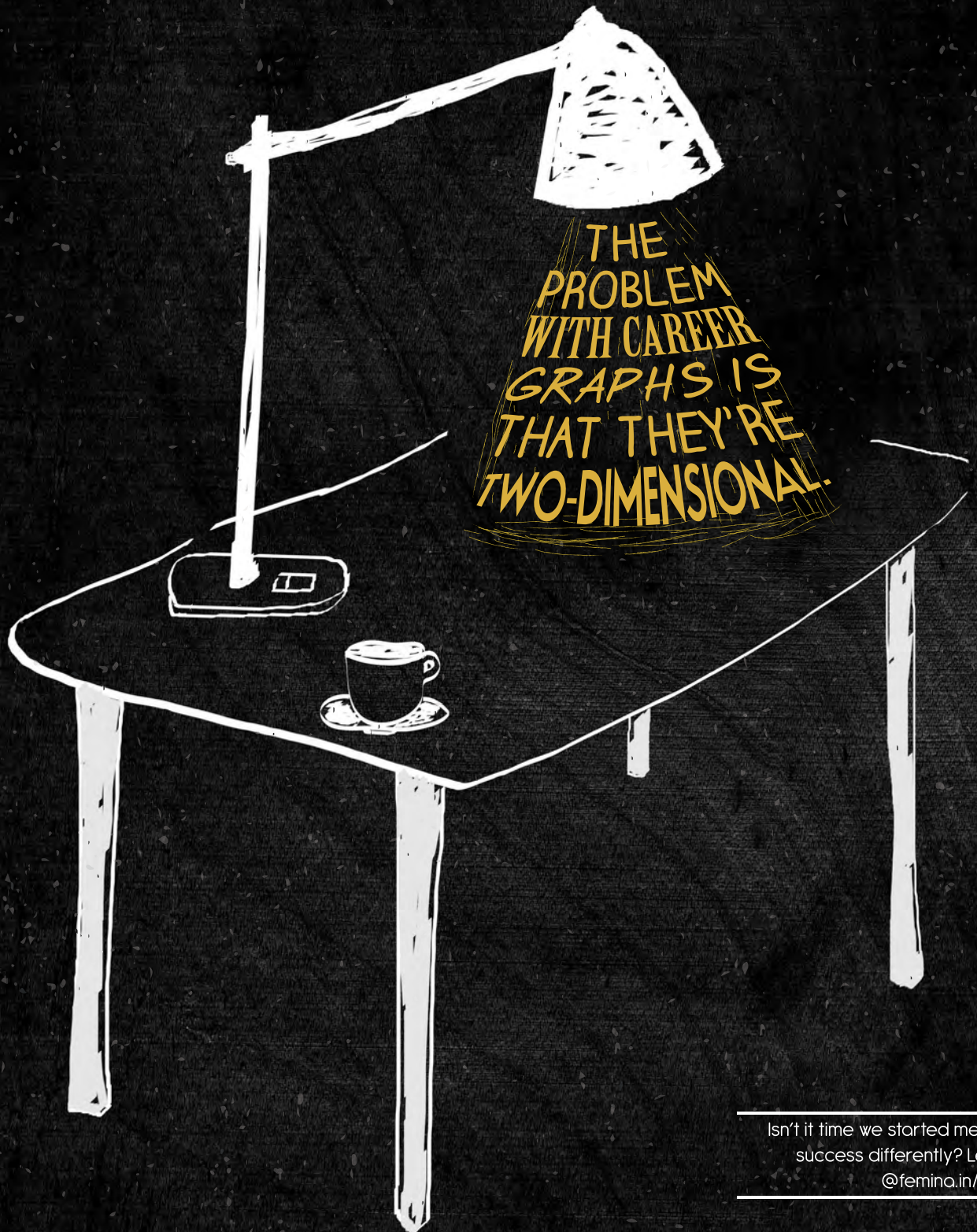
# SHELTERING YOUR PET *during the pandemic*

**Aishwarya Acharya** shares a verified list of boarding services for pets from COVID-affected families, who have nowhere to go



# FEMINA

## BE UNSTOPPABLE



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Isn't it time we started measuring success differently? Let's talk.  
[@femina.in/lifestyle](https://www.femina.in/lifestyle)

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Meanwhile, there are multiple boarding centres that are taking in pets from isolating families. Here are a list of a few...

### **PUPPYOYE DOG BOARDING AND DOG PARK, BENGALURU**

Handled by For Love Of All Pets (FLOAP), PuppyOye is one of the boarding centres in Bengaluru taking in pets from COVID-affected families. "We provide pick-up and drop facilities for the pets from their residence in our pet cab. The pets are first given a thorough bath and only then taken in," says Vinoop Ramesh, manager of the boarding centre. It is a no-cage, no-leash and an open park system where dogs get an open space to roam about. Ferocious ones are placed in tents. "We provide home-made food mostly chicken, rice, and *chapati* for the pets." They also offer immediate medical assistance in case of emergency, and pet food items with same-day delivery, free of cost.

**Charges:** ₹600-₹700, **Contact:** 9986940047

### **PET LOVERS HUT, GURGAON**

Pet Lovers Hut, owned and managed by Kuldeep Chauhan, is a farm-based boarding centre with kennels and sharing rooms for both cats and dogs. "There's a spot outside for the pets to bathe before they enter the boarding centre. No pet belongings are allowed with them," Chauhan says. "Food is usually home-made – boiled boneless chicken with rice and *roti*, and curd rice with soya chunks and seasonal veggies." For medical emergencies, there are in-house vets available, and five to six caretakers on the rounds 24 hours a day.

**Charges:** ₹800 per day, **Contact:** 9810007381



**Take utmost care even around your pets. Follow social distancing**

### **PAWTOPIA KENNELS & TRAINING, HYDERABAD**

Based in Madhapur, Pawtopia provides 24-hour boarding facilities for pets. "We offer a no-contact drop-off system at the gate, sterilisation of collars and leashes with disinfectants before boarding and at the end of stay, and bathing pets before admission," says owner Akhila Madireddy Kanvada, who is also a canine behaviourist. Meals are a combination of home-cooked meals and kibble. "Mornings and afternoons are dry food with vegetable gravy, dinner is usually *khichdi* with vegetables."

**Charges:** ₹450-₹650 per day, **Contact:** 7981334614

### **PETS KINGDOM, CHANDIGARH**

This boarding and care centre is equipped with a huge farm, swimming pool and a dog park for over 20 dogs. "We have an in-house veterinary (consulting and surgery) and care facility. Meals are freshly prepared every day as per their diet plans, we have caretakers available 24/7 for their assistance," shares Jashan Singh, owner. In fact, they also accommodate pets for those who cannot afford the charges.

**Charges:** ₹600-₹800 per day, **Contact:** 7982097430

### **Pet boarding centres across India courtesy the Petsfamilia Community**

#### **MUMBAI**

The Bark Club: 9930301200  
Doggie Dog World: 9167242218  
Petsville: 9920596669

#### **DELHI NCR**

Tara & Aditya: 8968211893  
Asha Arun's Pet Home Boarding: 9962600906  
Jeffury's: 9811591088

#### **KOLKATA**

ATS Kennel: OrangeWolf Kennel: 7278865163

Furry Tales Dog Creche: 9830435558

#### **NAGPUR**

Ishita Shukla: 8208067688  
Dipika Umak: 8624934584

#### **CHENNAI**

Hostel For Dogs: 9790724444  
Petencia Pet Care: 9150555222

#### **PUNE**

Tales of the City: 7030012021  
Happy Tails: 9822321167



# For Our MOTHERS

In this time of grief and struggle, sometimes, you just miss your mother. To try and conjure up a quiet space of joy, we reached out to strong pillars of our community to talk about happier times. Our memories of our mothers are incredibly special, and each of these stories provides a different look, an aspect, a perspective, on why. We dedicate these to everyone. To those who have lost. To those who love. To those who might not have had that bond, but have matriarchal figures in friends and their chosen family





# I think of my mother as a national treasure...



MULTIMEDIA ARTIST **MALISHKA MENDONSA** CREDITS HER MOM LILY WITH BEING HER MENTOR AND INSPIRATION



On these pages:  
Portraits of  
togetherness:  
Malishka and her  
mom Lily have always  
been very close

**F**or as long as I can remember, my mother Lily and I have been very close. As a child, I thought she was amazing. And I still do.

I remember childhood summers being fun. I remember playing a lot. I climbed trees, swung on the swings, sang with my friends. But, most of all, I remember that my mother encouraged me to read. Once the reading habit caught on, I was lost to the world, and to her. She would keep calling my name, but I wouldn't hear her because I was in a different universe. I know it couldn't have been easy. We were a middle-class family, but she somehow managed to get me books, buying the nice big tomes, or getting them from her friends. I remember the Archie comics! She had to keep bringing me loads and loads of books because I used to almost inhale them. And so she did.

She was a working woman. I've seen her go to work almost all her life, and that has been my inspiration for a lot of things. As hardworking as she was, she also had this great spirit of fun. She would want to take us out. We didn't go on summer holidays every year.



Nor were there elaborate holidays when we did go, but she made sure we had fun. One of my favourite holiday memories is of a vacation in Goa. I was in the eighth standard, and I remember being overwhelmed with the realisation that this was what a holiday was. We used to go to our 'native place', Mangalore, too, where we went to cousins' home and had *goli* soda, which is soda with a marble as the cork.

I have inherited an untameable spirit of adventure from my mother. The attitude that 'I can'... that I can go see the world and do things. She always used to say to me: you better take me before I'm too old to enjoy all this. I remember when we went rafting with a bunch of friends just after she retired. The raft almost went *palti!* I had to throw her back onto it, and she sat there, hurt knee and all, but so very happy. Just a few days ago, everyone warned us about not doing this trek; it's a long one, up a mountain, down the other side. But Mom went. And she made it, with the help of friends, because the universe conspires to make these things happen. She has this youthfulness that I want to always

**“MY MOM IS REALLY, REALLY FUNNY. I THINK MY LANGUAGE, OR ANY QUIRK THAT I HAVE, COMES FROM HER.”**

have too. Because my father passed away when we were very young, she's always been around our friends. She's one of us only. My mom's also really, really funny. She would say the funniest things when watching TV. I think my language, or any quirk that I have, comes from her. Her sense of humour keeps her far younger than her actual age.

To me, my mother is a national treasure. When COVID hit this time, everyone was on board when I said I have to deposit this national treasure somewhere safe. We have now come away to a wonderful place close to Mumbai where we do naturopathy and Ayurveda. We do yoga, eat nutritious meals, get massages. We're breathing freely, which she couldn't do in Mumbai.

What is that one thing you should know about my mother? It is this: you can earn a thousand rupees if you teach her to cycle in three days. She makes that offer to some of my friends. Mom has always really wanted to learn to cycle. I have been trying to teach her for years. Because of the person she is, she has a wonderful time, even when she's falling off the bike. I have to figure out how to get an adult bike with trainer wheels. Because it will be worth it to give her that joy.

**As told to Primrose Monteiro-D'Souza >**

# “My mom is the wind beneath my wings”

**LICYPRIYA KANGUJAM** IS A CHILD ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVIST FROM MANIPUR. ONE OF THE YOUNGEST CLIMATE ACTIVISTS GLOBALLY, SHE HAS ADDRESSED WORLD LEADERS AT THE UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE 2019 IN MADRID, SPAIN, TO ASK THEM TO TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE. THIS MOTHER'S DAY, SHE TELLS HOW HER MOTHER IS THE ONE WHO TAUGHT HER AND INSPIRED HER TO LOVE AND RESPECT MOTHER NATURE

**M**y mom is very special to me. A woman, a mother, a fighter – she is my inspiration. She is always calm, optimistic and ever-smiling throughout the day, something I think all can learn from her.

It is her love, compassion and nurturing nature for our environment and her love and respect for our Mother Earth that inspire me, and make me do what I do.

It is her belief that has helped me achieve what I have. When I was invited to attend the United Nations Climate Conference 2019 (COP25) in Madrid, Spain, we did not have the funds for me to travel and stay there. While relatives and others told me to cancel the trip because of the lack of funds, my mother said, “No! I will send my daughter to the UN!” She sold her gold chain to put together the money. The Spanish government came forward to support me after hearing my story, and sponsored my entire trip, but it was my mother's strong belief and support that led me to that stage in Madrid to address world leaders to take urgent climate action to save our planet and our future.

With the work I do, I attend a lot of events, meetings and programmes. This has me travelling throughout the year. Sometimes, I get to meet my mother just once a month! The lockdown, though, has given me a chance to spend quality time with her. We spend a lot of our time



On these pages:  
Licypriya's mom  
is her greatest  
inspiration



**“MOM HAS ALWAYS BEEN VOCAL ABOUT ME BALANCING MY WORK AS A CLIMATE ACTIVIST WITH EDUCATION; SHE BELIEVES BOTH ARE EQUALLY IMPORTANT”**

together planting trees. We have transformed the barren land near our home into a small forest and a beautiful green space by planting trees every day.

My mother worries a lot when I am asked to speak at big events about whether I can do so confidently or whether I'll make any mistakes, as all mothers do. But she also has tears of joy when I am up on that stage. Even when she cannot travel with me when I go abroad, she follows my work over video. Her staunch support is the wind beneath my wings. She has always been vocal about me balancing my work as a climate activist with education, as she believes both are equally important. She helps me be a better person.

**As told to Radhika Sathe-Patwardhan >**

On these pages:  
Elton has warm  
memories of  
his loving mom



“  
Growing up with an  
opinionated yet goofy mother  
certainly helped curate my  
interest in beauty at large

”

**ELTON FERNANDEZ** CONNECTS HIS INTEREST AND AESTHETIC  
IN BEAUTY TO HIS WONDERFUL, GOOFY AND DILIGENT MOTHER

**L**ike most aesthetes, my childhood was filled with multiple visual influences that helped develop my love for beauty. I was the younger of two boys who were never pressurised to excel at academics. Instead, my brother Irwin gravitated to sports while I was taken by the arts.

Both our parents were artful in their own way. My father worked in the Gulf for a large part of my childhood; he played the drums and sang bass in the family choir, had very beautiful handwriting, and enjoyed a fair bit of drawing, painting and cooking. Our mum was a banker and fairly good at drawing, enjoyed music, fashion, dance and beauty. We were raised alongside a dozen cousins as a large but involved family unit, and enjoyed attending Sunday school. After which we would all trot happily back home to catch the weekly broadcast of *Ramayan*, *Mahabharat* and *Vikram Aur Betaal* on the Doordarshan network. This was particularly fun during the summer holidays because we weren't constantly reminded of impending homework. Instead, my mother trained both her sons to adopt separate household responsibilities and chores that we swapped through the week.

When we did a consistently good job with shining the floor or scrubbing the utensils, we were rewarded with little tokens of appreciative repayment like a cricket ball or stumps, a badminton racket or a small toy we really wanted. We were raised to forgive and forget with kindness, to do our best and to be responsible young kids. My mother was an incredible jiver, who tried hard to pass on her skills to her kids! While I owe my exposure to musicality to my paternal family, my mother taught me how to express rhythm and movement through dance.

Looking back at my growing years, I see how I owe much of my work ethic to my diligent, disciplinarian mother. Funnily enough, I've also oddly inherited my silly goofiness and empathetic ways from her. Growing up with an opinionated yet goofy mother who took her time daily to express her individuality through fashion, makeup and grooming certainly helped curate my interest in beauty at large. From *The Carpenters* to Marie Osmond, stilettos and fashion in the '80s to permed hair and the coming of age of the '90s, my mind and heart are flooded with fond memories of a loving, attentive and conscientious mother. >



**“WE WERE RAISED TO FORGIVE AND FORGET WITH KINDNESS, TO DO OUR BEST AND TO BE RESPONSIBLE YOUNG KIDS”**





On these pages:  
Precious photographs  
with her mum Tarla  
from Renu's albums



“Her zest for life was unending, and she would always look forward to tomorrow...”

**RENU DALAL** REMINISCES ON MEMORIES WITH HER MOTHER, THE LATE TARLA DALAL, AND THEIR SHARED PASSION FOR FOOD AND LIVING LIFE TO THE FULLEST





**F**or us, like for most children, summer holidays meant fun, frolic, and merrymaking. It was a time for the entire family to spend together, at home or on vacation. Experimenting with vegetarian cuisines was always on the agenda. My mother, the late Tarla Dalal, used to make lovely cakes, mocktails and delicious ice creams during those hot summer months.

I vividly remember how she used to encourage me to take cooking classes for teenagers during the summer breaks. She taught me to effectively explain the art of cooking.

I have lots of fond memories with my mother. Of our wonderful holiday trips. Of the photoshoots for her books, the sheer excitement in the house when her cooking classes were on. I have loving memories of my father cyclostyling the recipes in the office, to be distributed to the students.

What I treasure the most is the unconditional love my mother lavished on me throughout her life. She was always extremely supportive and loving, but, at the same time, she always made sure to make me aware of my mistakes. She was my best friend, philosopher, and guide for life, besides being the most amazing mother.

Following in her footsteps, I want to have her ability to communicate simply. Her zest for life was unending, and she would always look forward to tomorrow, which is something I have tried to inculcate in my life as well. It is from her that I have learned to be an independent woman. She instilled in me the seeds of compassion, encouraged me to always be helpful, and to try to bring happiness to everyone around me.

I have imbibed her passion for cooking, for creating different menus, and for bringing something exciting and new to the table every time. I have written two cookbooks, *Modern Vegetarian Recipes* and *Simple & Delicious Vegetarian Recipes* and, just like in her iconic books, the recipes are simple, innovative,

and delicious. I learned from her that the measurements of ingredients should be perfect, with easy-to-follow instructions, to get a perfect dish with a perfect taste on the table. That is the recipe to spread happiness and joy in people's lives.

While we were growing up, my mother gave cooking classes and wrote a lot of books. Her cooking classes were legendary in Mumbai; she had a long waiting list of students patiently waiting to learn from her. Back then,

**“ONE OF THE THINGS THE WORLD DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT MY MOTHER IS HER HUMILITY”**

it was said that if a girl is to get married in Mumbai, she must attend Tarla Dalal's cooking classes. But, one of the things the world doesn't know about my mother is her humility despite being honoured with a Padma Shri. She never let her success change anything for us. At home, she was our loving mother and a wonderful wife, always down to earth, willing to answer every question put to her with apparent ease, and to make everyone comfortable around her.

If she were here today, we would be spending lots of time together, discussing politics, the stock market, and the current situation. We would discuss how to make a difference and help others to the extent we could. And, of course, we would talk about menus and recipes, food presentation, the newest trends in food and cooking to bring to the table, and how to create magic in the kitchen. **F**



# “ She would always push us to do more, to leave a more permanent dent in the universe ”

**FAYE D'SOUZA** DETAILS THE TREMENDOUS IMPACT OF HER MOTHER'S LOVE AND HUMOUR. SHE WRITES ABOUT HER UPBRINGING, AND HOW HER MOTHER TAUGHT HER TO BE TENACIOUS, ETHICAL, FIERCE AND, ABOVE ALL, INDEPENDENT

**W**hen I was 24 years old, I came up with the crazy idea of backpacking across Europe with a friend. I had saved for months for a shoestring trip, and I decided to borrow ₹60,000 (three months' salary) as a personal loan from the bank to cover the expenses. As luck would have it, the friend in question got cold feet and decided to drop out.

I was left with two choices: I could cancel as well, or I could travel around Europe all alone. Remember, this was before we had the internet on our phones, so no Google maps or WhatsApp, and no cell phone on international roaming because that would have cost me more than the trip itself.

I needed to make a decision. I really wanted to travel, but there was a part of me that was terrified. I called Mom for advice on what I should do, half expecting her to tell me that it was a terrible idea. "Travelling alone, in a foreign country, where you don't know the language or anyone who can help if you get into trouble!"

What my mother said instead was this: "Do it. You never know when you might get another chance to travel alone and see the world on your terms. As women, we



On these pages:  
Faye's life today  
is according to  
a blueprint set  
by her mother



## “WHEN OTHER GIRLS WERE BEING TAUGHT TO BE GRACEFUL, MY MOM WAS TEACHING HER GIRLS THAT FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE IS A NON-NEGOTIABLE FOR WOMEN.”

should take every opportunity that comes our way.” I did take the trip, it was the best trip of my life. But this piece is not about the trip, although I do have some stories to tell. This column is about my mother.

I don't know if she realised it then or since, but what my mother said to me that day changed my life. Everything I have done after that has been driven, in some way, by that idea. As women, our lives are tied, beautifully, to the people we love and to those who love us, and there are very few opportunities that come our way to steal a fortnight on our own terms. But there is more to this advice. Never let an opportunity slide, never give up a chance to try a new adventure or to see the world.

My mom, Flossy D'Souza, has three daughters and a son, and the one word to describe our upbringing is 'fierce'.

When other girls were being taught to be graceful, my mom was teaching her girls that financial independence is a

non-negotiable for women. “Never depend on anyone for money,” she would say. She taught us to defend what was ours with passion and insisted we all educate ourselves and stay in college for as long as we could before we started working. She had tremendous expectations from all of us. We learned never to give up, ever. We could never rest on our laurels. She would always be around to push us to do more, to be better, to leave a more permanent dent in the universe.

Mom is also a big believer in life skills. She made sure all of us, including my brother, learned to cook a full meal, clean our homes, and change a car tyre if we needed to. I remember her once telling me that I should learn to hand-wash all my clothes because I should never take having a washing machine handy for granted.

My maternal grandmother was something of a math wiz who could do mental math like a human computer, but she was married at the age of 18 and spent her days caring for her children. My mother was clear that her daughters would benefit from the experience of previous generations, and we would put our skills to use and become confident, independent women. So much of who my sisters and I are today is the blueprint my mother put down for us in our childhoods.

