

jfW

JUST FOR WOMEN

Varun Tej

RENDEZVOUS
WITH THE PRINCE
CHARMING OF
TOLLYWOOD!

CUPID COCKTAIL!

Drinks for two.
Dress for one!

SUGAR? YES PLEASE!

6 Oh-So-Sweet
Valentine Recipes!

not-so
14 CHEESY WAYS
TO CELEBRATE
FEB 14TH

ARE YOU
EATING RIGHT?
20th century's best
food lessons!

All things we ♥ this Season!

SLIP DRESSES, RED TRINKETS,
FRAMES FOR HOMES & MORE

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www.jfwonline.com

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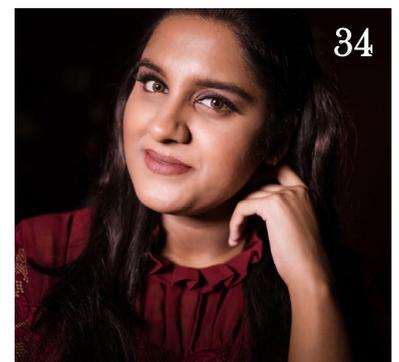
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**Founder and
Managing Director**

Sujit Kumar

**Co-Founder and
Editor-in-Chief**

Bina Sujit

Guest Columnist

Anu Hasan

Senior Features Writer

Radhika Ramesh

Sruthi Ravinder

Copy Editor

Susanna Selwyn

Contributing Writers

Sharmila Ribeiro

Riddhi Bokaria

Anjali

Vidya Raju Singh

Design

Rifah Aiysha

Marketing

Uthra Rajendran

T. R. Dharini

JFW Digital

Sarumathi

Dipshi Blessy

Bravin Jazz

Kenneth Christopher

Marketing Co-ordination

Sathiya Baskar

FOR ADVERTISING CONTACT



OPTIONS MEDIA PVT. LTD.

Phone: +91 9962923652

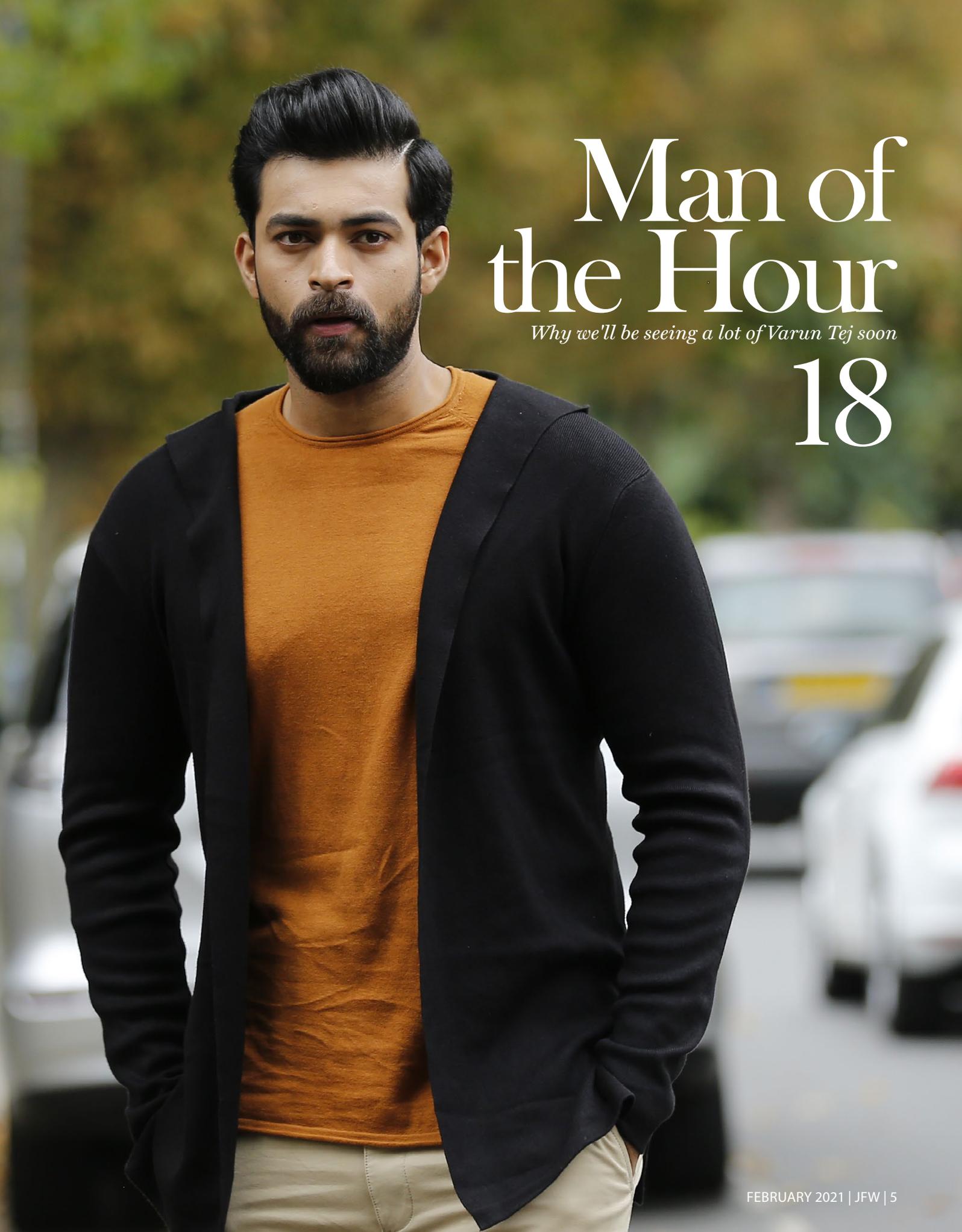
Email: sales@optionsmediagroup.in

Web: www.jfwonline.com

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Man of the Hour

Why we'll be seeing a lot of Varun Tej soon

18



Mailbox

LOVE WHAT YOU SEE?

Don't forget to share your thoughts and suggestions. Tag us, drop us a comment or just email us at jfw@optionsmediagroup.in



 **Anupa, Chennai**
on Food | On Your Platter

Nice recipes this time around. Like a good fusion of world cuisine as breakfast ideas.

 **Reethi, Chennai**
Closet clearance and your selection of sanitisers are something that I read with full focus. Nice. 😊

 **Anukriti**
I love the article on your picks for best international series. Most of which I've already covered and some that have gotten me intrigued now. Thanks for that. 😊 There are several hindi and tamil web series as well. Can you please have a list on those? I need a well filtered one letting me know what to watch and what to not.

 **Amitha, Chennai**
For a minute, I wondered why some popular actors were missing from the list, then I realised that it was one that hailed the work done in the previous year. Based on that and the depth of the characters they played, well picked guys.



 **Varshita, Bengaluru**
on Home | Smart Buys
You have always given good small apartment ideas, and these picks were no different. Would love to see more!

*Hi Varshita,
We always love to find real solutions to everyday situations. This edition is no different. Flip through for simple, practical and relatable reads!*



Queen of Hearts

May the passion of red and the beauty of heartines make your month of love extra memorable! Here are some Cupid-approved choices.