Today, when everything around me seems grim, the thing I miss most about being able to see my mother in >



Faye's mother-in-law Ujvala Gokhale has been a major factor in her life and success

person is her sense of humour. She is quick as a whip and easy to joke and laugh with, especially when things around us seem tough. My visits home usually include more than one instance of the two of us talking and laughing late into the night until we wake my father up with the noise we make.

In 2019, when I was faced with the life-altering decision to quit my 16-year career in television and start from the very beginning again as an entrepreneur, it was the scariest decision of my life. A choice to leave behind the comfort of the known and begin a massive, terrifying journey into the unknown. The voice in the back of my head has been my mother's. Telling me never to let an opportunity slide. Never to accept defeat.

"Do it. You never know when you might get another chance."

The last year has been tremendously challenging, it has forced me to re-examine my profession, the conscience of the job, and the service I can and should provide to society as a journalist. It has also been the most exciting journey I have ever taken, and every day is a new adventure.

As I take this journey, I hope to learn, to grow and to make my mother proud.

Happy Mother's Day, Mummy!

Note: I would be remiss if I didn't mention the other mom in my life. I was fortunate to have not one but two amazing women to support me. My mother-in-law, Ujvala Gokhale, the most enterprising and driven woman I know, has been a keen investor of time, energy and encouragement in my career, very often by clearing away domestic hurdles so I could stay focused. I will always be indebted to her for her faith in me.

# “ Mom loves me unconditionally ”

**SUSHANT DIVGIKAR**, ALSO KNOWN AS RANI KO-HE-NUR, RECALLS THE STORY OF COMING OUT TO HIS INCREDIBLE, AND ALSO VERY FUNNY, MOTHER

**I**t was a summer afternoon in May 2008. I remember this afternoon vividly because what transpired that afternoon would stick with me for the rest of my life. I had recently come out of the closet to my father and confided in him that I was gay and, upon requesting him to allow me to tell my mother, he had agreed. I was gung-ho with the recent confidence boost I got after my father whole-heartedly loved and accepted me for who I am, regardless of my gender or my sexual orientation.

I always knew that my mother was the backbone of my family and, that, without her, we might not have even survived as a unit. I also always knew that my mother was a headstrong yet emotional, powerful yet empathetic, slapstick yet compassionate woman. She wouldn't have reacted absurdly and drastically if I told her about my sexual orientation. I knew all of these things about my mother but, more than that,

I knew she loved my older brother and me dearly and with all her heart.

On the afternoon that I decided to muster up the courage to sit her down and tell her about myself, she was indulging in her cheap thrill of watching a ridiculous Hindi television soap opera (that had women and





On these pages:  
Sushant has  
enjoyed his  
mother's support  
all his life



men turn into snakes and vultures and attack each other). I was sure that if I interrupted her during her binge-watching session, I would get blasted and she would throw a fit at me for disturbing her.

However, I decided that I couldn't wait any longer and that I had to tell her on that very day. So I went to her and told her that I wanted to tell her something, something that was life changing and that would lift a burden off my chest. She looked at me with disgust for disturbing her and told me that I should wait for a commercial to start so she wouldn't lose the flow of the show she was watching.

In my head, I was shouting and saying, "THIS IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOUR STUPID TV PROGRAMME!" Once the advertisement came on, she asked me to quickly tell her what I wanted to and said I have only about two minutes to do it. As I was going to tell her about my orientation, she immediately stopped me and added, "... and, if this is about you being gay, I already know ! I AM YOUR MOTHER, I KNOW EVERYTHING!"

As she said those words, my jaw dropped, and I asked her, "Okay, mumma, what do you feel about that?" She softened her otherwise resting stern face, and smiled and said, "All I know is that I've always loved you and I will always love you regardless of whether you are gay, bisexual, transgender or whatever else you realise you are.

## “MY MOTHER AND I SHARE A VERY SPECIAL BOND AND I CELEBRATE HER EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR”

I have given you birth and all of these characteristics about you are all a part of YOU. So, if I say I love my children, I love them for who they are and that love is unconditional.”

These words instantly brought tears to my eyes and my mother and I hugged, and she gave me a little peck before patting me on the head with the remote control. And then told me to go make her some popcorn and tea.

I couldn't have imagined my coming-out story to have been any more special than this.

My mother and I share a very special bond and I celebrate her not just today, but every day of the year.

My mother has taught me that motherhood is a behaviour, it is an emotion, and she taught me that even though I was born male and now identify myself as gender fluid, I have the power to give the gift of unconditional love and acceptance to other children who don't get their mothers' love. *That is motherhood!* >

# “ She told me to be fearless and patient ”

CRICKETER **HARMANPREET KAUR** TALKS ABOUT HOW HER MOTHER, SATVINDER KAUR, SHAPED HER PERSONALITY AND TAUGHT HER ABOUT THE TRUE MEANING OF LOVE

**L**ove is a beautiful concept for me, since all of us are born out of love. A word that is synonymous with love is ‘mother’! From the day that I was born, my mother has shown me love in every aspect of life. During the best and worst times, she always showered love, gave me the strength to march ahead, and told me that she would do anything for my happiness.

I am my parents’ first-born and was welcomed and loved from the minute I came into this world. My mother played a key role in me becoming the person I am today. I was an extremely quiet child. I would be found daydreaming most of the time and was clueless about what I wanted. My grandmother and my mother were my only go-to people; they were always warm towards what I had to say or with regards to what I asked for. They would pamper me even if I had spent the day outside, playing in the park, forgetting all about my homework! My father would wait for me at the door to let me have it, whereas my mother would act as my protective shield. Time and again, she manipulated me out of the situation with my dad and spared me punishment.

I strongly believe one day is not enough to thank our mothers. We do not need a day to celebrate Mother’s Day; mothers deserve to be celebrated every day. For the first 16 years of my life, I lived with my parents under one



**On these pages:**  
Harmanpreet’s  
mom Satvinder  
has always been  
her staunchest  
supporter



## “MOM EMPOWERED ME TO CHASE MY DREAMS DESPITE FACING PRESSURE ON SEVERAL FRONTS TO NOT DO SO”

roof. From the time I started playing professional cricket, I have moved to and from several cities for my training and job, and never failed to carry my parents’ teachings wherever I have gone.

I come from an extremely religious family, and, as children, my siblings and I were made to read and memorise the holy books. Today, when I read and understand each word that was read and taught, I realise

that they have eternal meaning. The quotes from the scriptures have helped me become a better person and had they not been introduced to me by my mom, I would have been deprived of all those virtues today.

My mother always told me to be fearless and patient, to not be greedy, to be satisfied with what I have and to always give without expecting. All of these teachings walk with me today, and I feel blessed to have followed the path that my parents tread and have laid out for me by example.

I cannot really pin this down to any one memory with my mother, because there are just too many and they all come flooding one after the other the minute I begin to think.

A few aspects that make her so special would be her intuition – I can’t get away with anything when she is around. There’s her gentle touch – instant therapy to make me fall asleep. Her empathy – she will not let me put myself down. That calming presence of hers, her ethics, and, most importantly, the way she fought against society for me and empowered me to chase my dreams despite facing pressure on several fronts to not do so, are qualities that have shaped my strength.

I would like to tell her, “I am grateful for you and I wish to be born as your daughter over and over again.” >

# FINDING MRS. FEMINA 2021

On March 30, 2021, *Femina* gave the country its first-ever Mrs. Femina as it announced the winner of the glamorous new virtual property

Lockdown was no deterrent as 20 women from across India came together, virtually, to determine which of them would be the first among equals. Who would be Mrs. Femina 2021?

The first edition of Mrs. Femina was presented by **Bosch Home Appliances**, in collaboration with hair and makeup partner **Naturals**, and silk assurance partner **SilkMark**.

**Tapeshwari Sharma** took home the title (*catch the interview with her in this section*), while **Prachi Kane** and **Perna Nigam** were first and second runners-up respectively.

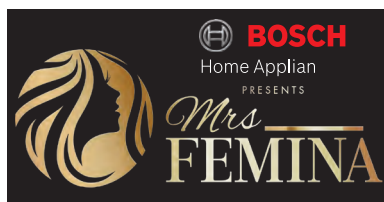
Hosted with the idea of identifying the unseen and untapped potential in women, the Mrs. Femina online hunt focused on the contestants' life journeys and challenged them to reveal the hidden dimensions of their personalities. Over a period of six weeks, they were mentored by industry specialists – **Eshaa Amiin** for fashion, **Harpreet Suri** for beauty, **Chef Neha Shah** for food, and **Sharanya Iyer** for a personality showcase. They also benefitted from an inspiring talk by life coach and motivational speaker **Aashna Dhanuka**.

The participants were shortlisted virtually by an eminent jury featuring industry stalwarts. Among them were actor and hobby pilot **Gul Panag**; singer, choreographer and performing artiste **Shiamak Davar**; actor and model **Amrya Dastur**; celebrity **Chef Varun Inamdar**; **Neeraj Bahl**, MD and CEO of Bosch Home Appliances; **Veena Kumaravel**, Founder, Naturals Group of salons; **Ronitaa Italia**, Editor-in-Chief, *GoodHomes* and

*Home & Design Trends*; and Managing Editor of *Femina* **Primrose Monteiro-D'Souza**. From the shortlisted 20, 13 contestants were taken forward via the voting round, with the jury selecting the final five, who were questioned online in an interesting jury round.

Other winners in the grand finale included **Ishani Jaswal** who won the 'Six Yards Three Looks' fashion challenge. The contestants were asked to create three different and unique looks using one sari. The beauty challenge, called 'My Beauty: Three Ways', was won by **Perna Nigam**. As part of the challenge, the contestants had to showcase their creativity by creating three looks with hair and makeup – colour pop, date night and bridal look. **Surbhi Choudhary** showed everyone just how big a foodie and masterchef she is by mastering the food challenge, 'Your Culture on a Plate', in which the contestants displayed their culinary traditions in a unique way. Last, and certainly not the least, the challenge in which the women showcased their personality was aced by **Ipsita Priyadarsini**.

The pageant also hosted a Srimathi SilkMark Contest that was won by **Anneshya Thakker**.



IDENTIFYING  
THE UNSEEN  
AND UNTAPPED  
POTENTIAL IN  
WOMEN, MRS.  
FEMINA FOCUSED  
ON CONTESTANTS'  
LIFE JOURNEYS

# OUR JUDGES



## GUL PANAG

*Actor, entrepreneur, hobby pilot and perpetual student, a former Miss India, and a shining example of versatility and talent, Gul Panag is proof that it is possible to do the many things you want, excellently, in one lifetime!*



## SHIAMAK DAVAR

**Much-awarded singer, choreographer and performing artiste, Shiamak Davar is known as the "Guru of Dance" in India. He is largely responsible for modernising India's dance scene especially in the film and theatre industry. Shiamak Davar International is the world's biggest dance academy, and his Victory Arts Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation that uses dance as therapy.**



## AMYRA DASTUR

**Well known from her modelling days, Amyra Dastur is now an actor who stars in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu and international films. Although down to earth and inspiring, she thinks of herself as a dreamer.**



## CHEF VARUN INAMDAR

*Chef, TV host, chocolatier, food stylist and author, celebrity chef Varun Inamdar is fondly known as 'The Prince of Chocolates' and 'The Bombay Chef'. He owns a private gifting label - Barcode, a restaurant named Mumbai Local Tawa and is the chosen chef for all guests of the Prime Minister of India. He is also the third most-viewed chef in the world with 533+ million impressions via social media.*



## NEERAJ BAHL

**Neeraj Bahl is Managing Director and CEO of Bosch Home Appliances, a position he has held since July 2019. He is responsible for running the BSH Household Appliances Manufacturing business in India and other South Asian markets. >**



## VEENA KUMARAVEL

*Veena Kumaravel is an entrepreneur and cofounder of the Naturals Group of salons based in Chennai, which she started in 2000.*

*With over 600 outlets across India, she is the first woman in South India to pioneer the unisex salon business, and her vision, through Naturals, is to create a thousand successful women entrepreneurs, 3,000 salons, and 50,000 jobs across the globe by the end of 2025.*



## RONITAA ITALIA

*A prolific writer and journalist with over 20 years of experience, Ronitaa Italia is Editor-In-Chief of GoodHomes and Home & Design Trends. She is known for her engaging content and unusual ideas, and she makes juggling all aspects of her life look so easy!*

## PRIMROSE MONTEIRO-D'SOUZA

*Managing Editor of Femina, Primrose Monteiro-D'Souza brings over 15 years of reporting on women to the jury round table. She is an award-winning travel and food writer.*



## OUR MENTORS

### ESHAA AMIIN

*Known for her fabulous sense of style, Eshaa Amiin is the woman trusted by B-town stars like Saif Ali Khan, Karisma Kapoor, Bipasha Basu and Chitrangada to make them look fabulous. She mentored the Mrs. Femina contestants before their fashion challenge round, sharing tips and tricks on how to give a sari three completely different looks.*



### HARPREET SURI

*The woman behind the Insta handle @momwearsprada, Harpreet Suri is an acclaimed name on social media. She was recently recognised as one of the top 50 influential women in the world, and she is the most-searched-for Indian mom blogger on Google. Harpreet mentored the contestants and helped them work out three different makeup looks to showcase in the beauty challenge.*



## CHEF NEHA SHAH

*The first runner-up on MasterChef India S4 in 2015, Chef Neha Shah studied food science and technology, and worked as a flavourist before quitting to indulge her passion for cooking and travelling. The restaurateur and chef inspires everyone on Instagram to cook with her can-do attitude, and she enthused the contestants to showcase foods from their roots for the culinary challenge.*

## SHARANYA IYER

Travel content creator Sharanya Iyer sees herself as an eternal student of a global classroom. Well known across social media as Truly Nomadly, the advanced open-water diver focuses on absorbing new cultural experiences, indulging in adventure activities, and following her heart. She was an enthusiastic mentor to the contestants before their personality showcase round.



## AASHNA DHANUKA

*Life and confidence coach Ashna Dhanuka believes that success comes with self love and self belief. Strengthened by her own journey and the struggles she has faced, the motivational speaker helps individuals move ahead with confidence, self esteem and hard work. She shared with the contestants easy-to-follow secrets to change the way they thought, behaved and lived - for the better.*



# OUR PARTNERS

### PRESENTING SPONSOR



## BOSCH

Home Appliances

Bosch Home Appliances are engineered with quality, innovative technology and excellent design. Experts at Bosch constantly develop new ideas to make your daily life more comfortable so you have more time to spend on the things that matter. Bosch designs products that allow you to enjoy more free time at home.

### HAIR & MAKEUP PARTNER

## natu<sup>als</sup>

India's No.1 hair and beauty salon

*The Naturals group of salons was established in 2000 and has expanded its presence to various locations in Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and West Bengal. By the end of 2025, Naturals hopes to create a thousand successful women entrepreneurs, 3,000 Salons, and 50,000 jobs across the globe.*

### SILK ASSURANCE PARTNER



*Your Assurance of Pure Silk.*

Silk Mark is an initiative of the Central Silk Board, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India. Silk Mark is your only assurance of pure silk. Whenever you buy silk, ensure it has the Silk Mark Label. You will not only be assured of the purity of silk, but you will also support the livelihood of over 10 million farmers, reelers, weavers and craftsmen across the country involved in the silk industry. >

# WHERE PERSONALITY IS QUEEN

The contestants in the first-ever Mrs. Femina online hunt tell us of their experiences



## AVNI PANDEY

*Participating in Mrs. Femina gave me a platform to realise and showcase that I am more than what can be fitted in a box made by society. I am a wife, surgeon, mother, and daughter but, above all, I am a woman, and that makes me boundless.*



## ANNEYSHA THAKKER

**WINNER OF THE SRIMATHI SILKMARK CONTEST**

*Mrs. Femina 2021 was an incredible journey! Meeting my fellow participants from across the country, being mentored, preparing for and performing the various challenges – all this was part of a fun-filled and beautiful learning experience that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. With this journey I have had a chance at self-exploration. Mrs. Femina has made me a better version of myself!*



## ARUNIMA JHA

*Participating in Mrs. Femina was an adventure, a springboard for me to explore a new side of myself. I brought something with me and took a lot away; perhaps not the crown but certainly the experience of becoming a woman of substance.*



## IPSITA PRIYADARSINI

**WINNER OF THE PERSONALITY SHOWCASE ROUND**

*My experience in Mrs. Femina 2021 taught me that change is the only constant thing in life. We are never too old or too late to learn new things in life. I've learned to be a chameleon, adapting to change or being the change in society, setting an example for women out there to fight for their dreams. I am glad for the awards, recognition, and opportunities coming my way after the pageant; my thanks to Team Femina for its constant support and guidance through the online hunt.*



## ISHANI JASWAL

**WINNER OF 'SIX YARDS THREE LOOKS'**

*Deciding to participate in Mrs. Femina amid the chaos and uncertainty all around us marked a turning point for me. Over the years, I had lost confidence and motivation.*

*I was just drifting through life. Stepping into a pageant after years was an adrenaline rush for me. Interacting with beautiful women from across the country and participating in the sessions with strong mentors like Eshaa Amiin, Harpeet Suri, Neha Shah, Sharanya Iyer, and Ashna Dhanuka were experiences we looked forward to every week. It was indeed their tips and tricks that helped me win the title of Mrs. Fashionista in the pageant. Thank you, Femina, for providing women across India with such a great platform.*



## MUNMUN DUTTA

**FINALIST**

**My journey with Mrs. Femina has been surreal; finishing in the top five was really humbling! The experiences that I had in the six weeks of the online hunt were incredible and will stay with me for a lifetime. For me, it wasn't about beauty, fame or winning the crown but about being who you are. Because, as women, we are innovative, strong willed, kind and determined and, with all these, I believe we can foray into the fields in which we want to bring change. I thank Femina for giving married women this platform to showcase our talents and realise, once again, what it is to be a woman in every sense of the word.**



## PRACHI KANE

**FINALIST**

**Mrs. Femina has made me grow out of my comfort zone and increased my confidence. It has strengthened my belief that "impossible" is just an opinion.**

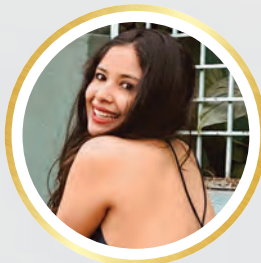


## PRAGATI ACHARYA

*Being a non-pageant person and having absolutely no idea about what goes into one, Mrs. Femina made me curious. My thirst to take up any challenge and try to excel at it pushed me to be a part of this online hunt. It drove me to take control of situations and I got to explore skills I didn't even know I had. It helped me prove that it's not important to be a pro at everything; you need to trust yourself, enjoy what you're doing, put your heart into it, and life will surprise you. >*

## MAHIMA BISHT

*Mrs. Femina was exciting and motivating. It became a big part of my life. It was on my mind a lot, perhaps too much. I went to bed thinking about it and woke up thinking about it. I've come out of the pageant a better and more self-motivated person. The only way to overcome your fears and grow as a person is to challenge yourself by getting out of your comfort zone, and Mrs. Femina really helped me to overcome my fear.*





## PRERNA NIGAM

**WINNER OF 'MY BEAUTY:  
THREE WAYS'**

The Mrs. Femina journey has expanded my horizons and made me realise that it's never too late to be the best version of yourself, and never too late to do every little thing you have dreamt of. I was already pregnant when I was shortlisted as a top 20 contestant, and, yet, *Femina* welcomed me with open arms to the journey, which proved that Mrs. Femina is all about nurturing talent beyond just physical appearance!



## RICHA SHARMA

*Every girl dreams of being on a platform that empowers her to showcase her strength and beauty to the world. Mrs. Femina proved to be exactly that platform for me. I am immensely grateful to Femina for giving me this opportunity for self-discovery. This journey has given me the self-belief to spread my wings and take flight across the sky towards the horizon to fulfill my dreams.*



## ROOPAL BAJAJ

Taking part in Mrs. Femina was a life-changing experience for me. It was the opportunity of a lifetime, and it gave me a wonderful platform on which to showcase my skills and talents. Thank you, *Femina*, for helping women make their dreams come true!



## RASHI JAIN

*The Mrs. Femina digital hunt was a unique and empowering experience. It challenged me to come out of my comfort zone to fight a battle against my inhibitions when it comes to trying something new with myself. The journey made me express myself more vocally; I found a whole new dimension of strength and versatility within myself. Thank you for this wonderful experience.*



## SHILPI PRIYADARSHINI

Going beyond beauty, age and, most importantly, marital status, *Femina* has shown women that there are no boundaries or barriers if we dream and take a step towards making that dream come true. Mrs. Femina brought with it a huge learning and lots of fun. The one month we spent in the competition brought out a creative side that I didn't even know I had; now, I'm just going to build on it and go further. Thank you, *Femina*, for this awesome journey, extremely informative and fun sessions, and the wonderful memories.