KissKiss Matte Lip Stick - M331 Chilli Red by **Guerlain**



Limited-Edition Heart Thong Sandal by **Tory Burch**



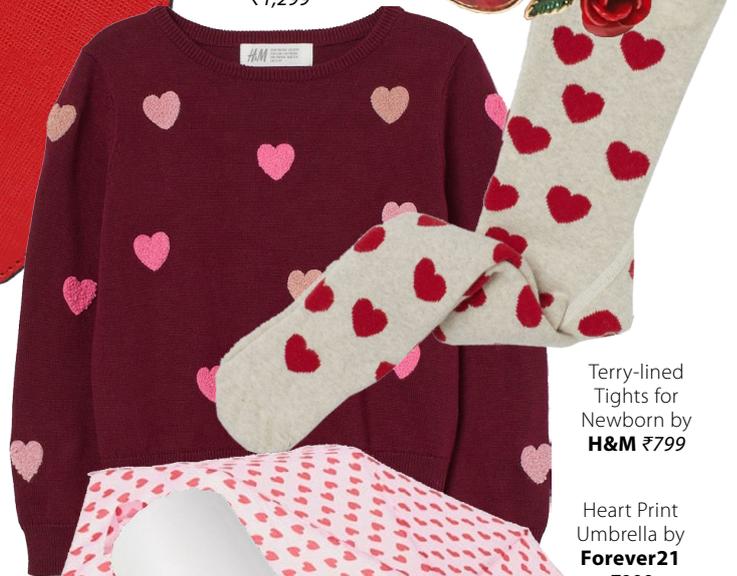
Heart-Shaped Wallet Of Echo Saffiano by **Love Moschino**



Rose Heart Charm Drop Earrings by **Forever21** ₹299



Appliquéd Jumper For Kids by **H&M** ₹1,299



Volume Disturbia Volume & Curve Mascara - N2 Red Disturbia by **Givenchy**



Heart Print Wrap Dress by **Forever21** ₹900



Heart Graphic Phone Case for iPhone by **Forever21** ₹499



Terry-lined Tights for Newborn by **H&M** ₹799



Heart Print Umbrella by **Forever21** ₹899



Lovetint Lip & Cheek Stain Mini - Fiery Red by **Benefit Cosmetics**



Le Rouge Lipstick - N333
L'Interdit by Givenchy

Heart and Key Gold-Tone Steel Pendant by Fossil ₹2,277

Sacred heart belt bag by Dolce & Gabbana

Red Side Knot Satin Top by Vero Moda ₹920

Heart Print Dress by Zara ₹790



Heart Logo Slides by Love Moschino

Red Belted Pants by Vero Moda ₹1,500

Sweethearts Perfect Flush Blush by Too Faced



Nail Lacquer - An Affair In Red Square by O.P.I ₹850

Duo Heart Rose Gold-Tone Stainless Steel Bracelet by Fossil ₹3,757



Heart-Buckle Hip Belt by Forever21 ₹399



Heart Shape Beaded Crossbody by Forever21 ₹1,799

Dressing for the **OCCASION**

A guide to picking the perfect dress that would catch more eyes than just your date's By **Sruthi Ravinder**



Zara Draped Camisole Dress ₹2,990

Mango Structured linen jacket ₹7,990



If you are worried about it being too revealing you can team it with a blazer or a plain white T-shirt.

Slip Dress

The slip dress is a manifestation of minimalist appeal. A classic slip dress usually is of one tone with spaghetti straps and midi length. It typically comes in satin material and is one of the 90s' favourite reappearance. The most popular colours are black, silver, yellow, olive green, blush, and beige. A satin slip dress is perfect evening wear.

Button-Down Dresses

If you are leaning more towards a casual style opt for button-down shirt dresses. Oversize button-down tops and dresses are the summer's basic everyone needs in their closets. There are so many amazing ways to style the piece. Styled underneath a sweater vest and belted at the waist, choose bright colours and billowing silhouettes for extra drama and a romantic appeal.



Maxi Dress

Most appeared in the catwalks of the season - Dior, Alberta Ferretti, Valentino, Erdem, and Michael Kors- this romantic trend comes in many variations from draped, baby doll, backless, and sheer. And because they are in tune with seasonal trends, these floor-sweeping dresses are the perfect Valentine's date allies.