## SONAL SOMANI

*Having a virtual pageant was a fantastic idea. The whole journey was an enriching and learning experience for me, it was all about exploring myself. The mentors we had for each round were so helpful.*

*I'm not someone who enjoys anything other than comfortable but stylish clothing, but I have found some love for a sari. It's always going to be styled my way but, yes, that was a big discovery. The hunt was an equal opportunity for all, which made the experience even more special. I'm glad to have had this opportunity and to make memories I will cherish for life.*



## SURBHI CHOUDHARY

**WINNER OF 'YOUR CULTURE ON A PLATE'**

**I've always been a proud Jack of all trades and being a part of Mrs. Femina gave me the perfect opportunity to celebrate many of my passions such as fashion, cooking and public speaking. The best part was being mentored by the best of the best in every category, thanks to which I now feel like a master of all – completely unstoppable!**



## TAPESHWARI SHARMA

**MRS. FEMINA 2021!**

**The title of the first-ever Mrs. Femina is the ultimate reward I could get for not giving up on my dreams. I am absolutely ecstatic yet humbled to have received this honour.**



## TARUNIKA MATTU

**I feel happy to have been a part of Mrs. Femina as it has helped me develop the best of myself by appreciation and encouragement. I cannot express my thanks adequately, but, hopefully, these words are a start.**



## TRISHA DAS

*I had an incredible experience through Mrs. Femina. I did things that I didn't think I was capable of. This online hunt pushed me out of my comfort zone, and I'm glad it did because I would never have tried some of these tasks otherwise. It was an amazing experience; thank you for giving me this opportunity.*



## YAMINI KANG

**Mrs. Femina helped strengthen my perspective toward my self-identity. The challenging weekly tasks helped me learn new techniques to showcase and enhance my core skills. I have gained immense experience through this amazing journey and grown in self-confidence. I am motivated to constantly strive for self-improvement. I truly believe that if we put our heart into something, we can never fail. Either we win, or we learn. My gratitude to Femina for this incredible opportunity. >**

# FIRST AMONG EQUALS

**TAPESHWARI SHARMA** tells **Primrose Monteiro-D'Souza** about her challenging but interesting journey to becoming the first-ever Mrs. Femina

**S**he looked down at her hands, and then back again at the judges on the online panel. Somehow, she managed to make eye contact with all of them. Consistency, she said. Consistency is what brings you success.

The next day, Tapeswari Sharma became Mrs. Femina 2021, the first-ever winner of the online hunt that *Femina* had conducted through lockdown. This was a quest to showcase the personality and talents of some of India's most unstoppable women, in keeping with the brand's ethos. Sharma had consistently stood out in the four challenges, and impressed the judges with her versatility and confidence. She stood first among equals. She laughs about being happy in not having to actually stand up, confiding, "I'm just 5'2". That's why I never tried for Miss India, though it was a dream."

It was a dream that fuelled her journey that began in small town Rajgangpur in Odisha, as part of a Marwari family so conservative that even watching television was a no-no. But her father was so determined that his children should be able to achieve what they set their hearts on, that he broke away from the homestead to live in another town.

There, finding themselves bereft of the support that a joint family admittedly provides, they were forced to send their sons and daughter away to boarding school in Rajasthan. Ever independent, Sharma went on to graduate in commerce from Symbiosis College, Pune ("because acting is in my blood, and Pune is close to Mumbai"), and then, ever practical, she did a course in HR from NMIMS.

## **Life changed again in 2006...**

Sharma gave an impromptu audition outside the college gates, and got a call for a cameo role in the Balaji serial *Kasautii Zindagii Kay*. "It took just two or three days, but I had my foot in the door," she smiles, remembering. It took another 50 to 60 auditions to get a proper show, *Jiya Jale* on 9x, in which she played the lead's youngest sister. Then came *Sasural Genda Phool*, and popularity. "It gave me a lot of recognition," she reveals with touching pride.

Sharma worked in television until 2014; her last show was *Devon Ke Dev...Mahadev*, in which she played Usha, Mahadev's daughter. She stepped away from the bright lights—for a while—when she became a mom. There was much she took away from >



“From being an introvert who loved being alone, *I went on to become an extrovert who enjoys talking to people*”

her time on the small screen. “I went into television thinking it was a fun and glamorous job, which, of course, it is. I quickly learned that it is a lot of hard work, and physically and mentally exhausting. I also learned very quickly that it was very important to take care of yourself. And it made me realise that I could be scared of rejection.” Being in television also improved her people skills. “From being an introvert who loved being alone, I went on to become an extrovert who enjoys talking to people. And this is a skill I have realised is quite necessary in life.”

### Love and all that...

Sharma met her to-be husband when she shifted to Mumbai; they dated for six years and married in 2013. “Getting married into this amazing family was a game changer. My mother-in-law actually thinks of her daughters-in-law as her daughters. There are very strong women in my family, and I can proudly say that I owe winning the Mrs. Femina title to them.”

Sharma’s businessman husband is also her best friend. “We have been together for 14 years now. He is also an actor, so he also understands me as an artiste.”

Her son is now six, and Sharma believes she truly discovered herself and her strengths after he came into her life. “My dream for him is that he becomes a good and happy person. I want him to do whatever it is that makes him happy, and to know that material things are not the key to happiness. I want him to be extremely compassionate and do whatever he can to help people.”

### Now dancing to a new tune...

Becoming a mother brought Sharma much joy, but also a lot of pain. “I changed physically when I became a mother, but the fact that people around me changed hurt me. Having been an actor for eight years, I was used to attention but, when I put on weight and gave up work, a lot of people made me feel insignificant. I could not figure out what to do to raise my self-esteem. Then, one day, it struck me that, I love music and dancing, and that if I became a deejay, I wouldn’t have to give up my time with my child.” It was mostly a night job, so it was perfect. It took self-discipline, but it also brought new excitement into her life, and a sense of achievement. “It’s quite unnerving when you have to take over the console and play for the crowd,” she confesses. “Before every session, I feel super scared, but I go ahead and do the best that I can, and that makes



“I want him (my son) to be extremely compassionate, *and do whatever he can to help people*”

me feel like I can do anything.”

One of the ‘anythings’ was taking part in the Mrs. Femina online hunt. Sharma saw the call for entries on Instagram. “I was so thrilled when I saw it, but I didn’t register because I knew, in between my son’s online school, my deejaying and my responsibilities at home, it would be very difficult to find time to take part. But my husband pushed me to register; he assured me that he would help out more with our son and home.” >

## MANTRAS FOR LIFE



### Consistency

"I've realised that if I want to be successful and happy, I need to be consistent. I say successful *and* happy because, for me, these are two separate things. I know consistency that will bring me closer to my goals. Consistency, for me, is doing something in spite of not feeling motivated or passionate in that moment, but knowing that this is what I need to do if I want to see my visions for my life coming true."



### Hard work

"I see my life today as a result of everything I have done and the things I did not do. Honestly, I feel I should have worked harder and smarter when I was single. One takes for granted the time that they have. It's only after having my son that I realised the value of time. Every moment spent away from him now has to be either productive or good for my soul. The goals I have now are many more than when I was younger and carefree, and the responsibilities are twice what they were then, so working hard is the only option."



### Dreaming

"Fight for your dreams! It is not easy; it takes courage, effort and sacrifice to make your dreams come true, but it is possible when you have faith in yourself. Fighting doesn't necessarily mean arguing, it means figuring out a way. So figure out what you want, figure out how you can get it and just don't stop until you reach your destination. Be flexible in your strategies, but stubborn about your goals."



"As the title winner, I think I have a lot of opportunities opened up to me *and a lot of responsibilities*"

All of this happened during the lockdown, and the optimist finds plenty to be grateful for through the whole process. "The first lockdown was a chance to spend more time with family and to relax, though I don't enjoy relaxing too much. I did quite a few online live sessions on social media and for private parties. I made a lot of dance videos and kept myself occupied. I am grateful to have had the privilege to do that when so many people around us were trying to survive; it breaks my heart to think about that. This lockdown is much more difficult mentally, especially since I was really looking forward to enjoying my opportunities as Mrs. Femina. The title is such a huge honour. I feel that the efforts and hard work that I have put in through my life have led me to earn this recognition. It shows that, when a woman's dreams are supported, she is capable of reaching great heights. Now, as the title winner, I think I have a lot of opportunities opened up to me and a lot of responsibilities. I want to use the title to make a difference in my life and in other's lives. I think it will give a lot of hope to so many great married women who are capable of doing great things; it is a chance to be recognised for being multi taskers and achievers." **F**



# ALL HAIL THE INNOVATIVE SUPER CHEF

The **Femina Super Chef** event in Gurgaon tapped into the nation's renewed enthusiasm for cooking



If there has been one delicious outcome of the lockdowns, it is that India's interest in cooking has been rekindled. Cooking has become a way of treating ourselves and our families to something good in these distressing times, of raising our spirits, of keeping ourselves busy, almost like self therapy. Offering Delhi's home chefs a chance to showcase their cooking skills, Femina Super Chef was powered by **Sunflame**, in partnership with **LG Hing**, with **Cremica** and **Ambience Malls** as associate sponsors.

The finale took place on March 28, 2021, at Ambience Mall, Gurgaon, where food lovers, culinary enthusiasts and experts came together to find that one home chef who could let her personality shine through her food, and her food showcase her personality.

Leading up to the finale, participants

were invited to post photographs or videos of their showstopper dishes with recipes on social media, or mail them in, tagging *Femina* with the hashtag #FeminaSuperChef. Five home chefs made it to the finale.

## A Delicious Finale

The grand finale was about spotlighting that woman home chef who is innovative, who likes the excitement of the unknown, and enjoys the challenge of presenting known ingredients and condiments in an unfamiliar way. The jury for the final round included **Chef Ranjan Chowdhary** of Cremica and **Chef Rajesh Sharma**, Executive Chef, The Roseate New Delhi. The five shortlisted contestants — Kritika Malhotra Chugh, Palak Maheshwari, Ankita Bandooni, Meera Arora, and Trisha Suri — were joined by Ila

Gupta, who responded to a call for participants from the audience.

The contestants were asked to pick chits to find out which round they would each be participating in. In the first round — the *chaat* challenge — two contestants had to prepare *chaat* using the ingredients in the mystery box, enhancing the flavours of their dish by incorporating LG Hing. For the salad round, the next challenge, two contestants went head to head to make a salad using a Cremica product. For the third challenge, two contestants were picked to make their version of *shahi paneer* with a twist. After the three rounds, the esteemed jury picked two contestants to compete in the final round, which involved cooking an Indian dessert. After all the tastings, the judges crowned **Ila Gupta** the Femina Super Chef, Delhi.



## OUR EXPERTS SPEAK

"The event was very well organised and executed, and the contestants showed some serious culinary skills. I would like to congratulate Team Femina on such a wonderful event!"

**CHEF RANJAN CHOUDHARY OF CREMICA**

"It was a great honour and joy for us to associate with an exciting culinary challenge such as Femina Super Chef.

At Ambience Mall, we have always believed in bringing together people and communities to celebrate talent.

All the participants who shared their cooking skills have inspired several homemakers and home chefs to walk the extra mile.

We wish them great success."

**ARJUN GEHLOT,  
DIRECTOR, AMBIENCE  
MALL**

"In India, cooking is often perceived as a routine job, and the homemaker puts in considerable effort and time in the kitchen to create a better life for her family without realising how talented she is.

Hence, we felt that Femina Super Chef is a unique platform that not only recognises cooking skills as a talent but also gives these women the chance to experience the excitement of a reality cooking show in real life.

It is basically a hunt for the most creative culinary expert in the country. With this event, we feel we will be building a one-on-one relationship with millions of such talented homemakers."

**K. L. VERMA, MANAGING  
DIRECTOR, SUNFLAME**





# SKIN CONSCIOUS

IN ASSOCIATION WITH  
Cetaphil

FEMINA DIALOGUES  
THE BEAUTY SERIES

Your guide to sensitive skincare revealed at the Beauty Series x Cetaphil

The year 2020 saw a change in the landscape of skincare routine for each individual. From spending more time indoors to paying close attention to what your skin needs, people were seen exploring their skin's needs. And, 2021, doesn't look much different, at least now, as we are cooped in inside our houses, again to beat the deadly virus.

All this stress, summer weather could pose challenges for ones with sensitive skin. If you have sensitive skin or know someone with similar skin woes, tune in to Femina Dialogues on Femina.in to watch the entire session. In this specially-curated Femina Dialogues – The Beauty Series, in association with Cetaphil, we help you view your skincare regime under a microscope and offer a guided direction for those with sensitive skin or those suffering from skin issues like pigmentation.

In the beauty series, the panelists include Dr Jaishree Sharad, a celebrity cosmetic dermatologist, Manushi Chhillar, actor and Miss World 2017 winner, and G Sathya Narayanan, Managing Director, South Asia, Galderma. The session was moderated by Sukriti Shahi, Femina's assistant beauty editor. Here are some takeaways that can change your understanding of sensitive skin and ways to take care of it. Here are some excerpts.

## What is sensitive skin and how do you distinguish it from other skin types?

Celebrity dermatologist Dr Jaishree explains, "Sensitive skin has a heightened ability or response to anything external that comes in contact with the skin. The external factors could be in the environment, cosmetics, products, food or anything coming in contact with your skin. The reaction can be mainly

associated with redness, itching, burning sensation, rash, hive or the skin is just dry and flaky." The doc says, for people who have sensitive skin, the barrier layer is compromised so the penetration or permeability into the skin of external factors is far higher. Fewer ceramides, less hydration and more of the Trans Epidermal Water Loss (TEWL) leads to sensitive skin that reacts to a drop of a hat.

## How has the skincare regimen changed during these turbulent times?

Having found the time and patience to pay more attention to skincare, this pandemic had something good going for Manushi as she found the right skincare regimen using natural ingredients from her kitchen. She believes despite the notion that more products mean better skin, it's actually the right products that lead to good skin.

## How does Cetaphil's range of Bright Healthy Radiance skincare products come into making while addressing the issues like pigmentation suffered by sensitive skin?

Talking about the consumer research that led to the making of Cetaphil's sensitive skincare range, G Sathya observed that "up to 40 per cent of Indian women report to have a sensitive skin type." "It (the new product) has a unique technology called gentle-bright technology that combines two ingredients sea daffodil (natural plant extracts) and Niacinamide (gives vitamin B3 extracts that are skin antioxidants). Taking insights from 17 clinical studies in eight countries around the world, the results from using these products were even skin tone and dark-spot reduction in four weeks," adds G Sathya.

## Skincare or self-care, we beg to not differ!

Dr Jaishree believes "Eating healthy, staying hydrated, avoiding stress and following a healthy lifestyle is all a part of one's skincare regimen," she explains. Limit yourself with products, visit your dermatologist and for home remedies use the right ingredients for your skin type. **F**

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**Sensitive skin has a heightened ability or response to anything external that comes in contact with the skin**

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## ***MIND AND BODY***

In these troubled times, it's even more essential to look at health and wellness with a sharp focus. We have a prominent master talking about why meditation is a necessary practice, complemented with the importance of sleep cycles. We also discuss a complete guide to wellness at home from acne and hair loss to pre-existing illnesses and nutritional supplements. We leave no stone unturned, also, when it comes to kids and mental health professionals. How do we tackle the big questions they're asking or the trauma they are facing? Read on





## THE PANDEMIC EFFECT

# Into The Minds of Therapists

We speak to a neuropsychologist, a marriage counsellor, and a child therapist to understand the boundaries they drew for themselves amid the pandemic, and how the personal and the professional often get blurred in their profession. By **ARMAN KHAN**

**I**t is a frightening thought – the idea that things might never be the same again. The pandemic has revealed our real selves more clearly, in harsh detail. Marriages simmering under years of bitterness and apathy have unravelled, and couples in toxic relationships have finally taken proactive action to get themselves out of the static messes they were stuck in. Parents have discovered the ways in which they can better adapt to the needs of their children and vice versa.

For therapists, witnessing the fluctuating growth cycles of a wide array of individuals during this time has been disorienting. Yes, it's their job; something they've trained for. But one wonders—how many of us are really trained for a pandemic?

The Supreme Court recently mentioned how healthcare workers have gone beyond their call of duty to keep us afloat. We check in on the struggles of these captains who have gone above and beyond in steering our ships safely to the shores of sanity.



## Jasdeep Mago

Set boundaries of self-care for her own good

“There was absolutely no improvement with them. Nothing I was doing was working out. Things were so irreparable that I had almost begun to resent the process of therapy, and that is not a good thing at all,” she says, with utmost honesty.

After a particularly intense session with the said client, Mago called her best friend and broke down. It wasn't this client as much as it was the chaotic effects of the pandemic that had thrown her life into disarray. She ranted, cried, and let it all out. “It wasn't that I was lacking in empathy, just that I simply had no emotional bandwidth to process new lives,” she says.

It was at this point that she knew it was high time she carved out boundaries of self-care for her own good, and indirectly for the greater good of her clients. The emergency calls would still keep coming, but she decided she wouldn't use her phone after 7 P.M. The Buddhist chanting practice that had always come to her rescue in the past, helped her stabilise once again.

Now with the second wave, Mago believes she is in a much better mental space. “Things still seem to be falling apart,” she says, “but perhaps I now understand that, despite everything, it is possible that I can still keep myself together.” >

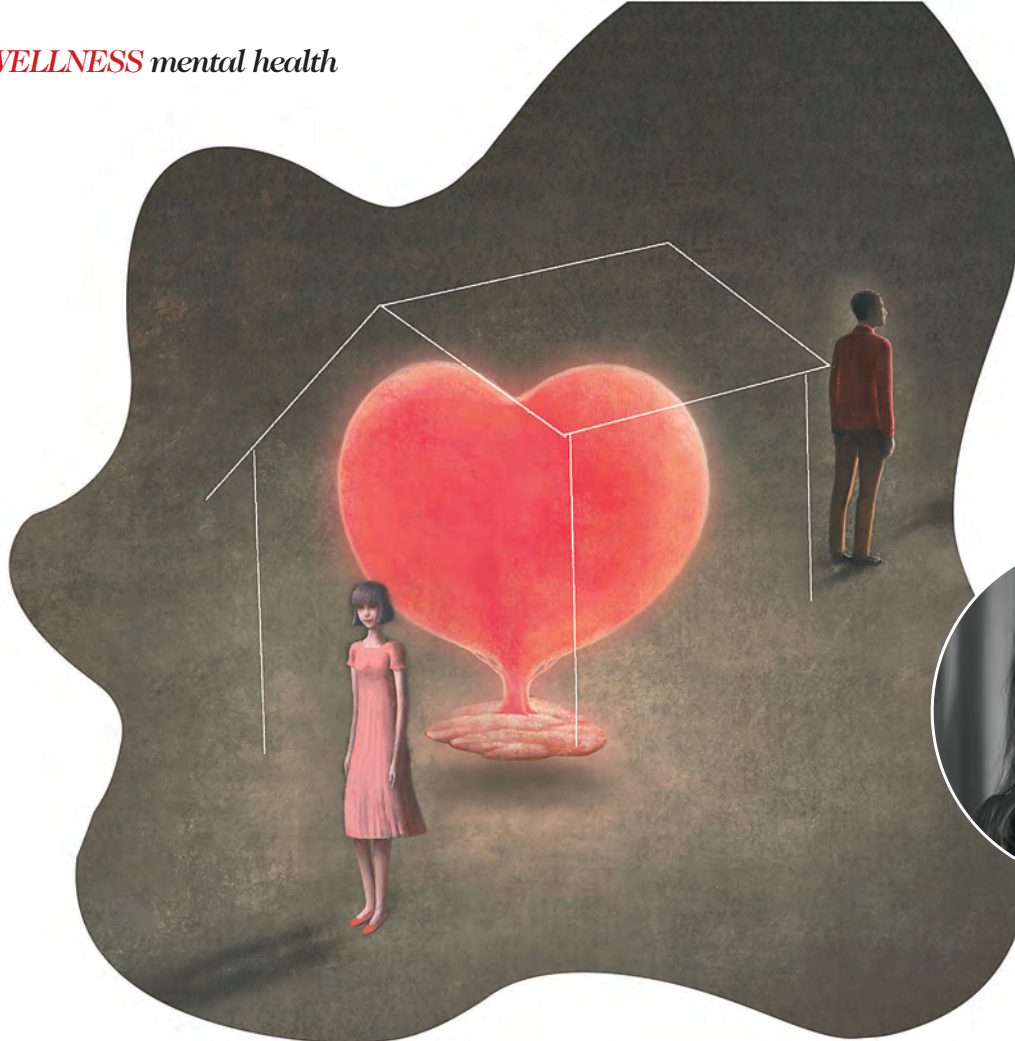
## THE LONG ROAD TO SELF-CARE

The whole point in Jasdeep Mago wanting to become a neuropsychologist was to understand her own life better, but, as her path became clearer, she reveals, “I realised that I could do something with this knowledge; that it could perhaps have a wider impact beyond me.”

But when the pandemic set in, the unpredictability of her profession truly set in too. Before she knew it, the volatility of it all had started to permeate her personal life. “It was scary,” she says, “I was snapping at my loved ones and getting annoyed easily.” The tipping point for Mago was when she took on someone else's client as a favour. Little did she know, this client would end up really shaking her up, and not entirely in the best possible ways.



**“IT WAS SCARY. I WAS SNAPPING AT MY LOVED ONES AND GETTING ANNOYED EASILY”**



**Dr.**  
**Shwetambara**  
**Sabharwal**

Likes to use the term  
'growth areas' as opposed  
to 'areas of problems'

## CLEARING OUT THE COBWEBS

Dr. Shwetambara Sabharwal specialises in marriage counselling. She does not like using the word 'stress' casually. Her description of the effects the pandemic had on her, is something to keep in mind: "There was a strain, yes. Physical strain too of receiving emergency calls from international clients in the middle of the night. But not stress. Nothing is a stressor unless you make it seem like one."

We've all seen news of marriages break in the pandemic, with divorce rates shooting up exponentially. But, for Sabharwal, there are no surprises there: "A lot of marriages were already under strain. To put the blame squarely on the pandemic would be an incorrect interpretation."

Sabharwal likes to use the term 'growth areas' as opposed to 'areas of problems'. "The one thing the pandemic brought to the fore are these growth areas between couples. When constantly living together, substance abuse was hard to hide and infidelity was easily identifiable."

The way Sabharwal sees it, any mental health disease takes at least six to eight months before it is easily diagnosable. The process of unravelling that might have begun in many marriages and relationships at the beginning of the pandemic, has now reached the stage where a diagnosis of all the underlying issues is possible.

While Sabharwal agrees that she perhaps might have every reason to be overwhelmed by the deluge of cases, it was important for her to "always be mindful" of the little things that we can perpetually be grateful for. "There is no point in ruminating over the past or the future. It doesn't take a lot to be aware of one's own cognition. The words we use, our actions – we simply need to know what we're doing. That solves almost half the problems and it certainly helped me," she says.