Monochrome Dresses

Spare your little black dress this Valentine's. Designers showed a predilection for black and white - most often, together and made a case for monochrome cocktail dresses this season. Chequered, colour-blocked, stripes - black and white dresses are perfect elegant evening wear that would work for most occasions from formal meetings to dinner dates.





Vero Moda Blue Jacquard Asymmetric Dress ₹2,200



Mango Ruched floral dress ₹6,590



Fossil Mother-of-Pearl Disc Pendant Necklace ₹4,495



Once Upon a Trunk Metallic Chain Earrings ₹1,850



Vero Moda Grey Pleated Sheer Midi Dress ₹3,499

You can also choose cocktail dresses that come with padded shoulders so that they de-emphasize your lower half and gives a proportionate structure.

It's also important to be cautious about your dress length. Choose the right length that stops at thinner parts of your legs, if not, the dress might make you look shorter.

Are you slightly on the athletic side? A cocktail dress with a ruffled top, collars, and embellishments around the chest will create volume around this area.

Jaypore Silver Ring with Pearls ₹5,600 ₹3,490



Pear-Shaped Figure

If you have a slender elongated upper-body with a smaller bust and hips, and thighs larger than the upper-body, then an empire waistline or a dress with an A-line cut would compliment your figure the best to create the illusion of volume on the upper body.



Inverted Pyramid Figure

If you have broad shoulders with a narrow waistline, asymmetrical hemlines would be your best bet. Dresses with more detailing below the waist are ideal; the flair bottom with a minimalistic shade on top will accentuate your figure.



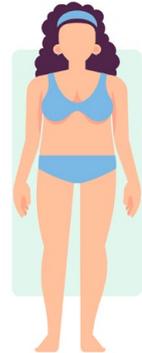
Hour Glass Figure

Narrow waist with curvy/large chest and hips? Firstly, embrace those curves!! Secondly, you would never go wrong with tight-fitted dresses, strapless or off-the-shoulder. A-line would also be perfect for an hour-glass figure. But you need to keep away from anything that flair from the waist.



Round Figure

Wear those curves with confidence. Go for cocktail dresses that have V-shaped necklines and empire waistlines. And don't forget to bling out with eye-catching jewellery. Long earrings, bold rings, and chokers will look fabulous on you. And to say the least, don't forget your heels.



Straight Figure

Petite and slender all the way? Look for dresses that are layered. Since knee-length ruffle ballerinas are back, it would be the perfect match for a V-neck blouse or a wrap shirt top. You can also go for a peplum dress that would give you a curvaceous figure.

Everything said, no matter how killer your dress is, it's your attitude that reflects your style the best. So whatever you chose to wear, wear it with a pleasant smile and a stride of confidence. Let's give Cupid some busy work this Valentine's! ■

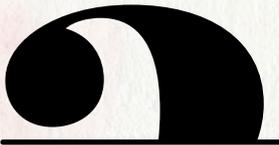
14 NOT SO CHEESY VALENTINE'S DAY IDEAS

No, you don't absolutely haaave to enjoy a candle-lit dinner and slow-dance. V-day can be about so much more if you keep an open mind.

1

Horror Movie Night

Not up to all the Valentine's Day sap? Why not bring out the popcorn and celebrate its gruesome roots with a gory movie marathon?



Work up a sweat together and sign up for a virtual couples workout or yoga session.



Be a Tourist

Invest in a polaroid camera and take a tour of your city's heritage spots. Chances are you haven't visited them after your school excursion.

Skip dinner and a movie try your hand at rock climbing.

Need for speed? Go Karting is the way to go.

3 4 5

6

Let's DIY

Take out the tools, muster up some skills and rope in your significant other into helping you take on a new home improvement or DIY project.



Game Night

A good game of Monopoly, Scotland Yard or Pictionary with friends is sure to bring out your competitive spirit



Set your sights on a route and head out cycling together.

8 9

10



Queen of Hearts

How better to loosen up than set up a round or two of poker or Cards Against Humanity, if that's more your thing.

12

Tune In

Create a playlist of all your favorite songs that are not about love and can be your go-to when you're cooking, driving or simply hanging out.

13

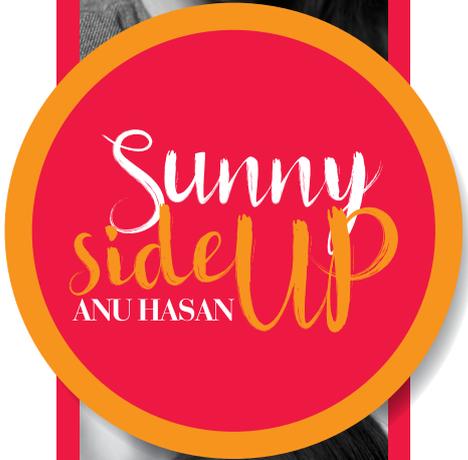
Volunteering together at your local charity can make others feel good, while also feeding your own soul.

14



Mystery Rooms

An escape room challenge is sure to get your brains racking and there are several virtual options as well. ■



Instinct

“ AS A FRIEND SAID, THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT THE PEOPLE WHO ARE PART OF OUR CHILDHOOD – A SPECIAL FEELING THAT CAN NEVER BE REPLACED BY THOSE THAT COME LATER IN OUR LIVES.

There have been many occasions in life that my gut instinct has been spot on. And many on which it has been completely off the mark. Which is why I don't blindly trust my instinct.

Where it proved right was when it came to my parents. I distinctly recall a conversation with my cousin. We were standing outside the gate of her apartment and she said "I don't think I have much time with my parents" And for some reason I said "No. I don't have time with amma and appa. They are not going to be here much longer. You have time." And this was a statement I made two whole years before they passed, despite the fact that her parents were older than mine.

While I had nothing to base this on, I trusted my instinct and increased the frequency of my trips from the UK. What used to be a trip once in forty five days became once in a month. I am glad that I did that for the last two years of their life. It was a perfect compromise between sustaining my work in the UK (which Appa was very particular that I should) and spending time with them.

And so, when the time came for them to go, which they did in quick succession, the one thing I did not have to deal with was the guilt and doubt whether I had done enough. (I must confess that every now and then the doubt surfaces and that is when I speak to my friends who have seen things from the outside and that helps me regain my perspective.)

I had made a trip recently to Trichy and my instinct again reared its head and nudged me to call family friends of ours. Again, the voice said, "not much time" But it was during covid, and I'd had to be outside amongst hordes of people for some paperwork. Akka had health issues and I knew that they would not understand if I called them, only to tell them I was NOT going to visit them because I was concerned I

might be a risk to them.

And like I said, I don't blindly trust my instinct. I tamped it down and told myself that it was better I not call them. There was always a next time. And by the time I make my next trip, the Covid situation might be better and the vaccine will be here and... well, you know the line of logic that follows.

When the phone rang last evening, and it was one of the siblings, the voice of instinct whispered "I told you" but again I tamped it down and despite the underlying fear, I said cheerfully "Good evening Anna, how are you?"

“ IN MY EXPERIENCE, PEOPLE ARE THERE IN THE IMMEDIACY OF SORROW. THERE IS A LOT TO BE DONE, THE NEWS IS STILL FRESH AND THEY STEP IN. BUT NOT MANY REMEMBER TO BE THERE DOWN THE LINE.

and his first line made my heart sink. "I have bad news ma" and I knew. Even before he said it, I knew. I knew akka was gone.

I listened to him as he narrated what had happened and then as I put the phone down, a swathe of memories scrolled in my mind in quick succession – of akka carrying me as a child, of me taking her with me to confront the kid who had threatened me in school (That is a memory that always makes me smile, because akka said I had asked her to stand outside the gate when I went in to confront the girl - my famous compromise again), her voice that had a metallic ring to

it, the way she smiled at me. All the memories of an integral part of my childhood in Trichy.