For Sabharwal, the key to basic mental health is to achieve a balance in the trinity of the body-mind-soul. "Everyone self-leans on these three nodes. And each one of us, particularly couples, gets overwhelmed because there is a deficit in these three nodes. For me and my clients, my job is to clear the many cobwebs between the three, one knot at a time," she explains.

**"THE  
WORDS WE  
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**“HOPE IS  
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## **Jehanzeb Baldiwala**

Reached out to her own support system – her peers – when it got disturbing

## **THE ARCHITECTURE OF HOPE**

Comparing traumas can often be misleading. We each have our own battles to fight, each one more challenging than the other. Most of us would like to believe, and for our own good reasons, that others have it better than us. But in the pandemic world, we can all perhaps reach a consensus that children have had the raw end of the deal.

For Jehanzeb Baldiwala – co-founder, Narrative Practices India, and Director of Mental Health services at Ummeed Child Development Centre – it was important to have a realistic understanding of what the future might look like for children.

“The primary source of security for younger kids comes from their parents, and, for teens, it is their peer group.

Both these groups had developed a complex relationship with their support systems in the pandemic,” she says.

The feeling that children had of life being horribly limited within the four walls of their room was a hard feeling to counter for Baldiwala. Their feelings were genuine. After all, they weren’t deluded that their childhood was forever going to be changed.

“It got disturbing, certainly. I reached out to my own support system – my peers. But, all along the way, I knew perfectly well that even though there was hopelessness around me, I had to give hope,” she says. And hope, the way Baldiwala sees it, doesn’t mean “a silver lining in a dark cloud” or a “pot of gold at the end of a bad day” but something more personal and intimate.

“Hope, for me, is simply a call to action,” she says, “It is the little things that can make a difference. The little things that you *can* do. Hope is not theatrical, and it is certainly not a miracle. And, eventually, you have a life that doesn’t seem that dark after all.” **F**





# WHEN KIDS ASK THE TOUGH QUESTIONS

Among the pandemic's many devastations is its impact on the mental health of children. Parents everywhere are trying their best to help their offspring make sense of our bleeding world. **By Aditya Mani Jha**

Counting the dead is an onerous and necessary task. And, at the end, there's still the living to be reckoned with. As we struggle to assess the true impact of the pandemic in terms of deaths and chronic illnesses, one could be forgiven for overlooking an area of concern: children's mental health. Dealing with death on such a vast scale is bad enough. There's also, however, the isolation that these kids have suffered through the lack of contact with their

friends and classmates. And, of course, The Big Bad: the fear that this virus will come for them or their parents next.

From the father of a six-year-old boy comes this: "There was a recent scare with my father-in-law (living 500km away) having a fever for a few days. While waiting for the test results, we were wondering if one of us should drive there and take care of him. My son overheard us and started crying that neither of us should go because he didn't want us to catch corona. It took a lot of convincing to tell him that we were only

planning and nothing was sure yet."

Another 12-year-old boy, according to his mother, comes and hugs her whenever she sits quietly by herself. Who died, Mama, is his inevitable question. He has become "insecure and clingy," his mother says. An eight-year-old girl living in Mumbai has, according to her mother, become obsessed with death. Her grandfather succumbed to COVID-related complications recently, and, since then, the little girl has been drawing images of the old man, bedridden, mask in place.

Paranoia, insecurity, confusion and the after-effects of prolonged isolation: these are common ground amid these disparate stories. In bittersweet movies like *Life is Beautiful* and *Jojo Rabbit*, there is an element of fabulism in the way information is withheld and/or manipulated to protect the psyches of young children. Today, in the internet era, this is no longer a realistic option. Children above the ages of 12 or so, especially those with ready access to the internet, form their own conclusions, and parents have to find a way to communicate without being patronising.

For Anil, a parent from Ludhiana, this meant explaining to his nine-year-old son why people shouldn't be celebrating Holi this year. "We watched some YouTube videos together that explained what coronavirus was, how it spreads, its impact on the world. He was initially upset, but he understood why people couldn't celebrate as usual this year." One America-based NRI mom spoke about how her 13-year-old daughter was keeping track of COVID-19 fatalities, especially after things started getting really bad in the US. "Instead of stopping her, I asked her to update me. And I chose to stay away

from the news. It gave her a sense of control and a sense of contribution to the family in the pandemic."

Another mother, who lives in Bengaluru, spoke about the questions her children – a daughter in standard four and a son in standard five – posed to her: "What is this virus? How will it affect the body? Why do I have to wear a mask? When can I go outside? When can I go to school?" Even though the children were familiar with the concepts of death and bereavement, the stress got to them after a while. In the middle of a long stretch of life under lockdown, they began to cry. "I had to make up stories, take them to the terrace to show them the stars, the moon, and reassure them. Had to tell them again and again, we are safe, we are together now, and let's make the most of it," she says.

Managing a child's fears while making sure their development as secure adults isn't stalled – that's the tightrope parents are currently walking. There's the very real fear that, with some children, the impact on their mental health could well be long-term. And, while there are limits to what parents can do to limit the damage, most people I spoke to agreed that being rigorously honest was crucial, even if the truth feels too much to stomach sometimes.

"You have to treat them like equals and not little people that you own," said an Indian-American parent. "NRI parents spend too much time cultivating obedience and respect for the elderly, etc, in their children, often at the expense of their own interests. I've told my kids that they don't have to hug elders or touch their feet and so on if they don't feel safe."

As we wait for the COVID dominos to stop falling, we'd do well to remember that our children are inheriting a world ravaged, its fundamentals called into question. The least we can do is to make sure they have all the help they need, as they set about negotiating the much-loathed 'new normal'. **F**

## CHILDREN ABOVE THE AGES OF 12 OR SO, ESPECIALLY THOSE WITH READY ACCESS TO THE INTERNET, FORM THEIR OWN CONCLUSIONS



# AT HOME WITH WELLNESS

How to deal with comorbidities and other health concerns during a pandemic.  
By **Eden Noronha**

‘Social distancing’, ‘Flattening the curve’, ‘Quarantine’ – these are some of the most widely-used terms nowadays after the COVID-19 outbreak has unleashed utter mayhem around the globe. While self-isolation seems to be the only and most effective way of dealing with this health crisis, one cannot deny that staying indoors comes with its own set of challenges – whether related to staying mentally or physically fit.

From pre-existing diseases to new physical and mental health issues developed during and due to the pandemic, there are a lot of concerns that cannot be overlooked, especially in such critical times, even as you self-isolate at home. Here is an overview of common health concerns related to the virus, and comorbidities that can lead to complications, along with effective measures to treat them, and tips to stay safe and healthy at home.



## Hair Loss And Acne Resulting From COVID-19

With inputs from Dr Smriti Naswa, Consultant Dermatologist and Cosmetologist, Fortis Hospital, Mumbai  
Researchers are trying to analyse the side-effects of certain medications administered during COVID-19 treatment. Among these, hair loss and acne are commonly seen. Take a look at some of the after-effects, and ways to overcome them.

### Hair loss

Many recovered patients have reported temporary hair loss after battling the infection. This hair loss is due to Acute Telogen Effluvium, a temporary condition in which people experience excessive hair shedding after a stressful life event. This usually starts three months after the said event. According to a survey conducted by the Indiana University School of Medicine, it was found that hair loss was among the top 25 symptoms experienced by those diagnosed with the highly infectious disease.



**IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THE REASON FOR THE ACNE, AND TO IDENTIFY THE ACCELERATORS**



**Solution:** Don't panic. Instead, seek help from your dermatologist at the earliest, since they can help identify other triggers for hair loss. You need to have proper nutrition, especially with foods rich in vitamins, minerals, iron, calcium, and protein. If a proper diet is not maintained, the hair loss might get prolonged. It is recommended that you have a balanced diet in varied colours – a rainbow diet can be easily adopted. Have two to three fruits each day; vegetables, millets, grains, legumes and good fats must also be incorporated into your diet, and do not go for too much protein consumption.

**Acne**

If your doctor has put you on steroids for your COVID-19 treatment, be aware that a common side-effect is acne. It is commonly observed around the trunk (chest, back, shoulders), lower jaw, and neck. Excessive sweating is another cause known to aggravate acne – so a rise and drop in body temperature might have added to steroid-triggered acne. Another aspect is the fact that, during hospitalisation, the drop in frequency of hair-washing leads to dandruff, which is another known acne-aggravating factor.

**Solution:** It is important to understand the reason for the acne, and to identify the accelerators. Do not scratch the flare-ups, otherwise they will leave marks. Use non-comedogenic moisturisers to keep the skin hydrated after bathing. Refrain from harsh scrubbing to treat the acne. Moisturiser won't treat acne that has already occurred, but it will definitely prevent complications like pigmentation. One thing is certain: once treated, this acne won't come back as the triggering agent, the steroids, will be discontinued. >

## Comorbidities & Treatment

A comorbidity is a medical condition that co-occurs with another affliction. Comorbidities are leading to a higher death rate. Death usually results from multiple organ failure and other health complications. While healthcare providers are doing their best to tackle the virus and spread information about the precautions to be taken, patients already suffering from chronic illnesses like cancer, diabetes, or heart-related issues, who are also at risk of testing positive for COVID-19, are worried about availing hospital treatment in these times. We take a look at the most common comorbidities in coronavirus, and why it is important to seek treatment at this time.

### Cancer

With inputs from Dr Amit Chakraborty, MS General Surgery and MCh Oncosurgery  
The fear of contracting COVID-19 has kept patients from visiting hospitals to get themselves tested for cancer-related symptoms. Such delay in initial diagnosis has caused severe damage in patients with cancer. Stage I and II are considered to be early stages of cancer, in which the progression of the malignant cells is limited. By the time a patient enters stages III and IV, the cancer is said to have progressed or grown. The later stages affect the mortality rate of patients. During COVID-19, many patients were

diagnosed when they were in stage III and IV, which lowered their chances of cure, and even survival.

**Treatment approach:** It is extremely vital that we accept the new normal that is going to last for a few more years and avoid procrastinating diagnoses and scheduled treatments. Early screening leads to diagnosis in the early stages and, overall, increases the chances of survival. Take all safety precautions, check on the hospital or clinic's procedures, and get a check-up.

### Diabetes

With inputs from Dr Neelkanth Kote, Medical Advisor and Consultant Diabetologist, Alt Life  
In India, 47 per cent of people diagnosed with coronavirus are type 2 diabetic patients. People with diabetes are more likely to experience fatal conditions in current times, because their health is majorly compromised, and the prognosis is poor. Viral infections

**IT IS EXTREMELY VITAL THAT WE ACCEPT THE NEW NORMAL THAT IS GOING TO LAST FOR A FEW MORE YEARS AND AVOID PROCRASTINATING DIAGNOSES AND SCHEDULED TREATMENTS**



become difficult to treat as blood sugar levels fluctuate, and the recovery period takes longer than normal. Furthermore, the immune system of diabetics is potentially challenged due to abnormal blood sugar levels that makes them a little more at risk in this virus transmission. It is established that diabetics are more prone to the novel coronavirus. **Treatment approach:** Wearing masks, maintaining social distancing, and isolating when initial symptoms show up are some of the basic necessities during these challenging times. Diabetics should also try maintaining a healthy immunity balance by consuming regular, recommended doses of vitamin C, vitamin D and zinc in their diet. Avoid eating junk or street food. Prescribed medication should be taken religiously, and blood sugar levels should be checked periodically.

### Heart Disease

With inputs from Dr Rajpal Singh, Director and Interventional Cardiologist, Fortis Hospitals, Bengaluru  
Statistics show that India accounts for two-thirds of the heart disease burden in the world, and this remains the number one cause of mortality in our country. **Treatment approach:** Your heart is a muscle, and you should consistently work out to keep it strong. Just as exercise strengthens other muscles in your body, it makes the heart muscle more efficient in pumping blood. Therefore, a simple, brisk 30-minute walk can do wonders for your heart. Walking can also help in strengthening bones, reducing body fat, and improving endurance. Maintain a healthy diet by including plenty of fruits and vegetables, eating moderate amounts of fats and oils, and using fewer salts and sugars. Sleep deprivation can contribute to problems with blood pressure, and increase the risk of heart disease, so good quality sleep is essential too.



## Staying Healthy At Home



From creating a regular fitness routine and a relaxing beauty regimen to dealing with underlying health issues, these simple tips will help you stay healthy at home.

### Practise Yoga

This is the best time to focus on your mental well-being and what better than regular yoga when confined to your home? There are a zillion YouTube videos and tutorials available online. If you are a beginner, we suggest you stick to simple *asanas*. Some experts say that 30 minutes of yoga at home is often more beneficial than intensive hours at a gym. Make yoga a part of your morning ritual. The sun salutation, or *surya namaskar*, is the best way of practising yoga because it puts together *asanas* that involve and exercise different parts of the body.

### Take Short Active Breaks

The WHO recommends 'short bouts of physical activity such as dancing, playing

**EVEN IF YOU ARE TAKING HEALTH SUPPLEMENTS, YOU WILL NOT REAP THE BENEFITS IF YOU DON'T PAY HEED TO YOUR DIET**



## GENERAL HEALTH TIPS FOR PATIENTS WITH COMORBIDITIES

### Ensure Hygiene

Maintaining sanitation is one of the most important things during this pandemic.

Sanitisers with at least 70 per cent alcohol should be used regularly.

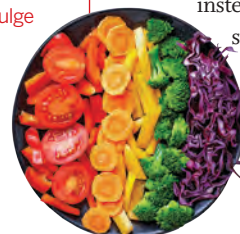
Washing your hands before consuming meals and using separate towels is recommended. The common area that is accessible to all should be cleaned and disinfected every once in a while. A mask should be worn at all times to avoid the risk of the virus spreading while you are outdoors. A mask should typically cover the nose and mouth together. Glasses or head shields can be worn to cover naked eyes.

### Practise Social Distancing

Try maintaining at least six feet distance even while staying indoors, considering the vulnerability of a comorbidity. Avoid gatherings, unnecessary meetings, and close contact with anyone who has frequent outdoor activity. Avoid shaking hands, hugging or touching others. Instead, wave and communicate verbally.

### Unplug

Since the pandemic has forced us to work from home, many of us have struggled to find the ideal work-life balance. Consequently, we are constantly glued to our gadgets and finding this new norm very stressful. A healthy lifestyle means giving oneself the time and opportunity to indulge in our favourite hobbies and passions outside of our work. You must follow a predictable schedule at work, even if you are working from home, and unplug from your gadgets when the day is over.



with children, and performing domestic chores such as cleaning and gardening' that are extremely beneficial to stay active at home. You can also walk around the house if you can't get out to keep fit.

### Stay Hydrated

According to experts, women should be drinking at least 2.5 litres of water a day, and men should be drinking at least 3.5 litres of water daily. This includes water from food and other sources like tea, coffee, and juices.

### Get Regular Oil Massages For Hair

Use this quarantine to focus on your hair health. Never underestimate a good hot-oil head massage, since it also works as a great stress buster. You can use coconut, olive, almond, or argan oil. Add a few drops of castor oil to the mix for hair growth. In case you are struggling with dandruff, add a few drops of tea tree oil.

### Practise Mindful Eating

It's always easy to reach for that bag of chips or grab that chocolate muffin to seek solace when one is ridden with anxiety about this lockdown. Even if you are taking health supplements, you will not reap the benefits if you don't pay heed to your diet. Eat foods high in vitamins A, C, and E, minerals like zinc and iron, and omega-3 fatty acids too. Try increasing your protein intake with foods like eggs, beans, nuts and whole grains. However, that doesn't mean you have to eat loads of meat; spinach and avocado are great sources of protein as well.

### Limit Your Fat Intake

WHO recommends limiting total fat intake to less than 30 per cent of total energy intake, of which no more than 10 per cent should come from saturated fat. Choose cooking methods that require less or no fat, such as steaming, grilling or sautéing instead of deep-frying. You can switch to olive or sunflower oil to cook. Also, reduce your intake of red and fatty meats, butter and full-fat dairy products, palm oil and coconut oil. **E**



# SLEEP YOUR WAY TO HEALTH

Working from home, even just being at home can be more difficult than you imagine. Getting a good night's sleep is key to a healthier today. By **Eden Noronha**

**B**efore the pandemic changed our lives, the estimated cost to the global economy in lost productivity due to depression and anxiety disorders was US\$ one trillion per year, the World Health Organisation (WHO) website reports. This figure did not reflect the unreported cases of anxiety, depression or other such disorders that people might have been facing. The numbers now are exponentially higher, and it will take some time and perspective to see the economic fallout of the situation resulting from mental health problems.

And, yet, beyond the financial aspect of the problem is the fact that so many of us might be unknowingly suffering

from stress and anxiety. With everyone spending eight or more hours a day at work, we need to ensure that we can be as calm and stress-free as possible.

## COULD YOU BE AT RISK?

The WHO says the work-related risk factors for mental health relate to interactions between the type of work we do, the organisational and managerial environment, the skills and competencies of the employees, and the support available to them to carry out their work. Other risks might include inadequate health and safety policies, poor communication and management practices, limited participation in

decision-making or low control over one's area of work, low levels of support for employees, inflexible working hours, and unclear tasks or organisational objectives. Some of the other bigger risk factors include psychological, verbal and sexual harassment at work.

Citing a Harvard Medical School report on 'Mental Health Problems in the Workplace', Dr Deepanwita Roy, Clinical Psychologist at MFine, a telemedicine app, states that the following mental health disorders are prevalent in working individuals...

**Depression:** Symptoms include increased nervousness, restlessness and irritability. Depression can make the person aimless, unproductive, withdrawn and passive.

**Bipolar disorder:** Symptoms include changing moods that cycle between depressed and elevated or manic. People with bipolar disorder can be disruptive, rule-flouting, and overly aggressive or have their judgement impaired.

**Anxiety disorder:** Fatigue, restlessness, difficulty in concentration, and excessive worrying over performance are symptoms. This is the most common mental health disorder recorded among employees.

**ADHD:** Symptoms include failure



## EVEN IF THE SUN ISN'T SHINING BRIGHTLY, NATURAL LIGHT STILL HAS POSITIVE EFFECTS ON CIRCADIAN RHYTHM

to meet deadlines, disorganisation, problems following instructions from supervisors, inability to manage workloads, and arguments with co-workers.

While ADHD is more common in children, adults, too, might show similar symptoms.

If you notice any of these symptoms in yourself, talk to someone – ideally a professional counsellor – who can help you the right way. If you think a colleague might be struggling, guide them to get help too.

### SLEEP IS THE ANSWER TO MANY ISSUES

“In this time when traditional ways to seek help remain out of reach, there are still ways to improve the work-from-home environment, and ensure your wellness,” says Dr Roy. “A good night’s sleep can be one of the key elements in overall health. Studies suggest 90 to 95 per cent of employees who work from home suffer stress-related insomnia in the new normal. Insomnia, backaches, restlessness, stress and anxiety are among the side effects that people are facing from the prolonged work-from-home routine. For many, working from home has not only blurred the lines between their personal and professional lives, but has also led to the emergence of minor to major sleep deprivation, sleep disturbances, and, in some cases, insomnia.” Dr. Roy suggests steps that can help.

### HELP YOURSELF

If you are dealing with work stress and sleep problems, here are a few self-help strategies to try...

**Try journalling:** If you find yourself waking up in the night because you can’t stop thinking about something that’s stressing you in the day, journalling can help you clear your mind. It will help process strong emotions that are causing you to lose sleep, and help you brainstorm and construct plans, which, in turn, will aid in managing your stress.

**Reserve your bed only for sleep:** Sleep experts emphasise the importance of creating an association in your mind between your bed and sleep. For this reason, they recommend that sleep and sex be the only activities that take place in your bed. This means that working-from-home should not be working-from-bed. Avoid bringing a laptop to bed to watch a movie or series. Create a comfortable and comforting space by making your bed, fluffing up your pillows and frequently changing your sheets; it will make it more conducive for you to doze off.

**Get back to sleep at night:** If you find that you’re having a hard time sleeping, don’t spend more than 20 minutes tossing and turning. Instead, get out of bed and do something relaxing in very low light, and then head back to bed to try to fall asleep.

**Expose yourself to sunlight:** Exposure to light plays a crucial role in helping our body regulate sleep in a healthy



way. As you deal with disruptions to daily life, you might need to take steps so that light-based cues have a positive effect on your circadian rhythm. Keep windows and blinds open to let natural light into your home during the day. Even if the sun isn’t shining brightly, natural light still has positive effects on circadian rhythm.

**Be careful with daytime naps:** If you’re home all day, you might be tempted to take more naps. Rather than approaching naps haphazardly, consider a more intentional and consistent napping schedule. In addition to reducing sleepiness, napping can improve learning, help with memory formation, and assist with our emotional regulation.

It’s important to note that naps should be limited to just 10 to 20 minutes, as longer naps can leave one feeling groggy, while shorter naps simply aren’t long enough for you to reap the benefits.

**Contact your doctor if necessary:**

If you have severe or worsening sleep or other health problems, it is advisable to be in touch with your doctor. **F**





## THE AXIS OF PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION

We all know that it's beneficial to meditate. Here's a detailed deep-dive into why, from health reasons, unlocking creativity, to the process of evolution, both physical and spiritual.

By **Master Danny Gorgonia**

What exactly is meditation? The dictionary defines it as the act of thinking, pondering, contemplating. It's a clear and simple definition, but it implies that everyone is doing it, and that it comes naturally to all.

Studying its Eastern origins, however, shows that meditation is more complex. Sometimes it's thinking and pondering, sometimes it's the complete opposite – not thinking, not focusing. There's meditating on the stillness between one's breaths, and there's meditating with the chanting of mantras. There's meditation to deepen your understanding of a subject matter, and there's meditation to relax and rest the logical mind. There is meditation in sitting still, and there's meditation in body movements – stepping from one stance to another, moving from one *asana* to the next, like a silent dance. Sometimes meditation is a dance, as the whirling dervishes do.