As a friend said, there is something about the people who are part of our childhood – a special feeling that can never be replaced by those that come later in our lives. And so it was with Akka.

Dealing with Amma and Appa's death taught me many lessons. It gave me strength while it also gave me ability to feel compassion for other people's loss. And it was this that I was drawing upon now. While I felt sad, I knew that I couldn't turn the clock back. So instead of focusing on what could have been, I looked at what I could do to make them feel better.

I knew my brother had not been in touch with them and that they loved him. It would comfort them if he spoke to them. I messaged him and gave him the news. I made a note in my phone to check in on them a year from now.

In my experience, people are there in the immediacy of sorrow. There is a lot to be done, the news is still fresh and they step in. But not many remember to be there down the line.

And it isn't their fault. Life happens. It has this ability to simply go on. But I know how hard the anniversaries were that I spent alone. It is during those times that the painful memories – the ones where I fought to save Appa jostled for space with the good memories of the laughter and love. And of course, as time goes by, the painful memories lose. But as I said, the first few anniversaries are hard.

So, I always make sure that on anniversaries, I reach out to the people I care about. These are some of the many lessons I have learnt. And now I wonder if I am being taught another one. Maybe, at least in some matters, I should just blindly trust my instinct. ■

Connect with Anu Hasan. Send in your suggestions and feedback at www.facebook.com/anuhasan.india or mail her at anufbpage@gmail.com

Essence of Radiance

Let your skin sip up the goodness of tea tree oil. Potent in small quantities, this is the latest wonder ingredient of the beauty realm.



Why add tea tree oil to your daily beauty regime?

Tea tree oil, also known as melaleuca oil, is all you need to make your skin feel rejuvenate. An essential oil distilled from the leaves of the native Australian plant *Melaleuca alternifolia*, this is not to be confused with the plant that produces leaves used to make black or green tea. A powerhouse of antioxidants, its anti-inflammatory, anti-fungal and anti-microbial properties makes tea tree oil an effective way to reduce skin inflammation, treat skin infections like acne, pimple, dermatitis, itching and promote overall skin health. It's no surprise that these germ-fighting properties have made tea tree find their way to the beauty aisle. ■

Real Nature Tea Tree Face Mask by **The Face Shop** ₹100



Tea Tree Anti-Imperfection Daily Solution by **The Body Shop** ₹1,595



Subtitle please!
When working with tea tree essential oil, never apply it directly to skin. Make sure to dilute the oil with a carrier oil, such as olive oil, coconut oil, or almond oil. For every 1 to 2 drops of tea tree oil, add 12 drops of a carrier oil. Don't forget to do a patch test to make sure your skin doesn't react negatively. ■

Tea Tree Anti-Imperfection Night Mask by **The Body Shop** ₹1,895



Tea Tree Face Scrub by **Mama Earth** ₹349



Tea Tree Oil and Vetiver Body Wash by **Love Beauty and Planet** ₹315



Tea Tree Essential Oil by **Ras Luxury Oils** ₹675



Advanced Organics Tea Tree Skin Clearing Mattifying Facial Toner by **Biotique** ₹220



Tea Tree & Hemp Soap Bar by **Rose & Co.** ₹499



Tea Tree Anti-Imperfection Peel-Off Mask by **The Body Shop** ₹595

SPOTLIGHT

PRINCE CHARMING IN ACTION!

WITH TWO MOVIES LINED UP FOR A RELEASE THIS YEAR AND SEVERAL EXCITING PROJECTS IN THE PIPELINE, VARUN TEJ IS ALL GEARED TO LIGHT UP THE SCREENS THIS 2021. IN A CONVERSATION WITH SRUTHI RAVINDER, TELUGU CINEMA'S FAVORITE CRUSH, VARUN OPENS UP ABOUT LOVE, LIFE, AND OF COURSE, THE WORLD OF FILMS.