In the ancient Eastern traditions, from Hinduism to Jainism, Buddhism and Taoism, meditation was, and still is, an integral part of their respective spiritual practices. Under each of these religions there are as

many types of meditations as there would be prayers. Prayer and meditation do go hand in hand in spiritual practice, with many practitioners saying that in prayer, "You talk to God," and in meditation, "God talks to you." In spiritual and religious organisations, certain types of meditations are designed to raise the consciousnesses of practitioners to a higher level, up into the spiritual world, where communing with the Divine is possible. Meditation here is spiritual training, honing a person's inner perceptions to sense what lies beyond the material world.

Now, in the 21st century, where does meditation stand? It's no longer just thinking, pondering, and contemplating. Nor has it retained an exclusively spiritual flavour. What good does meditation still do?

Firstly, **meditation is good for health**. Studies show that it can reduce stress and clear the mind. It contributes to improved performance and productivity at the workplace and leads to harmonious relationships at home. Studies on the brain show that meditation also brings brain waves down to a slower cycle, from beta (the waking state), to alpha (the relaxed state), and to theta (the meditative state). Beyond this is delta, or deep, dreamless sleep. >



## MEDITATION IS GOOD FOR HEALTH. STUDIES SHOW THAT IT CAN REDUCE STRESS AND CLEAR THE MIND

During meditation, the practitioner's brain waves hover around alpha and theta, and they feel more relaxed and more positive. At this time, healing is possible. The body's self-healing mechanism proceeds smoothly, uninterrupted by a conscious, constantly criticising mind. When the mind is calm, digestion improves, the immune system functions properly, hormones balance out, blood pressure lowers, headaches go away, and fatigue is replaced with new vigour, etc. So, practising meditation for 15 to 20 minutes a day is good for self-healing.

Secondly, **meditation taps into the fount of creativity.** The "eureka" moments, the discovery of new ideas, or the sudden realisation of perfect solutions – these generally happen when the mind is relaxed and more so when it is in theta state. Meditation trains the mind to shift more easily from waking beta to meditative theta. In theta, brain waves are slower and deeper, the mind is calmer, and fewer thoughts are generated. This peaceful inner environment allows the creative juices to flow and brings forth the ideas and concepts that would have likely been ignored during the active waking state. With regular meditation, one experiences this coursing of creative energies more frequently, as the brain is trained to go to the theta state, and to, therefore, access spontaneous, creative, infinite, fantastic ideas.

Thirdly, **meditation helps us evolve.** Physical evolution

happens very slowly, over several lifetimes and generations, spanning centuries and millennia.

But evolution on the non-physical level – for the aura, the chakras and meridians, and the energies flowing through them – might be possible within a lifetime, through the magic of meditation. The magic ingredient that catalyses this process is *prana*, or subtle energy. When fresh, clean, healthy *prana* is infused regularly and frequently into the aura, chakras, and meridians, change starts to happen and evolution gets a jump-start.

Not many meditations are able to do this. The few meditations that do specialise in accelerating evolution require the practitioner to work on their own chakras and meridians, plus reconstruct their character through the practice of virtues. Chakral meditations increase the quantity of *prana*. Living a virtuous life upgrades the quality of the *prana*. As the aura, chakras, and meridians start evolving, the physical body follows suit, and the transformation spreads, to the mind, the soul, and the spirit. This path is not easy, but it's a challenge worth taking for those who are ready.

To meditate is to ponder, think, contemplate. It is also a path to better health, a doorway to the fount of truth and creativity, and a key to evolution. **F**

*Trained personally by Grandmaster Choa Kok Sui, the founder of modern Pranic Healing and Arhatic Yoga, Master Danny Gorgonia is one of the senior-most disciples of the school, in the world. Teaching extensively across the globe, his clarity and profound understanding of esoteric truths have garnered an immense following with students, seekers and practitioners. Read more on the school and Meditation on Twin Hearts on [www.worldpranichealing.com](http://www.worldpranichealing.com)*

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# How To Deal With PREGNANCY During A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

What to do if you're pregnant and test positive? Does COVID affect the baby? These questions have been on many pregnant women's minds, causing endless extra stress. **Radhika Sathe-Patwardhan** got some experts on board to help answer these and more such questions

**T**he second wave of the pandemic in India has shaken us all. For expecting mothers though, it has been a time of added stress and emotional upheaval. Statistics have shown that, last year, during the first wave of the novel coronavirus, pregnant women did not contract the virus as much as they have during this current second wave. Considering that this time around, the virus and its new strains are widely accepted to be more virulent, it is natural that the fear and uncertainty around COVID is seen amongs all, and many have questions they want answered. This is despite it being around since 2019, as it mutates and newer strains are still being discovered.

The Nuffield Department of Women's and Reproductive Health at the University of Oxford recently came out with their

INTERCOVID Study in the journal *JAMA Pediatrics*, in which they based their research on over 2,100 pregnant women across 18 countries worldwide. They concluded that the risk to mothers and babies is much greater than what was acknowledged earlier. Professor of Fetal Medicine, Aris Papageorgiou from the University of Oxford, who co-led this study, has stated that, "Women with COVID-19 during pregnancy were over 50% more likely to experience pregnancy complications (such as premature birth, pre-eclampsia, admission to intensive care and death) compared to pregnant women unaffected by COVID-19." But, before you panic, note that this research is not based on a big database and is as yet unsubstantiated. It is, however, a good heads-up to keep track of any changes and symptoms and to find out if you're COVID positive in the early stages.





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“STICK TO A WELL-BALANCED DIET, WASH YOUR HANDS, **DON'T BE AROUND SICK PEOPLE, AND LIMIT VISITORS AT HOME.** AVOID GOING TO CROWDED PLACES, AND FOLLOW COUGH AND SNEEZE ETIQUETTE”

### **Staying safe**

How can a pregnant woman protect herself against COVID-19?

Dr. Madhuri Burande Laha, consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist, Motherhood Hospital, Kharadi in Pune, says, “A pregnant woman will have to strictly follow the COVID protocol like using a mask, social distancing, and hand sanitising.” She adds, “Stick to a well-balanced diet to enhance immunity, wash your hands from time to time, don't be around sick people, limit visitors at home, avoid going to crowded places, and follow cough and sneeze etiquette.” The cough and sneeze etiquette she is referring to involves using the crook of your elbow to cough or sneeze into if you don't have a handkerchief readily available. New mothers also need to wash their hands before and after touching the baby and to “practise good respiratory hygiene and breastfeed your baby safely by masking and after proper hand sanitisation”. >



## EARLY DIAGNOSIS AND PROMPT TREATMENT ARE IMPORTANT TO CURTAIL THE DISEASE PROGRESSION



### Keeping check

If you're pregnant, and recognise any symptoms of coronavirus, firstly, don't panic. Secondly, "those pregnant women having classic symptoms of COVID-19 like cough, fever, body pain, loss of smell and taste or breathing difficulties should immediately get themselves tested for COVID-19," says Dr. Veena Aurangabadwala, gynaecologist, Zen Multispeciality Hospital in Chembur, Mumbai. "Vomiting, nausea, and breathlessness are some of the symptoms experienced by pregnant women that might overlap with COVID symptoms. Consult a gynaecologist or physician immediately," adds Dr Burande Laha. Dr. Vaishali Joshi, obstetrician and gynaecologist at Kokilaben Ambani Hospital in Mumbai, also adds that "early diagnosis and prompt treatment are important to curtail the disease progression. As per ICMR guidance, all pregnant asymptomatic mothers are tested for COVID within five days of their expected due date."

**Nutritionist and dietician Avanti Deshpande** offers nutritional advice for women to avoid COVID-19 infection, and also for those who have tested positive for the virus

Pregnancy is divided into three trimesters. In the first trimester, the focus is to ensure that the foetus is well planted in the womb. The calorie requirement of a woman in this trimester is almost similar to an adult non-pregnant woman. In the first trimester, the focus is also on folic acid, which one gets from apples, green leafy vegetables, and sprouts.

In the second and third trimesters, the calorie and protein requirements increase. The diet should increase in good calories, so, include foods like whole milk, nuts, especially almonds, walnuts, mixed seeds (flax, pumpkin, melon), protein-rich foods like *dals*, sprouts, eggs, etc. Food rich in omega-3 fatty acids like walnuts and flax seeds, fibre-rich foods like fruits and salad should also be consumed so that the vitamins and minerals nourish, build immunity, and provide fibre to ensure that you are not constipated. Keep the diet balanced with a good portion of protein, salads, and leafy greens and let complex

carbs like *chapati*, millets and rice enter your system. One should also include *ghee* in the diet as it will increase the growth of the gut microflora, which will build immunity and fight infections. Turmeric, too, is beneficial in protecting against a virus attack. Keep sipping warm water throughout the day and ensure you rest well. This will help build your immunity.

If a pregnant woman tests positive, here are some tips to help fight the virus in terms of nutrition alone:

- ◆ Ensure that you have turmeric milk at least twice a day
- ◆ Keep hydrating, with fresh fruit juices, water and freshly-made buttermilk (if you have a cold, avoid this), and home-made soups.
- ◆ Rest well.
- ◆ Keep protein intake high in every meal, including, breakfast, lunch, snacks and dinner.
- ◆ Avoid fried and junk foods.
- ◆ Keep up with the vitamin supplements, including Vitamin C if needed.

# THE CHANCE OF TRANSMISSION FROM MOTHER TO THE UNBORN FOETUS THROUGH THE PLACENTA OR TO THE NEWBORN BABY THROUGH THE BIRTH PASSAGE IS ALMOST NEGLIGIBLE



## Clinical Psychologist Dr. Perna Kohli, founder – MindTribe.in gives pointers on how a pregnant woman who is diagnosed with COVID can maintain her calm

In order to maintain mental sanity and peace, follow the advice of your doctor, which might include regular temperature checks, lying on your stomach, breathing exercises, maintaining a routine, and having positive thoughts. Self-medication based on hearsay or social media advice is a no-no. Here are more ways to keep mental stress at bay:

**Take your multi-vitamins:** Prenatal vitamins aid in the development of your baby and also protect you from illness.

**Exercise:** Exercise releases endorphins that benefit the development of your foetus and, being the 'happy hormone', keep you happy.

**Practise mindfulness:** It is important to calm your nervous system by engaging in mindfulness breathing. You can use the 4-7-8 technique, which means breathe into the count of four, hold your breath to the

count of seven and release your breath to the count of eight. Repeat this thrice as this can help you release stress.

**Reduce news exposure:**

If news impacts your mental health and makes you jittery, refrain from watching or reading. It is essential that you look at various types of news like sports, international, business, and not just COVID-related.

**Read to prepare self:** Take this time to read books on childbirth, child development, or invest this time to prepare yourself mentally on how to take care of your baby later.

**Keep all the resources handy:** Make a folder or a virtual document to organise all resources, so you are prepared for the birth of your child. This will help reduce panic.

## Knowing the risks

Dr. Joshi notes, "Pregnant women have been considered a high-risk group since the COVID-19 epidemic has started due to low immunity, which sets in due to natural changes during pregnancy. In the current situation, advanced pregnancy weeks, i.e. the third trimester, associated health problems like diabetes, pre-eclampsia, asthma and advanced maternal age can give rise to severe illness, ICU care and preterm delivery or foetal loss." Being overweight and having hypertension can also be considered a comorbidity and increase the risk of contracting the coronavirus, according to Dr. Aurangabadwala.

Another worry that mothers-to-be have is of passing the virus to the baby. "The chance of transmission from mother to the unborn foetus through the placenta or to the newborn baby through the birth passage is almost negligible," says Dr. Joshi. Dr. Aurangabadkar points out, "There is not enough evidence or studies to validate the possibility of a pregnant woman passing COVID to her unborn or newborn baby. There is no information regarding miscarriage as well."

There have been some rumours over social media that pregnant women while giving birth should opt for caesarean sections only. "The mode of delivery or the way woman has her baby is not determined by the positive COVID result," Dr. Joshi stresses, "Usually, caesarean sections are necessary for critically ill patients. But vaginal delivery can be achieved in asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic pregnant women." The decision, Dr. Aurangabadwala says, should be based on the case and what the doctor and the mother decide upon. >



## Expert Advice



**Dr. Veena Aurangabadwala**

"If you notice any abnormal changes in the body like breathlessness or any other signs, then immediately report to the doctor. Do not neglect the symptoms and delay your treatment. Avoid unnecessary CT scans unless absolutely necessary and advised by the treating gynaecologist or MD physician."



**Dr. Madhuri Burande Laha**

"Do not self-medicate; always consult a doctor. Track your symptoms daily. Check your temperature and oxygen levels twice a day. Take your vitamins and other supplements as suggested by the doctor. Do not panic."



**Dr. Vaishali Joshi**

"Asymptomatic and mildly symptomatic pregnant women should isolate at home. Maintain hydration by plenty of fluids, physical fitness by regular physical and breathing exercises, and mental health by staying in touch with family and friends virtually. Inform the hospital or maternity home in case you go into labour during isolation."



**Avanti Deshpande**

"Follow mindful eating, ensure that you have ghee and turmeric in the diet every day. Walk for at least 20 minutes to 30 minutes and practise two to five minutes of meditation and pranayama daily. Ensure the right protocol is followed when stepping out."



**Dr. Prerna Kohli**

"Take care of your sleep, mental and physical health. No matter what, remain calm and patient, it will help you get through the tough time. Stay in touch with your doctor or consult a mental health practitioner if the stress is too high."

Apart from consulting the doctor and taking the right medication for the infection, here are some of the things Prerna Nigam did and needed regularly when she was detected COVID positive:

- ◆ Steam Inhalation
  - ◆ Having an oximeter and thermometer handy
  - ◆ Gargling
- ◆ Deep breathing exercises
  - ◆ Hydrating
  - ◆ Taking zinc and vitamins C and D supplements
  - ◆ Eating fruits
  - ◆ Ventilating rooms well
- ◆ Staying positive

### Prerna Nigam, Mrs. Femina 2021 second runner-up, entrepreneur and a fashion-lifestyle blogger gives a first-hand account of being pregnant, COVID positive and under home quarantine!

My husband Praveen Gautam developed a slight sore throat and cold a while ago. As this coincided with the sudden summer wave in Delhi, we assumed it was because of the weather change. But we still took the precaution of sleeping in separate rooms and wearing masks at all times. We also got tested. The results showed that while I was negative at the time, he was COVID-positive. As I had been exposed too before we got the results, we both began our home quarantine in separate rooms.

As I was alone in taking care of him, while being pregnant at the same time, I soon started to feel exhausted! I first felt it was due to the sudden increase in workload, but, on the third day after my negative result, I began having a sore throat and a running nose, with my temperature going up. I got tested again and, this time around, the results showed that I was COVID positive too!

By this time, I had no strength to even get up. Thankfully, my friends and family came forth to send us meals, so that was one worry less! I was also in constant touch with my gynaecologist and

specialists to ensure the baby is keeping safe too.

After being detected positive with symptoms like cold, fever, and chills, loss of appetite and sore muscles started to take over. My biggest fear was that of passing it to my baby! The only good news that came was that babies are mostly spared and generally don't get sick. I just had to make sure my oxygen level was always maintained. I also got diarrhoea and nausea. I was throwing up and also having to visits the bathroom



Prerna Nigam, Mrs. Femina 2021 second runner-up, entrepreneur

frequently. I also realised that the stress of heaving weakens your bladder control. Added to being pregnant, it was a horrible experience. I had to accept it though as I was dealing with both being COVID positive and being pregnant.

With every passing day, I continued feeling very tired and the feeling of malaise just kept increasing. My skin started to hurt; even my own touch to soothe my body ache was causing me pain. Lying down for too long or getting up from my bed was a task. Two weeks on, my current symptoms are extreme fatigue, backache, light-headedness, headache, cough, mild leg cramps (seldom), rapid heartbeat (randomly), low BP, loss of smell, and more of an appetite.

I would say I'm 80 per cent better than before (still waiting for a negative report though!). I'm not going to push myself. I just want to feel better by taking tiny steps. The thing that worries me the most though is relapsing by doing too much, too fast and all the unknowns to follow. So many lingering symptoms from this virus worry me.

It's been a couple of weeks since I started showing symptoms of COVID-19. To say that the last two weeks have been full of a plethora of emotions is an understatement! **F**

From the age of seven, Shashirekha Yellampalli had to walk for miles in the scorching heat to fetch water for her family's daily needs. Such was the situation for all the inhabitants of the industrial hamlet of Satyavedu, nestled on the border between Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.

Since it was for something as essential as water, Yellampalli had no choice but to sacrifice her time and bear the difficulties to fetch it. Extreme heat, heavy downpours and uneven roads notwithstanding, she went and fetched that precious resource every single day. "Apart from being time-consuming, it led to several dire consequences – physical strain, hard labour, missing school often, delay in everyday chores and activities like cooking, washing and bathing. The water was not good for cooking or bathing, and made us sick as well," the now-20-year-old informs.

Forced to give up school after class 10, Yellampalli joined a pharmaceutical company as a helper to supplement the family income. Her parents



work as agricultural labourers on nearby farms. Owing to her need to fetch water and other household duties, she often had to skip going to work, and missed out on the day's pay.

About five years ago, the local panchayat committee of Yellampalli's village – home to 50 households in *kaccha* houses with thatched roofs – installed a hand pump. But the troubles seemed to multiply when it ran dry during the summer, and soon went into a state of disrepair, adding to the woes of the villagers. "No amount of repair work seemed sufficient for that pump," she states. "It stopped working the three or four times it was fixed."

Then, a few years ago, an intervention by WaterAid India and Pepsico brought pipelines into the village, with a connection for every household to draw water from a tank installed next

to the newly-dug borewell. With that, each family has sufficient water for all activities. Apart from improved health, it allows the villagers to use their time for more productive work. "I have more time to learn new skills to improve my livelihood. Also, with increased income, my family is healthier and happier," Yellampalli says. She is now an integral member of the village user committee, under which she tackles any water-related issues around operation and maintenance. She also operates the community water storage tank twice a day to get the water supply going. She is trained to operate a motor pump, clean the bore wells, store reservoirs, and fix taps, and she does not shy away from using these skills if the need arises. With a small contribution from each household, the maintenance is taken care of; Yellampalli doubles up as the accountant and collector of fees. "My goal is also to strengthen the village user committee to ensure there are no water challenges in the future," she says.

## THE WATER BEARER

As a child, **SHASHIREKHA YELLAMPALLI** had to walk for miles to fetch a few litres of water. Today, she is the 'protector' of the water tank in her village, ensuring no one has to go far for that basic necessity.

By **Shraddha Kamdar**

Owing to her need to fetch water and other household duties, Yellampalli often had to skip going to work, and missed out on the day's pay



# SCALING HIGH

From battling the big C at nine, to climbing, literally, to several national and international victories, climber **SHIVANI CHARAK** has come a long way. In this freewheeling chat with **Shraddha Kamdar**, she talks of her trials and tribulations

A young girl, all of nine, is celebrating her cousin's birthday with her father and siblings in their home, when she suddenly experiences a sharp sting in her abdomen, which quickly escalates into throbbing pain.

She hides herself in the washroom, not wanting to disturb the party. The next day, she is treated symptomatically by a doctor with a painkiller, but her parents, uneasy with the incident, ask for further medical investigations. When the diagnosis is in, the girl is promptly shifted to the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) at Chandigarh for further treatment, all the while being told that she is suffering from a kidney stone.

That was one of the turning points in the life of the country's star climber, Shivani Charak, whose story is nothing short of grit, determination, and the will to succeed. The now 19-year-old, originally from the Rajouri district in Jammu, is currently ranked as India's top woman sport climber. She has proven time and again, that she is made of the material that champions are made of, both physically and mentally.

"My parents wanted to shield me from the diagnosis of stage one ovarian cancer, and the fact that my left ovary needed to be extracted. They did succeed for almost a year. They took all the precautions, keeping the truth from my siblings (she has an older sister, and younger twin brothers) and the extended family, even through the surgery," the young sportswoman tells us over a telephonic chat.



Shivani admits to being perplexed with the extensive treatments being administered for something that she thought was routine. The feeling was heightened by the fact that she was being treated in a high-end, modern facility in Chandigarh, when she could have been easily treated in Jammu itself. "I used to observe my parents fraught with tension, trying to stop themselves from tearing up in my presence. It is only when I overheard the staff at the hospital discussing my condition that I pieced all the information together and deduced I had the big C," she narrates. She put on a brave face even after being aware, since she did not want her parents to break down any further.

Remembering an incident from her chemotherapy days, Shivani tells us that she would weep when she saw the children in her hospital ward suffering from various ailments. "I told my parents, 'Inki bimari bhi mujhe lag jaaye, par woh theek ho jaaye.' I used to think one kid less in the world was a small price to pay for saving so many lives," she says with a naiveté that is intact. Her parents, on the other hand, would encourage her to be positive, assuring her that she and all the >

"I used to be a Taekwondo practioner, but had to give it up due to my health. Climbing brought a fresh opportunity"



other children as well, will be fine.

The family had to shuttle between Chandigarh and Jammu, since her parents could not take prolonged leave from work, or disrupt the education of their other children. Her pillars of support, her parents and siblings, would not deny any of her wishes. Once, on Holi, during the recovery phase after chemotherapy, she insisted on playing, and they let her. "When I started washing the colour off my hair, a whole bunch fell out. I could not hold back the tears, and was unwilling to leave the room till it grew back. My family members coaxed me out, explaining that the process of regrowth would take time. They were always patient with me," says the class 12 student of Government Higher Secondary School, Domana, Jammu.

Cut to 2013, within a year of being cancer free, forms for a climbing competition being distributed in school sparked her interest. "I used to be a Taekwondo practitioner, but had to give up due to my health. Climbing brought a fresh opportunity," she states matter-of-factly. Her mother and older sister (climber Shilpa Charak) were sceptical of her taking up a strenuous sport within a short period after her surgery, but her father allowed it after the doctor's nod, and her brothers Arun and Ajay encouraged her, taking her to a facility to show her the technicalities, and to start learning.



(Clockwise from left) Charak's numerous medals, the champion's proud moment at a competition; a glimpse of a practice session



"There were too many detractors when I started, well-meaning neighbours and relatives who said it is a boy's sport; girls should learn how to run the house"

At the school-level competition, her maiden event, she brought home the silver medal, the gold being won by her sister. Since then, Shivani has never looked back. "Post that, I was selected for the zonals, and I attended the training camp for it. There, I informed my trainer of my health, and he, too, motivated me to leave those days behind, and continue climbing if it made me happy," she says. After climbing became her sport, she started dreaming of winning medals for the country, making the most of the second chance offered to her, not only in life, but also in sports.

And win she did. In the five years since she took up climbing, she has won 21 medals, including eight golds, 10 silvers, and two bronzes at the national level. She has represented the country at the international level at the World Cup, Asian Cup, and Asian Youth Championship, a series of tournaments in China, and, in her latest, she won the junior bronze in speed climbing at the Asian Youth Championship 2019 held in Bengaluru at the end of last year, excited to win her first international medal on home ground. Apart from that, the champion is the winner of eight gold medals and one bronze medal at the zonal (north zone) level, during the last five years. In 2019, she also participated in the IFSC ACC Asian Championships 2019 in Indonesia, an experience that paved the way for her home win.

Shivani now has her heart set on a berth for the Tokyo Olympics for which she is training hard by herself, in Jammu, Delhi, and Bhubaneswar. "It seems tough, since all but one position are taken, and the open one is for the Asian continent," she says.

On a parting note, we ask her what keeps her going, and she cites the positivity exuded by her friends and family. "There were too many detractors when I started, well-meaning neighbours and relatives who said it is a boy's sport; girls should learn how to run the house. I ignored them, but they had to finally take notice of me when I went for the World Cup. They called to congratulate me," she beams.

For now, Shivani is focused on her sport. That is all that matters to this fan of Indian cricketer Yuvraj Singh. **F**

# FOR A GREATER GOOD

**DR SHITAL SOMANI KASAT**, Co-Founder and Chief Growth Officer, S4S Technologies, is leading change for women in rural areas with the company's farmer-friendly technology. She talks to **Shraddha Kamdar** about her journey



Nothing is quite like the bond that you share with your team, and, today, we are all family to each other; I don't feel alone anywhere." Dr Shital Somani Kasat, Co-Founder and Chief Growth Officer, S4S Technologies, begins her chat by talking of the seven core members of the social tech company who have stood by each other through thick and thin. Today, S4S Technologies has developed into a food preservation company that invents new food-processing machines to help farmers, but it started as a thought in the minds of Shital and her friend Vaibhav Tidke (the other co-founder of S4S) when they were at the far end of their undergraduate studies.

Friends since class six in the town of Ambajogai in rural Maharashtra, Shital and Vaibhav went off to study dentistry and chemical engineering respectively, in their later student years. Vaibhav was keen on doing something on his own rather than getting a job. When he sounded off the idea to his childhood friend, she was on board. "We wanted to use our scientific knowledge to solve societal-level problems, and got into identifying these problems. I had developed a dental X-ray processor, one that reduces the exposure of the patient to the developer. After a few days of initial market research, we found that digital tech was expensive at the time in our country, but,

soon, cheaper solutions were to arrive from the West. We realised ours would not be picked up. Our technology worked, but we had to let it go as a business idea," Shital narrates.

Looking for their next project to work on led the duo to the vegetable market, where they saw the early-morning fresh and well-priced stock wilt away by evening to be sold off dirt cheap and even be thrown away as it was perishable; farmers did not want to spend on transporting it back home. "There were no storage facilities, so we studied data on India as a producer and post-harvest losses. The fact that, after all the labour they put in, farmers were forced to throw their produce away propelled us to work in that direction," Shital says. It led them to develop the solar conduction dryer, their UN award-winning solar-powered, electricity-free dehydrator. The dryer has won several awards and innovation challenges, including the Dell Social Innovation Challenge 2013.

Shital informs that the machine was invented when they were still in college, and the prize money brought in media coverage that, in turn, brought in enquiries for the machine. "There was no business model as such. The first year went well, with enquiries and sales. After that, there were issues with selling dehydrated products, and, recognising that gap, we decided to buy back the dehydrated products from the farmers, and aggregate and sell them," she informs. This led the team, which had grown by then, to study

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TO IMPROVE  
THEIR WORK"**



different businesses that use dehydrated products, and work with them. Today, over 1,200 farmer cooperatives across eight countries are using the dryer at farm level. S4S works as an aggregator to supply these ingredients to businesses.

The decentralised process has S4S loaning the machine to women in rural areas, who are also provided the produce to dry. They can spend their hours in their yards drying the produce and then drop it off at a collection centre nearby. The produce is processed at a centralised facility in Aurangabad and then sold. “When we started selling dryers, we were looking at farmers in general. The vegetables needed to be washed, cut, and dried, which we realised that women could do better. Soon, we saw they were committed, hard working and punctual, and brought in their own life experiences to improve their work. It turned out to be a win-win, as they, too, could earn much better from their homes, without spending time and money on commuting anywhere; they could improve the lifestyle of the entire family with their earnings,” Shital narrates.

Today, as a company, they are empowering lots of rural women; how did she decide to take this plunge instead of pursuing what she studied? “I like accepting new challenges. I studied dentistry because of my rank, but, then, with S4S, I saw the larger picture, and we were able to create social



With the other six core members of S4S Technologies

“TO BE THE  
BEST IN  
EVERYTHING IS  
NOT POSSIBLE  
AND NOT  
NEEDED.  
**BEING GOOD  
IS OFTEN  
GOOD  
ENOUGH!”**



With her four-year-old, Viaan

and economic aspects. Initially, it was difficult to convince my Marwadi family—we are not farmers—that I wanted to give up what they viewed as a white-collar profession to work in the interiors in a start-up. There was also social pressure to get married, which I did, at 24. It was not against my wishes, but I had wanted to wait. Our generation has dual pressures of career and home, which is frustrating. Winning the Dell Social Innovation Challenge, however, was a turning point; my family started believing in our work,” she says.

Shital jokes that she does not mention that she is a dentist by education, since, often, her research experience is not taken seriously. There have been instances that have made her second guess herself, but results have proven otherwise. “We work on multiple dehydration technologies, not just the dryer. Once, as a research associate at the Institute of Chemical Technologies in Mumbai, I was working on HaldiTech (developed by another core member of S4S), which reduces the conventional month-long drying process of turmeric to two days. A few PhD students laughed at my experiment, and I was dejected at the time, since, after all, they were all experienced scientists. But the results came, we were so pumped up that it worked as a confidence booster that I was working with the right technocrats. And I can sell it to customers because I have experienced it,” she narrates.

The mother of a four-year-old, Shital has learned to build support systems in her spouse, their families, and help. She explained her work to her son. Shital unwinds at the gym with the peppy that she likes, feeling refreshed after each workout. She also likes trying new recipes and meeting close friends. The scientist who is inspired by all entrepreneurial mothers has figured out that to be the best in everything is not possible and not needed. “Being good is often good enough!” she signs off. **F**



# Stepping FORWARD

Liva Miss Diva Universe 2020, **ADLINE CASTELINO**, who emerged as the third runner-up at Miss Universe 2020, talks to **Aishwarya Acharya** about what makes her a modern beauty queen

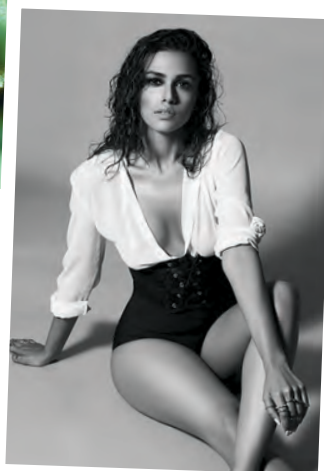
All of 22, Liva Miss Diva Universe 2020 winner Adline Castelino is soft spoken, articulate, thoughtful, and mindful. Determination, however, stands out as a dominant personality trait—determination made her emerge as the third runner-up at the Miss Universe 2020 pageant on May 16, in Florida, USA. Born and raised in Kuwait, Castelino moved to Mumbai all by herself at a young age of 15. The journey wasn't always smooth. "When I came to Mumbai, I didn't know anyone. I was a complete stranger to the city. Gradually, I made some good friends and developed contacts who helped me overcome many obstacles, especially my speech defect.

**"WHEN I CAME TO MUMBAI, I DIDN'T KNOW ANYONE. GRADUALLY, I MADE GOOD FRIENDS WHO HELPED ME OVERCOME OBSTACLES, ESPECIALLY MY SPEECH DEFECT"**

Staying alone in Mumbai helped me find my confidence," she says.

The last year has been difficult. With everything coming to a standstill, things had to be approached differently. Preparing for the pageant wasn't easy at such a time, but, she managed. "I'm technologically challenged," Castelino laughs. "It's funny, since I belong to this generation that is supposed to be inherently tech savvy. So, for me, when all the panellists moved to the online space, it was tough trying to figure out and set everything up. Eventually, I got used to it." She continued online training with for ramp walk with Alesia Raut Suryavanshi, with personality skills mentor Sanjeev Datta, communications training with Supreet Bedi and with Sabira

Merchant, one of the oldest trainers at Miss India for etiquette and diction.



Having grown up with a lisp and having been mocked for it, Castelino was looking to overcome the impairment. "I looked for someone who had overcome a speech defect themselves to be my role model, but, unfortunately, I couldn't find anyone. Then,

I decided that if I'm not able to find a role model, I'm going to be one myself," she beams confidently. Almost 40 per cent of our population has a speech defect, she adds. "Speech training in India is expensive, not something everyone can afford; even I couldn't. I paid attention to the way people spoke. I searched YouTube for videos from which I learned how to bend my tongue, I practised tongue twisters every day."

Her efforts towards winning the title extends beyond the glamour. To be a modern beauty queen, as she puts it, it is important to be able to connect with people. "At a Women's Day gathering, a few young girls came up to me and said, 'Oh, you look like me, so, if you did it, even I can do it.'" It is at that moment she realised that people want to see themselves in you, as a beauty queen, and, if you're able to achieve that, it's victory in the truest sense.

## OUR THANKS TO...

### PANELISTS

#### Skin Care Expert:

Dr. Jamuna Pai

#### Smile Care Expert:

Dr. Sandesh Mayekar

#### Ramp Walk Trainer:

Alesia Raut

#### Etiquette and Diction

Expert: Sabira Merchant

#### Personality Skills

Mentor: Sanjeev Datta

Viram Datta

#### Communication Expert:

Supreet Bedi

#### Pilates Expert:

Samir Purohit and Namrata

Purohit

#### Gym Partner:

Reset

#### Hair Coach:

Kromakay

#### Makeup Coach:

Clint Fernandes

#### Salon Partner:

Savio John Pereira

#### Voice Crafting Expert:

Monaz Ranina

#### Hair Extension Partner:

Diva Divine Hair

#### Location Partner for AV

shoot: Hilton Mumbai

International Airport

### DESIGNER

### WARDROBE

#### Lead Pageant

Stylist: Bharat Gupta

#### Finale Gown

Designer: Falguni Shane

Peacock

#### National Costume:

Shravan Kummar

#### Designers:

Shivan and Narresh

Samant Chauhan

Abhishek Sharma

Rohit kamra

Saisha Shinde

House of Three

Varun Nidhika

House of Exotique

Lavanya Coodly

Bhawna Rao

Nima

Shivani Awasty

Maya Culture

AKHL

#### Jewellery:

Curio Cottage

Karishma Joolry

Sataara

Antarez Jewels

The Jewel Gallery

#### Accessories:

Clutches by Mintsa

Sunglasses by Kosch

### SPECIAL THANKS TO

**Falguni Shane Peacock:** "Adline is a strong and a beautiful girl with the perfect combination of beauty and brains. The finale gown was designed to be an exquisite, one-of-a-kind ensemble created exclusively for her. The dual-toned, metallic gown is a gorgeous fusion of urbane architectural elements such as the neat lines, amalgamated with traditional motifs such as petite florals. The gown represents the best of both worlds; an extension of Adeline's persona who is a woman with modern beliefs, outlook, and traditional values."



# FEMINA

## BE UNSTOPPABLE



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Isn't it time we did away with the  
'perfect body' myth? Let's talk.  
[@femina.in/fitness](https://www.femina.in/fitness)

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## THE WORLD ON YOUR PLATE

Most of us haven't left our homes in over a year. While you might not be able to travel, whether solo or with your families, you could bring the world to your table. Nourish yourself, or sneak in some delicious treats with these dishes from different places across the planet. Yes, you can make these easily at home. Read on for a host of recipes that will mobilise your menus



# STAY AT HOME, TRAVEL WITH FOOD INSTEAD

Bring joy to your table with easy recipes from across the planet. Even if we must stay at home, these dishes will bring the world to your plate and help keep our families nourished, warm, cool, or, in the case of our fabulous desserts, just happy!

SWEET  
TREAT!



## PAVLOVA FROM AUSTRALIA/ NEW ZEALAND



Named after the Russian ballerina Anna Pávlova, a pavlova is a meringue-based dessert with a delicately-crisp crust and a centre like a marshmallow, typically served with softly-whipped cream and fresh fruit. Both Australia and New Zealand take credit for the pavlova's origins; we only care about how wonderful this dessert is. It can be made several days in advance and stored in an airtight container. Place the whipped cream and fruit on the meringue just before serving because the meringue will rapidly soften due to the moisture of the cream and fruit.

This recipe is courtesy Parth Bajaj, a home baker, TV show host, food photographer and stylist. Check out his other recipes on Instagram @parthbajaj.

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 egg whites (approx 60 g)
- ½ cup caster sugar
- ½ tsp lemon juice or white vinegar
- 1½ tsp cornflour
- ½ tsp vanilla essence
- 100 ml non-dairy whipping cream (sweetened)
- Choice of fruit for topping

### METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 170° C.
2. Clean a mixing bowl using vinegar, so that there are no traces of fat in it.
3. Place the egg whites in the mixing bowl, and start whisking at low speed for two minutes. Gradually increase the speed to medium. Whisk until soft peaks are achieved.
4. Gradually start adding your caster sugar while whisking constantly, until all the sugar is dissolved.
5. Add the cornflour, vanilla essence, lemon juice or vinegar. Gently fold into the mixture.
6. Line your baking tray with parchment paper. Scoop the mixture out into a dome; there's no need to be precise.
7. Place the tray in the oven for 15 minutes, and then reduce the temperature to 150° C, and bake for another 35 to 45 minutes until the meringue is dry or pale in colour. Turn off the oven, let it cool inside for a while, and then take it out.
8. Whip the cream to soft peaks. Add to the middle of the pavlova and garnish with fruits or berries of your choice. Serve immediately.



TREAT!

## KOEKSISTERS FROM SOUTH AFRICA



If you're looking for a treat that's new but strangely familiar, this South African dessert is a calorific splurge worth the effort. Take yourself to sugar heaven with these deep-fried plaited dough rolls dipped in sinful syrup. They are so deservedly beloved back home that there is even a Koeksister Monument in Orania, in the Northern Cape province. Traditionally, *koeksisters* were baked to raise funds for churches and schools.

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups flour
- 1 tbsp baking powder
- ½ tsp salt
- 2 tbsp cold unsalted butter, cut into small chunks
- 1 egg, beaten
- ½ cup milk
- Vegetable oil, for deep frying

### FOR THE SYRUP:

- 600 g sugar
- 1½ cups water
- Juice and zest of 1 lemon
- 9 cm fresh ginger, peeled and sliced

### METHOD

1. To prepare the syrup, bring the sugar and water to a boil. Once the sugar has dissolved, stir in the lemon juice and zest,

and ginger. Chill overnight.

2. To prepare the dough, mix the flour, baking powder and salt in a bowl. Using only your fingertips, rub the butter into the flour mixture until it resembles breadcrumbs. Add the beaten egg and milk and knead to a smooth dough. Cover in cling wrap and allow to rest for two to three hours.
3. Place the dough on a lightly-floured work surface and roll out to a 12.5cm x 35cm rectangle about one centimetre thick. Cut into 1.25-cm wide strips. Braid pairs of strips, and pinch together at both ends. Repeat for all the strips. Cover with a clean cloth and allow to rest for 10 minutes.
4. Heat the oil on a medium-high flame and deep-fry the *koeksisters* until golden brown.
5. Remove the chilled syrup from the fridge. Dip the hot *koeksisters* into the syrup, remove, and serve immediately.

**TIP:** It is important to have the syrup really cold and the *koeksisters* piping hot. >

ENERGY  
BOOST!

## BOXTY FROM IRELAND

Yes, we know you've probably made *roesti* from Switzerland, and, yes, we love it too. We just thought you'd like to try something a little different. *Boxty*, or Irish pancakes, use both grated and mashed potatoes. We did say this was a treat! Also known as poundies and potato bread, their popularity has risen with a renewed interest in Irish cuisine. You would probably see them on the menus of high-end restaurants in Ireland, but we're betting you could bring a bit of the Emerald Isle home with these easy-to-make treats.

### INGREDIENTS

1½ cups grated raw potato  
 1 cup flour  
 1 cup mashed potatoes  
 1 egg  
 1 tbsp skim milk  
 Salt and pepper, to taste  
 ¼ cup olive or canola oil

### METHOD

1. Toss the grated potatoes with the flour in a large bowl. Stir in the mashed potatoes and mix until well combined.

2. In a separate bowl, whisk together the egg and the skim milk. Mix into the potatoes.

3. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

4. Heat the oil in a large skillet over a medium-high flame. Drop patties of the potato mixture (about two inches in diameter) into the oil, and fry about three to four minutes on both sides, until golden brown. Drain and serve warm.





## HORCHATA FROM MEXICO

Legend has it that the rice-based drink *horchata* was named by James I of Aragon, who, after tasting it, proclaimed, "Açò és or, xata!", which translates roughly to "That's gold, darling!" Known for its soothing freshness in the Mexican heat, and ideal, too, for our *desi* summer, *horchata* is infused with cinnamon and vanilla for that extra oomph. If you were travelling, chances are you might also have found it in Spain and across Latin America.

### INGREDIENTS

**1 cup long-grained white rice, rinsed**  
**1 cinnamon stick, broken into pieces**  
**8 cups drinking water**  
**½ cup sugar, or to taste**  
**1 tbsp ground cinnamon + extra to garnish**  
**¾ tbsp vanilla extract**

### METHOD

**1.** Blend the rice and cinnamon sticks with four cups of the water in a blender for about one minute.  
**2.** Remove to a large bowl and add the

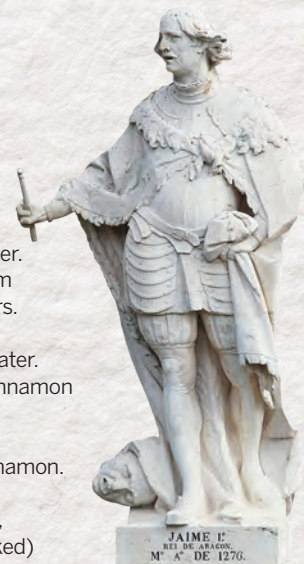
remaining four cups of water.

**3.** Set aside to soak at room temperature for three hours.

**4.** Pass through a sieve to obtain the rice water. Stir in the sugar, ground cinnamon and vanilla extract. Chill.

**5.** Stir well and serve cold, garnished with ground cinnamon.

**TIP:** You can also add rum, lime zest and ground (soaked) almonds for added flavour. >



COOLING  
DRINK!



COMFORTING  
MAIN!



## KUSHARI FROM EGYPT

The national dish of Egypt, *kushari* (or *koshary*, if you prefer) is a delicious mix of rice, lentils, chickpeas and pasta in a tangy tomato sauce. Popular among working-class Egyptians, *kushari* is found in many local eateries. This is comfort in a bowl, made with pantry staples. It takes a little time to put together, but each element is fairly simple to make, and the different ingredients add interesting textures to the dish. And, unproven though it might be, you might enjoy knowing that some sources believe *kushari* originated in India. That fried onion garnish, mmmm!

### INGREDIENTS

1 cup cooked rice  
50 g cooked chickpeas  
50 g boiled macaroni  
2 tbsp cooked lentils (*masoor dal*)  
Salt and pepper, to taste  
Olive oil, to drizzle  
1 handful fried onions  
Mint leaves

### FOR THE TOMATO SAUCE:

1 medium onion, cut into chunks  
2 medium tomatoes, cut into chunks  
1 large garlic clove  
1 green chilli  
1 tsp coriander powder  
1 tsp roasted cumin powder  
2½ tbsp tomato puree  
1½ tbsp malt vinegar  
1 tsp brown sugar

2 tbsp olive oil  
1 tbsp chopped coriander leaves

### METHOD

1. To prepare the tomato sauce, blend together the onions, tomatoes, garlic, green chilli, coriander and cumin powders, tomato puree, malt vinegar, and brown sugar to a puree.
2. Heat the olive oil in a pan and add the puree. Simmer until it reaches the consistency of a salsa. Add the coriander leaves, and salt and pepper to taste. Set aside a tablespoon of the cooked mixture as a garnish.
3. Add the cooked rice, chickpeas, macaroni and lentils to the sauce with a dash of olive oil. Mix well.
4. Serve hot, garnished with the reserved sauce, fried onions and mint leaves.