PHOTOGRAPHY **VAISHNAV PRAVEE** | STYLIST **MANISHA MELWANI**



GROWING UP AS THE SON OF KONIDELA NAGENDRA BABU AND NEPHEW OF CHIRANJEEVI AND PAWAN KALYAN, VARUN TEJ DEVELOPED A PASSION FOR THE WORLD OF CINEMA AT A VERY YOUNG AGE.

While many would call this a range of proverbial silver spoons in the mouth, it must be acknowledged that Varun has scaled his own series of ups, downs, plights and uncertainties. Today, he is on an unstoppable journey of carving a legacy of his own.

LET THE GAMES BEGIN

His massive upcoming release is Ghani, a sports drama directed by Kiran Korrapati and produced by Sidhu Mudda of Renaissance Films and Allu Bobby of Allu Bobby Company. Saiee Mukerjee has been signed as the female lead. The cast includes Upendra, Suneil Shetty and Naveen Chandra too. “Well, I cannot get into the details of the movie, but all I can say is that it’s a one-of-a-kind sports action film and I am excited about the way it’s shaping up so far. Generally, this genre hasn’t been explored in our

industry, and this gave us the seed to start this project with confidence and excitement. Being an avid sports lover, I am pumped about this!”

The movie was set for last year but had to be shelved due to the pandemic and is now releasing this July. Varun plays a boxer for which he undertook training from a national level champion boxer. “Training for the role for a while now, it involves a lot of discipline both mentally and physically. I have a personal trainer and a nutritionist hired for the film the champ himself, Neeraj Ghoyat, who’s training me for the role and teaching me the nuances of the game. It is a lot more complex when you put on the gloves, but I am getting the hang of it and hopefully, you will be amazed at the output as we are trying to keep it as real as possible,” he reveals. “We have faced quite a few challenges due to the pandemic, but we are back on our feet with our gloves on.”



Apart from Ghani, he is also shooting for F3 which is the sequel of the blockbuster film F2. The movie that stars Varun and Venkatesh Daggubati, directed by Anil Ravipudi, is set to hit the theatres this August. "In the pipeline are a few more that I've committed to, but it's too early to announce them currently as they are in the scripting phase. They are exciting projects, and I am looking forward to them as eagerly as you are."

A SPECTRUM OF GENRES

Varun is not the one to shy away from experimenting with his scripts. He seamlessly shifts from one character to a drastically different character from movie to movie: an NRI lover boy, a reckless gangster, a mischievous thief, are just some of these varied roles. "I like to challenge myself," he admits. "The scripts and roles I pick are based on the screenplay and how the story is being narrated. The art of storytelling, the characterization of the role, and the conviction or confidence in the director is what I look for before I 'green-light' it. There is a conscious effort I put in to be different with each movie."

So what does it take to play completely different personalities on the big

screen? Varun breaks it down like this: "It's mostly opening yourself up to the imagination and the experience of that specific role keeping in mind the director's vision. Reading the script and noting the emotions, thoughts, and feelings that arise from it. Reading in between the lines and what is being said. To each his own, but this is my process. In short, the character on the screen should be of the script and not of one's own personality."

CAREER LESSONS LEARNED

This self-assured nature seems to have risen from humble learnings that Varun has had. Before his big success in movies like Fidaa and Tholi Prema, Varun had a few misses with movies Mister and Loafer not doing great in the box office and leaving his fans disappointed. Did that make him opt for safer roles and put aside unconventional ones? "Not really, if it is interesting and I believe I can pull it off to give a different experience to everyone watching, I'll take the leap of faith and hope for acceptance for the risk," comes his confident reply.