## CRÊPES SUZETTE FROM FRANCE



The origins of Crêpes Suzette are many, blurred but almost always romantic. The story we want to believe has the dish accidentally catching fire as the Duke of Wales entertained a lady guest, Suzette. Another version attributed the name to the French actor Suzanne Reichenberg, whose stage name was Suzette, and who carried the crêpes on stage, as part of a play, but flambéed them for dramatic effect. Whatever the origins, we love these pancakes elevated by the addition of Beurre Suzette—a sauce of caramelised sugar and butter, orange zest and juice. If you decide to light up (the sauce, we mean), you will bring the same drama to your table. Make sure you have an extinguisher handy, just in case!

### INGREDIENTS

**140 g plain flour**  
**200 ml whole milk**  
**100 ml**  
**2 eggs**  
**25 g unsalted butter, melted,**  
**plus a little extra for greasing**  
**Salt, to taste**

### FOR THE SAUCE:

**3 tbsp caster sugar**  
**250 ml freshly-squeezed orange juice (from 2 to 3 oranges)**  
**zest of 1 orange**  
**1 tsp lemon juice**  
**1 tbsp Grand Marnier or Cointreau**  
**50 g unsalted butter, cut into small pieces**

### METHOD

1. Add a pinch of salt to the flour and sift into a bowl. Make a well in the middle.
2. Mix the milk and water together.
3. Break the eggs into the well and start whisking slowly. Add the milk and water in a steady stream, whisking constantly and gradually incorporating the flour as you do so. Whisk until the batter is smooth and all the flour has been incorporated.
4. Set the batter aside for 30 minutes, then whisk the melted butter into the batter.
5. Heat a pan over a medium flame. Lightly grease with melted butter. Using a ladle, pour roughly two tablespoons of batter into the pan—

make sure the bottom of the pan is evenly coated to make a delicate, lacy pancake. Cook the pancake for about 45 seconds on one side until golden. Flip it over and cook the other side for about 30 seconds until it freckles. Slide the pancake off the pan and stack on a plate with baking paper in between. Continue until the batter is used up.

6. To prepare the sauce: Add the caster sugar to a non-stick pan over a low-medium flame. Allow the sugar to melt slowly without stirring and continue to cook until it becomes a deep amber-coloured caramel.
7. Take the pan off the flame and add the orange juice; be careful as it might spit as it hits the hot caramel. Add the orange zest, lemon juice, and the liqueur. Return the pan to a low flame to re-melt the caramel. When it is liquid again, add the butter, bring to a boil, and simmer gently until glossy and slightly reduced.
8. Add the pancakes, folded into quarters, to the pan and warm through. Serve immediately. >



IMPRESSIVE  
DESSERT!





## GAZPACHO FROM SPAIN

Who knew that a meal, eaten by Spanish field workers, would become a soup served in the coolest restaurants? Renowned for its refreshing qualities, *gazpacho* is a cold soup made for the summer months. Originating in Andalusia, it began life composed only of bread, water and olive oil, something like a liquid salad. Undergoing many variations throughout its history, it took on its most recognisable form when tomatoes were added after the Columbian Exchange in 1492. These days, your *gazpacho* could also be made with avocados, cucumbers, parsley, watermelon, and grapes!

### INGREDIENTS

- 500 g ripe tomatoes, roughly chopped
- 2 spring onions, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic
- ¼ cucumber, peeled and chopped
- 30 ml olive oil
- 1 tbsp sherry vinegar
- Salt and pepper, to taste

### FOR THE GARNISH:

- 1 spring onion, finely diced
- ¼ green pepper, finely diced
- ¼ red pepper, finely diced
- 1 hard-boiled egg, finely diced
- Croutons

### METHOD

1. Place the chopped tomatoes, spring onions, garlic and cucumber in a blender and whizz to a smooth puree.
2. Pass thrice through a fine sieve to remove most of the pulp.
3. Place the liquid back into the blender, and whizz, slowly adding the olive oil, sherry vinegar, and salt and pepper to taste.
4. Chill until you're ready to serve.
5. Serve the *gazpacho* cold, garnished with the diced spring onions, peppers and egg, and croutons.



CHOCOLATE TREATS!

## BRIGADEIROS FROM BRAZIL



*Brigadeiros*, Brazilian fudge balls, get their name from a brigadier Eduardo Gomes. The story goes that he was a good-looking man in the 1940s, very popular with the ladies, if not with the voters (he didn't win the elections). He is remembered at birthday parties in Brazil, as children and adults enjoy these bite-sized treats.

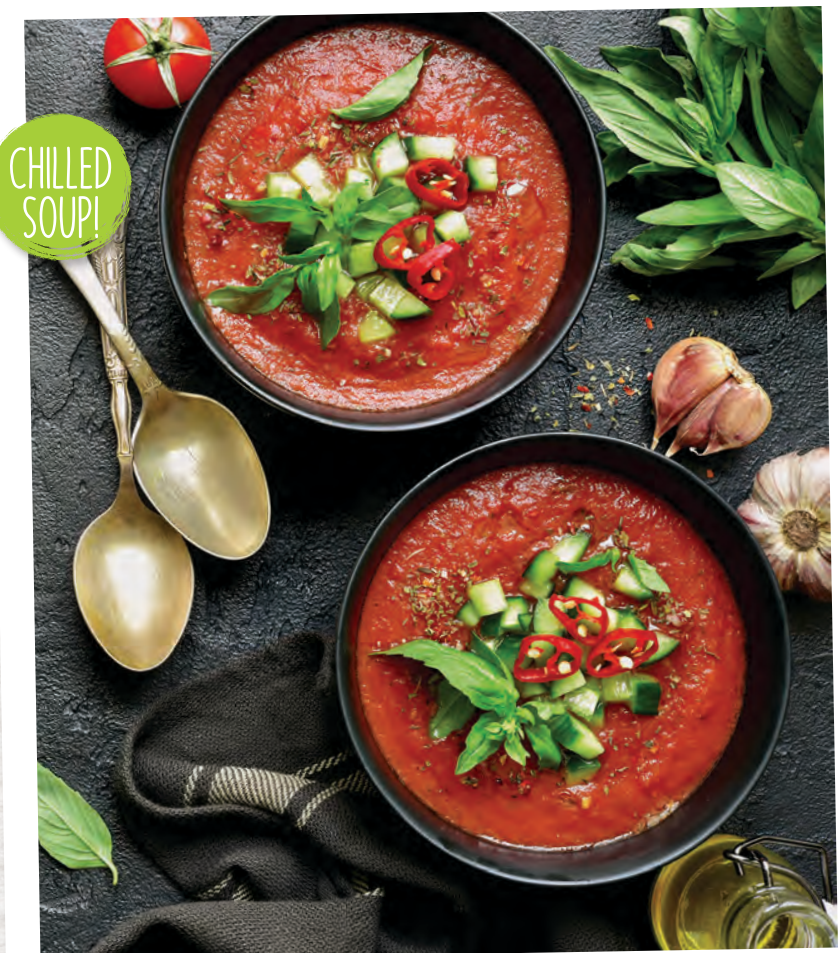
In the good old days, you would order them from a *doceira* (a candy lady), but, in recent times, there are trendy *brigadeiro* shops in Brazil, where they come with different toppings and unusual flavours. *Brigadeiros* are very easy to make at home with just five ingredients; the sprinkles give them their distinctive appearance.

### INGREDIENTS

- 400 ml sweetened condensed milk
- 4 tbsp cocoa, sifted
- 2 tbsp butter + extra to grease your hands
- Salt, to taste
- Chocolate sprinkles

### METHOD

1. Place the sweetened condensed milk, cocoa, butter and salt in a small pan in a saucepan over a low-medium flame. Cook, stirring continuously to prevent burning, until the mixture thickens. To know if it has thickened enough, draw your spatula through the middle of the mixture; if it takes a while for the mixture to close the gap, you can take it off the flame. Allow to cool to room temperature.
2. Place the sprinkles on a plate.
3. Grease your hands with butter and roll half-tablespoon portions of the cooled mixture into little balls.
4. Roll the *brigadeiros* in the sprinkles to coat and place them in candy cups.



CHILLED SOUP!

WARMING SOUP!



## CHŁODNIK FROM POLAND

Sure, you're looking at this photograph and thinking of *borscht*, but this chilled soup comes from Poland, via Lithuania. Like *borscht*, beetroot is a major ingredient, giving it that lovely colour. *Chłodnik* is great to cool down with, but there is also a hot version – called *barszcz* – if you're being good and following doctors' orders.

### INGREDIENTS

- 3 medium beetroots, trimmed, peeled and chopped
- 1 medium potato, peeled and chopped
- 2 cups vegetable stock
- 1 small cucumber, coarsely chopped
- 2 small spring onion bulbs, coarsely chopped
- 1 cup yoghurt
- Salt and white pepper, to season
- ½ lemon, juiced
- ¼ cup *creme fraiche*
- 1 ½ tbsp finely-chopped chives
- 1-cm piece fresh horseradish (or use fresh ginger)
- Boiled eggs, halved (optional)

### METHOD

1. Place the beetroot and potato cubes in a pan with the stock. Bring to a boil over a medium-high flame, then reduce the flame and simmer for 25 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender. Remove from the heat and cool.
2. Refrigerate until chilled.
3. Place the mixture in a blender. Add the cucumber, spring onions and yoghurt. Puree until smooth. Season to taste with salt, pepper and lemon juice.
4. Ladle into bowls, top with a dollop of *creme fraiche* and the chopped chives. Grate a little horseradish (or ginger, if using) over, and serve immediately. >

## MOSTERDSOEP FROM THE NETHERLANDS

For everyone who loves mustard – and we think the world is rather divided on this – this creamy soup is traditionally made with mustard from the Zaandam region of the Netherlands. Wholegrain mustard, which is more accessible to us, works quite well too. In these times, when the doctors tell us that warming drinks can only help, this unusual Dutch dish will make a good addition to your repertoire of soups.

### INGREDIENTS

- 4 cups vegetable stock
- ¼ cup butter
- ½ cup flour
- 1 heaped tbsp whipped cream
- 3 tbsp mustard
- Salt and pepper, to taste

### METHOD

1. Bring the vegetable stock to a boil in a pan over a medium-high flame.
2. In a separate pan, make a *roux*: melt the butter, then add the flour, stirring continuously to avoid lumps. Cook until smooth for about five minutes.
3. Add the stock, half a cup at a time, stirring between additions until smooth and creamy.
4. Once all the stock has been added, simmer on low heat for about 10 minutes.
5. Stir in the whipped cream, mustard, salt and pepper. Serve hot.



COLD SOUP!





## MENEMEN FROM TURKEY

Very similar to the well-known *shakshuka* that originated in North Africa and is popular in the Middle East, *menemen* is a breakfast classic in Turkey. It consists of eggs cooked with onions, peppers and tomatoes, making it a wholesome meal. You might find some similarities to our egg *bhurji* as well.

### INGREDIENTS

2 tbsp olive oil  
2 onions, sliced  
1 red or green pepper, halved, deseeded and sliced  
1 to 2 red chillies, deseeded and sliced  
400 g tomatoes, chopped  
1 tsp caster sugar  
4 eggs  
Bunch of parsley, roughly chopped  
Salt and pepper, to taste

### FOR THE YOGHURT DIP:

6 tbsp thick yoghurt  
2 garlic cloves, crushed  
Salt and pepper, to taste

### METHOD

1. Heat the olive oil in a pan over a medium-high flame. Add the onions, peppers and chillies and sauté until they begin to soften. Add the tomatoes and sugar. Stir well. Reduce the heat and cook until the liquid reduces. Season with salt and pepper.
2. Using a spatula, create pockets in the mixture and crack the eggs into them. Cover the pan and let the eggs cook over a low flame until they set.
3. To prepare the dip, beat the yoghurt with the crushed garlic, and season.
4. Sprinkle the parsley over the *menemen* and serve hot from the pan with a dollop of the yoghurt dip.

VERSATILE  
DIP!



## MUHAMMARA FROM THE MIDDLE EAST

If you're looking to bring a quick taste of the Middle East to your table, this recipe will work for you. *Muhammara* is a popular dip and condiment in Syria, as well as in Lebanon. Apart from the fact that it tastes delicious, it has three major things going for it: it's simple to make (just throw all the ingredients into the mixer), it's vegan and low-carb, and it's so versatile. *Muhammara* works well as a spread for pita, as well as with grilled fish, kebabs and meats. And, just so you seem cool and in-the-know, introduce this at table as '*mhamara*' – that's how it's pronounced in Arabic (btw, it means red).

### INGREDIENTS

4 red bell peppers  
1/2 cup breadcrumbs  
2 to 3 cloves garlic, crushed  
3/4 cup walnuts, toasted and chopped  
1 to 2 tbsp lemon juice  
1 tbsp red pepper flakes  
1 tsp ground cumin  
Salt and pepper to taste  
1/2 cup olive oil

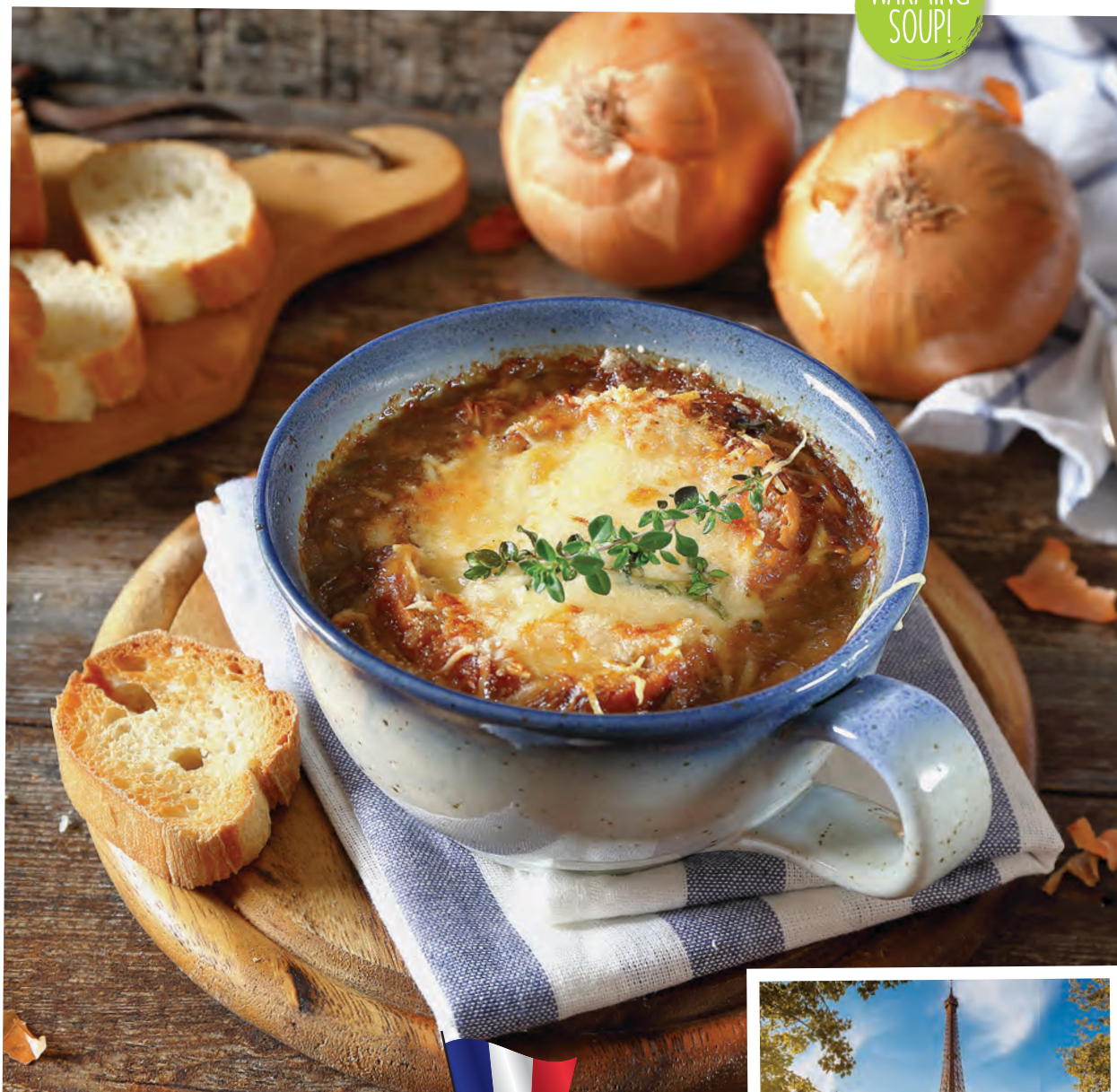
### METHOD

1. Broil the whole peppers over a flame, turning frequently, until the skin blackens. Remove to a large bowl, cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap, and allow the peppers to cool for 10 minutes. Once cool, peel off the blackened skin, and destem and deseed. Rinse the peppers under running water and pat dry.
2. Chop up the peppers and place them in a blender with the breadcrumbs, garlic, walnuts, lemon juice, red pepper flakes, cumin and salt and pepper, and pulse to a rough puree. Add the olive oil, and pulse again. Do not allow the puree to get too smooth; the *muhammara* should be a little coarse in texture.
3. Taste the dip and adjust the seasoning.

BREAKFAST!



WARMING  
SOUP!



## **FRENCH ONION SOUP FROM FRANCE**

If you need a super-simple soup that uses everyday ingredients that you're sure to have in your kitchen, look to France. French onion soup proves that slow cooking and good ingredients always give you a dish that is flavourful and comforting. Slicing your onions evenly is the key to uniform browning and, once you're past that step, it's just a matter of letting the soup simmer until done.

Add a touch of culinary luxury with

a cheese-laden piece of toast in the soup, but, dare we say it, the nuances of the *potage* stand up to going naked too!

### **INGREDIENTS**

**2 tbsp butter**  
**1 tbsp oil**  
**2 cups onions, uniformly sliced**  
**5 cups vegetable stock**  
**Salt, to taste**  
**¼ tsp black pepper powder**

### **METHOD**

- 1.** Heat the butter and oil in a saucepan with a heavy base over a medium-high flame. Add the onions, and sauté, stirring frequently, until they are golden brown.
- 2.** Add the stock, bring it to a boil, and simmer, uncovered, for about 15 minutes.
- 3.** Add the salt and pepper to the soup and serve hot. >

SWEET TREAT!



## KEY LIME PIE FROM THE USA

Key lime pies are synonymous with America, so it might surprise you to learn that the Key lime is a citrus hybrid with origins in Southeast Asia. It is now naturalised throughout the Florida Keys, and Key lime pie is promoted as its “most famous treat.” In fact, in 1987, it was declared the “greatest of all regional American desserts”. The pleasantly tangy dessert combines egg yolks, condensed milk and the juice of the Key lime, though you can use our local lemons as well. Floridians love how simple it is to make and how easily available the ingredients are, and we know it will soon become a favourite in your dessert rotation too.

### INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup butter at room temperature
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 large egg yolk
- 1¼ cups flour
- ¼ tsp salt

### FOR THE FILLING:

- 400 g condensed milk
- 2 to 3 egg yolks
- ½ cup lime (or lemon) juice
- Whipped cream (optional)

### METHOD

1. To prepare the crust, beat the butter and sugar with an electric mixer or in a food processor until well blended. Toss in the egg yolk and continue blending. Decrease the speed and mix in the flour and salt. Knead the mixture, so that the dough is bound well.
2. Transfer to a 9-inch-diameter tart pan with a loose bottom. Pat the dough down onto the base and the sides firmly and evenly. Cover with cling wrap and refrigerate for about an hour.
3. Preheat the oven to 180° C.
4. Remove the pie crust from the fridge, discard the cling wrap, and bake blind for about 17 minutes until golden brown. Cool the crust completely in the pan.
5. To prepare the filling, blend the condensed milk, egg yolks and lime juice until smooth.
6. Pour this into the baked pie crust and bake in the preheated oven for 15 minutes. Remove and allow to cool a little. Place the pie in the fridge to chill thoroughly.
7. Release from the loose-bottomed tart pan, top with whipped cream (if using), and serve.

## TAB TIM GROB FROM THAILAND



“Crunchy red rubies” – that’s what Tab Tim Grob literally translates to. And who wouldn’t want some of those? This delicious dessert from Thailand is made with colourful water chestnuts and chilled coconut milk. You’ll find it is quite a wonderful way to cool down on a hot day.



### INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup sugar
- ½ cup water
- 1 cup water chestnuts, fresh or canned
- A few drops of food colour, preferably red
- 1 cup tapioca flour or corn flour
- 1 cup coconut milk
- Shaved ice

### METHOD

1. To prepare the syrup, heat the sugar and water together just until the sugar dissolves. Set aside to cool.
2. Peel the water chestnuts and cut each one into bite-sized pieces.
3. Mix some drops of food colouring with two tablespoonfuls of water, and toss the water chestnuts in this. Let them soak in the mixture until all the pieces are evenly coloured (it should take about six hours).
4. Place the flour on a plate and roll the water chestnuts in it so that they are all well coated. Toss them in a colander to remove excess flour.
5. Now cook these pieces of water chestnut in boiling water for about a minute. They’re done when they float to the surface. Throw them immediately into ice water.
6. To assemble the dessert, put some water chestnuts in a dish, pour some syrup and cold coconut milk over, top with shaved ice, and serve.

**TIP:** Instead of plain water in the sugar syrup, you could also use half a cup of jasmine essence water. If you can’t find jasmine essence, simply soak the flowers overnight in a covered bowl of water. **F**



COOLING DESSERT

## A PUNCH OF PROTEIN

Three BFFs got together with their shared love of nutrition and sustainability, and the result is **Green Protein**, a plant-based vegan protein beverage. Madhvi Datwani, Parag Khimani, and Parigna Thorat's fun and easy way to bring protein into your life is free of harmful additives and suitable for all age groups. More affordable than whey protein, it makes use of 100 per cent pea protein isolate, and comes in delicious fruit-flavoured variants like, blackcurrant, watermelon, berry blast and raw mango.

**Price:** Single-serve sachets at ₹79, and 454 g pouches at ₹1,397

**Available from:** greenprotein.co.in and online stores



## MIXED UP AND LOVING IT!

Looking to make the second lockdown more palatable? US-based **Hamilton Beach** has a new Juicer Mixer Grinder for the *desi* market. It comes with a commercial grade 1400-watt motor that will not be defeated by hard spices, *idli* batter and dry coconut, and with 13 preset menu options so you can get the consistency you want. It promises to never leak all over your kitchen counters courtesy shatter-proof Tritan lids with robust gaskets and locking tabs, and its universal stainless steel blade does away with the hassle of changing blades. Your protection is ensured with a double safety interlock system and an automatic braking system. Now all we need is a robot with AI to cook for us!

**Price:** ₹24,499 onwards

**Available from:** hamiltonbeach.in and online stores



# ON THE MENU

ALL THAT'S NEW AND TASTY IN THE WORLD OF FOOD AND DRINK

## DRINK YOUR WAY TO GOOD HEALTH

Harness liquid nutrition for good health with **The Beverage Reboot** by nutritionist and health coach Neha Ranglani. According to Ranglani, perfect health depends not only on the food we eat, but also on how well our body can cleanse and detoxify itself with the tools we provide. Your tools with this book:

Over 75 recipes for therapeutic juices, smoothies, wellness shots, shakes, power drinks, coolers and warmers to get healthier in the most holistic way possible.

**Price:** ₹450

**Available from:** neharanglani.com and online stores



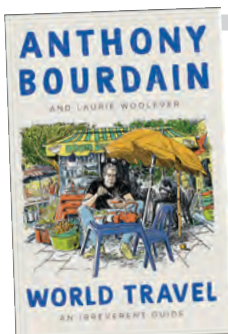
## ONLY THE FINEST GELATO IN ITALY

We love gelato, so it's good news that Italy is now going all out to ensure you get the fluffiest texture possible whipped into your quintessentially Italian treat. The new proposal is looking to impose fines of up to €10,000 on unscrupulous vendors in the country who pump extra air into gelato instead of vigorously mixing it, and is also considering banning artificial colours and flavours. Sweet news indeed for artisan *gelaterias* and lovers of good gelato.

## A COOK'S TOUR FROM THE GREAT BEYOND

If you are part of the legion of the late **Chef Anthony Bourdain's** fans, consider this to be his final gift to you. Completed by Laurie Woolever, his long-time assistant, **World Travel: An Irreverent Guide** is Bourdain's guide to the planet's best places to eat. Expect the usual humorous and brutally honest writing, and prepare to travel vicariously in lockdown.

**Price:** ₹699



# THE CHILL-OUT ZONE

Chef **Varun Inamdar**'s delicious recipes will keep you cool and happy in the summer heat

## KAIRI CHA PANHA



3 medium  
raw mangoes  
1 cup jaggery  
2 tsp black salt  
½ tsp roasted  
cumin powder

¼ cup fresh mint  
Ice cubes  
4 cups chilled water

**SERVES: 6 > PREP TIME: 20 minutes > COOKING TIME: 25 minutes**

**Calorie  
count:  
200 calories  
(per serving)**

1. Wash and dry the raw mangoes.  
Roast them over a direct flame for about 10 minutes until charred on the outside.  
Set them aside to cool. Once cool, pull off the skin and, using your hands, separate the pulp and the stone.
2. Place the pulp in a blender with the jaggery, black salt, roasted cumin powder, mint and ice cubes, and blend to a smooth paste.
3. Add the chilled water, and blend again for a minute.
4. Pour into glasses, and serve chilled.

**TIP:** ROASTING THE MANGOES HEIGHTENS THE FLAVOUR OF THE RAW MANGOES.

# KULIYE KI CHAAT



1 cup seasonal fruits, cut into squares  
1 cup seasonal vegetables, cut into squares  
1 tbsp lemon juice  
Salt, to taste  
½ tsp red chilli powder

1 tbsp chaat masala  
¼ cup black-eyed peas, boiled  
2 tbsp fresh pomegranate arils  
½ cup chopped toasted walnuts or other nuts (optional)

**Calorie count:**  
200 calories  
(per serving)

**SERVES: 4 > PREP TIME: 30 minutes**

1. Scoop all the fruit and vegetable squares a little in the centre. Place them on a serving platter.
2. Drizzle with the lemon juice and sprinkle with salt, red chilli powder, and chaat masala.
3. Add the black-eyed peas, pomegranate arils, and nuts, if using, over the fruit squares.
4. Serve immediately. >

**TIP:** THIS IS A GREAT WAY TO DRESS UP SEASONAL FRUITS; EXPERIMENT WITH THE VARIETY AVAILABLE.

## SOYA KHEEMA



¼ cup vegetable oil  
1 green cardamom  
1-inch cinnamon stick  
4 to 5 cloves  
½ tsp black peppercorns  
1 Indian bay leaf  
2 green chillies  
¾ cup finely-chopped onion  
1 tbsp freshly-ground ginger-garlic paste  
1 tsp Kashmiri red chilli powder

1 tsp garam masala  
¼ tsp turmeric powder  
1 cup soya granules, soaked in 2 cups warm water, and drained  
Salt, to taste  
½ cup finely-chopped tomato  
¼ cup dill leaves  
¼ cup coriander leaves  
¼ cup mint leaves

SERVES: 2 > PREP TIME: 10 minutes > COOKING TIME: 30 minutes

**Calorie count:**  
600 calories  
(per serving)

1. Heat the oil in a pressure pan.
2. Add the cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, black peppercorns, bay leaf, chillies and onions, and sauté until golden brown.
3. Add the ginger-garlic paste, Kashmiri red chilli powder, garam masala and turmeric powder, and mix in well.
4. Stir in the soya granules and salt.
5. Add the tomatoes, and the dill, coriander and mint leaves. Stir well.
6. Close the pressure pan and pressure cook on a low flame for 20 minutes. Serve hot. **F**

**TIP:** SERVE WITH A MUMBAI FAVOURITE, PAV.

# Motherhood Is BEYOND GENDER

In 2019, transgender activist **AKKAI PADMASHALI** officially adopted a baby boy. She speaks to **Kayalvizhi Arivalan** on the challenges of her life and the joys of motherhood



**A**kkai Padmashali has had a challenging journey to reach where she is today. The transgender activist and motivational speaker's childhood in Karnataka was confusing. She was born a male, Jagdeesh, to a homemaker mother and a father in the air force. At 16, she decided to come out of the shadows and claim an identity for herself.

The journey since has been filled with challenges and achievements. Padmashali is the first transgender person in the country to get a driving

**SHE ALSO FEELS THAT INSTEAD OF REFERRING TO SOMEONE AS A TRANSWOMAN, THEY CAN BE CALLED A WOMAN.**

license stating her gender as female. She was married to her longtime partner Vasu and got the marriage registered. The couple legally adopted a baby in 2019 after a year of struggle. "The adoption happened in 2019, but I knew I wanted to be a mother when I realised I was a woman at the age of eight," says the award-winning transgender rights activist. She credits the 2017 Karnataka government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, with being forward thinking; Padmashali was made a member of a drafting committee under the planning board of Karnataka state, which investigated the aspects of transgender rights. "The policy that was drafted in 2017 eased the procedures a bit while I was trying to adopt a child."

Padmashali reiterates that it is everybody's responsibility to bring issues of the sexual minority agenda to the forefront. "Today, as a mother or a woman with a child, I don't want to bring up my child with conservative thoughts on gender. I want to build a safer environment to ensure that he does not struggle with his identity and can open up about who he or she is." She also feels that instead of referring to someone as a transwoman, they can be called a woman. "I just go with what I want to be today, and I am just a woman without any barriers," she says.

In spite of her busy work schedules and commitments, Padmashali takes the time to enjoy this phase of motherhood. "As a social activist, life is stressful, but, when I hear the baby call me amma, it gives an enormous amount of relaxation and strength. I forget the day's ordeal when he showers unconditional love on me," she says, as she gears up to celebrate her baby's second birthday in July.

# ACHIEVE YOUR FITNESS GOALS AT HOME

Setting up a fitness zone at home is a pocket-friendly choice for people who tend to procrastinate every time they think of stepping outside their house, says **Aparupa Mazumder**

**T**he pandemic and lockdown restrictions cannot be a reason for you to not move that muscle. Walking and practising yoga at home are healthy and easy ways to keep fit and well. The other way to

achieve your fitness goals in the comfort of your home is to set up an affordable home-gym. Here, you get to work out in an ambience you are well acquainted with, and you have everything you need at hand to work out at any time you want. However, you need to make sure that your home gym inspires you to get the most out of your workout sessions.

While choosing an ideal space in which to build the gym, consider what sort of workout you will be doing—will it be strictly cardio or will you be setting up some basic equipment?

Also consider the amount of free space you have and need.

Once you've acquired all the required equipment, make sure you set up a full-length mirror too. It will help you to monitor your moves and keep a check on how precisely you are performing the exercises. So, no more excuses of lack of time or a convenient gym close to home. You're all set to get fit and stay well. **F**

## 10 basic pieces of equipment for a home gym



### 1. Yoga mat:

This is the very first requirement when setting up a home gym. Technically speaking, you cannot work out on the bare floor because it is not very comfortable, and you might hurt yourself.



### 2. Skipping rope:

Jumping and skipping are like the bread and butter of cardio.



### 3. Resistance bands:

These add to your strength training.



### 4. Ankle weights:

These can be used for

almost every cardio exercise. They work as a challenging factor in your workout sessions.



### 5. Fitballs:

These are affordable and great for core exercises.



### 6. Barbell and rack:

Admittedly, a barbell and rack will occupy a lot of space, but they make a great addition to your home gym, helping particularly with strength training.



### 7. Dumbbells:

Dumbbells are a

very versatile addition to your gym.



### 8. Foam roller:

A foam roller helps you stretch out your muscles and acts as a stress buster.



### 9. Bench:

This is an essential part of both cardio and strength training.



### 10. Trigger point balls:

These are good for recovery sessions because they act upon specific muscles and acupressure points.

# Transform Yourself

## Experience a clear complexion

**Pigmentation and scars are the two most common frustrations one faces in regards to their skin. Skin conditions like Acne, and skin diseases like Lichen Planus, also leave pigmentation and scarring as their more tell-tale curses. Wouldn't it be nice, to have a powerful, effective, yet gentle laser that can tackle pigmentation and scars at the same time?**

There are so many women with post acne scars and deep pores on their face. They also happen to have blotchy pigmentation called Melasma. So many women have Melasma that is faint, almost like a shadow or ghost pigmentation, that it is barely visible if they have stayed out of the sun for a few months. When these women undergo fractional resurfacing lasers, like Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) or MNRF Microneedling lasers are done, to tighten their acne scars, they end up worsening their facial pigmentation. They end up unmasking underlying Melasma that they never knew existed.

Pico lasers are perfect for your delicate and temperamental skin. When compared to conventional Q-switched Nd:YAG lasers that feature a nano-second pulse rate and are used by the majority of dermatologists in India, the ALMA Pico Clear uses fewer treatments with less downtime to more effectively deal with all kinds of pigment problems. The Pico Clear delivers ultra-short "pico-second" pulses of energy that are long enough to shatter unwanted pigments, but short enough to not cause any skin damage, redness, or burning.

For years now, Dermatologists have faced the same conundrum – When we try to treat pigmentation, we sometimes end up scarring. When we try to treat scars, we sometimes end up tanning. This is why I love my Alma Pico Clear! It helps me treat acne scars on patients with Melasma and deeply tanned skin. It helps me eliminate tattoos without leaving unsightly scars. And it is perfect for dark scars left by superficial burns, trauma and abrasions.

Performing a full face Carbon Pico Laser Facial is truly rewarding. I usually perform the treatment for a single patient request like uneven skin tone or poor skin texture. But the patient will always leave with multiple benefits with tighter skin, fine lines that look 'ironed out', open pores that have vanished, fine hair that looks lighter, facial redness and roughness that seems to have cleared out.. No wonder it's called the Hollywood Facial!

The world's leading company in Aesthetic Medical Lasers – Alma Medical Pvt. Ltd. – introduces the Alma Pico Clear laser for the first time in India. Visit Dr. Sunaina Hameed, MD, at Skin.Health Advanced Dermatology Center in Whitefield, Bangalore, to begin your treatments. Dr. Sunaina Hameed has 14 years of experience and is the 1st Indian Dermatologist to be conferred the prestigious Diplomate by the American Board of Laser Surgery. Go to [www.dr.sunaina.com](http://www.dr.sunaina.com) for more information.



**Dr. Sunaina Hameed**  
MD, Dip.ABLS (USA)

For Appointment :

**Dr. Sunaina Hameed, MD, Dip.ABLS (USA)**

**Skin.Health Advanced Dermatology Center**

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\*Readers Engagement Initiative

# SUMMER SERVINGS

Mango meets chocolate in a most delicious way

**What:** Mango donuts from Mad Over Donuts

**What we love:** Mad over Donuts has launched a special range of delicious mango donuts. These soft, fluffy donuts are filled with mango jam and dipped in white chocolate glaze, some topped with dark chocolate mousse and some sprinkled with mango-flavoured chocolate shavings. The special flavours include Mango Cheesecake, Mango Tango and Mango Berry, all 100 per cent eggless and freshly handcrafted. Mad Over Donuts is committed to ensuring contactless delivery and maintaining the highest standards of safety and hygiene.

**Price:** ₹110 onwards

**Available at:** all stores in Mumbai, Pune, Delhi, Bengaluru and Chennai



## BAMBOO ALL DAY, EVERY DAY

An all-natural solution to help you be environment- friendly

**What:** The Beco range of planet-friendly products

**What we love:** Beco is an Indian eco-friendly home, kitchen, and personal care brand. It was established on a simple yet strong realisation that each plastic article we use will come back to us in the future. The products include the Beco bamboo toothbrush with charcoal-activated bristles, Beco sustainable bamboo facial tissues, Beco toilet rolls, and Beco garbage bags. All these products are made from 100 per cent organic bamboo, and are chemical free and non-GMO verified.

**Price:** on request

**Available at:** letsbeco.com




## Practical, Sustainable Yet Trendy

Comfortable clothes carefully designed down to the smallest detail

**What:** Chicco's spring-summer collection

**What we love:** Chicco SS21 outfits are designed with fun details you will love for your child. With garments to keep your baby comfortable indoors and stylish outdoors, this range is inspired by the theme of nature conservation, with elements from marine life, city life, and surfing in bright tropical colours. Look for t-shirts, denims, trousers, dresses, baby suits, sets and more for kids from birth until five years of age.

**Price:** ₹699 onwards

**Available at:** stores and online 





# GREEN Revolution in SKINCARE

An all-woman power company, **Sintra Naturals** started a decade back with a common goal of creating plastic free skin care revolution in India

**H**onest, affordable, clean and plastic free is what Sintra Naturals is all about. All their products are hand made in small batches in Hyderabad by experienced makers. Launched in the UK with eco-friendly, Zero waste and sustainability as core values, Sintra soon spread its wings in India and became successful in a short span of time.

The USP of the products is the usage of organic and clean ingredients and tiresomely working towards sourcing high quality ingredients and plastic free packaging.

Currently, Sintra Naturals has a wide variety of skin care essentials like Soaps, Body Butters, Hair care and more to join their vegan skincare family. All their soaps are hand made with high quality shea butter and olive oil. They are palm oil free, sulphate and fragrance free and are 100% natural with no artificial colourants which comes in an organic cotton drawstring bags packaging. Body butters are available for all skin types and weather conditions. Their naked body butter can be used for babies, right from birth. Their hemp seed oil

body butter is proven to work wonders on skin conditions like Eczema and Dermatitis. Due to frequent usage of soaps and sanitisers, our hands are left vulnerable and dry which is addressed in their bestseller Rose Hand Cream. Their 100% natural deodorant is made from zinc ricinoleate, which is derived from castor oil and has an extraordinary capability to neutralize odours without disturbing the skin's natural flora.

These deodorants are aluminium and chemical and baking soda free. They also have an award winning haircare range, which comprises vegan shampoo. It was awarded as the most recommended product. The shampoo bar is made of Coconut derived surfactants and Argan Oil and is well suited for all hair types and genders. Their recently launched hair-styling range is free from silicones and fragrances and helps the hair, fight heat and environmental damage.



## THE KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM SINTRA NATURALS

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Sustainable:</b><br/>The products are palm oil free and the ingredients used have less impact on the environment.</p> <p><b>Eco-friendly:</b> They don't encourage single use plastics for packaging and use either reusable or recyclable (easily) or biodegradables.</p> <p><b>Zero waste:</b><br/>Their gift sets come in</p> | <p>either tin or wooden boxes which are handmade. These boxes can be reused for various purposes.</p> <p><b>Extremely safe:</b><br/>All their products are certified by specialist chemists in Europe for safety standards. Every product undergoes rigorous testing and safety checks.</p> |
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**For more details:**  
[www.sintranaturals.in](http://www.sintranaturals.in),  
for buying our amazing products.

**Social media:**



SINTRANATURALS INDIA

# BECAUSE YOUR SKIN DESERVES THE BEST

Natural products from Beauty by Anahata



**What:** The beauty and skincare range from Beauty by Anahata

**What we love:** Beauty by Anahata is a sustainable lifestyle brand that focuses on wellness-based beauty products. Its range of affordable skincare, hair-care, beauty and food products is prepared with ingredients straight from the mighty Himalayas. All the products are organic in nature, 100% chemical free and hand-crafted, including Enhancing Hibiscus Hair Oil, Shayna Body Lotion, Pure Rose Toner, Rose & Almond Body Glow Oil, Rose & Aloe Lip Balm, Aloe Vera Gel (infused with rose), Pure Rose Water, Nava Rose (infused with anti-ageing cream), Rose & Aloe Body Cleanser, Rose & Almond Body Glow Oil, Bloom Elixir Acne Fighting Serum, and Orange & Lemon Zest Soap.

**Available at:** [anahataorganic.com](http://anahataorganic.com)

## THE THOUGHTFUL GIFT

Your first step toward being a conscious shopper



**What:** Gifting ideas from The Care Kit

**What we love:** The simple kits comprise gifts that take care of your giftee's physical and mental well-being. They come customised with skincare, hair-care and beauty products, customised diet plans and a delight all the way from Rajasthan. Faith In Nature by Sublime Life comes with an array of beauty, body and hair-care products. Tinge packed with 100% cruelty-free and vegan beauty products such as lipsticks, foundations and multi-sticks. Nourish with Sim provides customised diets and workout plans with a Deep Health Coach. Rajasthan Studio guides us on the ancient art history of India.

**Available at:** [sublimelife.in](http://sublimelife.in)

**Price:** On request

## Speaker For The Soul!

Smart speakers that will turn your home into a smart home!

**What:** Zebronics launches the Alexa Smart Speaker 'ZEB-Smart Bot'

**What we love:** Zebronics, one of India's leading brand of IT and gaming peripherals, sound systems, mobile and lifestyle accessories, and surveillance and power solutions, has launched its first smart speaker, the 'ZEB-Smart Bot', which can remotely control appliances such as the TV and AC, and has built-in Alexa for voice-enabled assistance. You can listen to music, play an audio book, set schedules and appointments, and much more.

**Available at:** Amazon.com for ₹3,699





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# Making it **BIG**

Meet Sofia Parveen, a doe-eyed beauty who does it all – modelling, acting, dancing and more with aplomb! By Saher Khanna

**H**ailing from the city of Jamshedpur, Sofia Parveen's modelling journey has been one of hardships, perseverance, and growth. During her school days, while Parveen pursued singing, her professors prompted her to do something different. "They used to point out that I had a good height and sharp features, so I should get into modelling and acting," she shares; it made her believe it was the right time to embark on her career.

Parveen took up both theatre and modelling in her undergrad days, and also sang, danced, wrote skits and street plays, winning an award for best writer at the national level. With her ambitious and go-getter attitude, Parveen has come a very long way. She has starred in three music videos, with her first break on a T-series music video, College, by Preet Harpal, followed by two White Hill music videos: Dark by Pavii Ghuman and Teri Hoi Na by Preet Sukh. She has done commercial advertisements for IPL Star Sports, Rummycircle.com, and ICICI Bank. Along with this, she has walked the

ramp for Pankaj and Jitesh, and modelled for prominent brands such as Pushkar Bridal, Label Shalini Khanija, Preeti Diamond Jewellery, Sonali Jain Fashion, and Angel Jewels.

But achieving success hasn't been a walk in the park for Parveen. Born as she was into a simple family, she faced resistance from both her father and brother when she wanted to move to Mumbai for her career. "But I knew if I didn't take the risk, I would regret it my whole life," she recalls. While struggling to adjust to life in a new city, she had more bad days than good, but it was her do-or-die attitude that propelled her forward. She is now well settled in Mumbai and in her career, with her kitty, mother and sister, her rock through these difficult times. Parveen was surprised to learn that the modelling industry preferred foreign standards of beauty, and believes that it is necessary to appreciate Indian beauty and models more. She

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***"I KNEW IF I DIDN'T TAKE THE RISK, I WOULD REGRET IT MY WHOLE LIFE."***

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never lets these adversities faze her and always strives to do better.

Parveen is exceedingly passionate about her work, whether it comes to meeting new people, learning from them, travelling to places to explore her art, or posing for the camera. Though travelling generally is a great perk, it can also be quite challenging for models to look pretty even without enough sleep. As for her lifestyle and beauty regimen, she maintains a healthy routine by working

out six days a week, exfoliating and taking regular care of her skin, eating a balanced, protein-rich diet, and not drinking alcohol or smoking.

Living by the mantra that you build your empire with the stones they throw at you, Parveen believes in never giving up and always taking a stand for what she believes in. She delights in reading books and poetry. A Zumba enthusiast, she aspires to adopt a more disciplined lifestyle and make it big in life. **F**



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