And he has no regrets either: "All characters I've played so far are close to my heart, or else I would not have taken

IT'S MOSTLY OPENING YOURSELF UP TO THE IMAGINATION AND THE EXPERIENCE OF THAT SPECIFIC ROLE KEEPING IN MIND THE DIRECTOR'S VISION. READING THE SCRIPT AND NOTING THE EMOTIONS, THOUGHTS, AND FEELINGS THAT ARISE FROM IT.



the script to the next stage. Old school but yeah, all these characters are special to me as each has taught me a different lesson and given me a different perspective to life.” In his words, it all comes down to this – “I never take failures to my heart and success to my head that is one of the biggest lessons the industry has taught me.”

STAR FAMILY

Born to actor, Nagendra Babu, his paternal uncles Chiranjeevi and PawanKalyan, and his cousins Ram Charan, Allu Arjun, and Sai Dharam Tej are also iconic actors in Telugu cinema. Needless to say, Varun grew up in the limelight. “Again, the pressure was never a barrier for me as it was my passion to become an actor,” he recalls. “Having grown up in such an environment, I began to understand and closely appreciate the pressure with every film because the markets and stakes are so high, the role is different and we ride on such big fan bases. But taking in the whole picture puts it all into perspective. Each of these elements goes hand in hand with the rest.”

Once again his fearless spirit shines through: “I’ve always believed in myself and I have been taught by both to get my foundations right and then go forward with the approach. So, success just adds value as I believe in the process and that is what gives me the confidence in achieving more in my career.”

The recent NisChay Wedding threw light on the mega Konidela family, their strength, and their closeness. Though each is busy running a successful life professionally the family remains very close and rooted and together. “A lot of catching up happens on the table after long hours of work; that’s where we get together and have a great time talking about our day,” says Varun, with a twinkle in his eye as he speaks about his family.

V-Day Special

With a huge following of doe-eyed girl fans, Varun Tej sure is one of the most eligible bachelors of south cinema. Here’s a little peek into his guilty pleasures:

What is your idea of a perfect date?

During this pandemic, it would be to Netflix & chill.

What is one thing people do not know about you?

You need to meet me to know me.

What is something you notice about someone when you first meet them?

Their smile.

Three things that you would look for in your better half.

Sense of humour, modesty, and the love for travel.

Quick 5 with Varun

What is your favorite place to eat?

Home-cooked meals are my all-time favs. Comfort food is whatever my mom makes.

How many hours a day do you work out?

Depends a lot on my shoot schedule. But on an average it would be two hours, but for this film, it’s a bit more time in the gym.

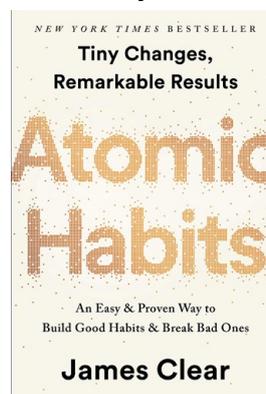
Movies you’ve loved watching:

In recent times it would be Rangasthalam
Andhadhun
Soorai Pottru

Last series you watched

LUPIN

Last book you read



Atomic Habits
by James Clear ■



Can You Handle The Aroma-nce?

How about a generous serving of romance, seasoned with cheeky desire? Create your own version of love to savour in each mouthful.



MALTED STRAWBERRY CAKE

The show stopping cake of every pot-luck or dinner party you host next!



About the writer:

Anjali is a self-taught baker and food photographer from Ahmedabad, Gujarat. She loves to play around with ingredients and create lip-smacking desserts that catch people's eyes and tries to incorporate flavours from across the globe. She believes in making home-baking easy, hassle free and delicious! Follow her on Instagram [@bakesalotlady](https://www.instagram.com/bakesalotlady) or check out her blog [bakesalotlady.com](https://www.bakesalotlady.com) for all the detailed recipes.



MALTED STRAWBERRY CAKE

INGREDIENTS

Cake

- 235g Unsalted Butter (room temperature)
- 3 Large Eggs
- 40g Malt powder (Milo/Horlicks or any malt powder you can find)
- 40 ml Low Fat Cream
- 1 tsp Vanilla Extract
- 200g Castor Sugar
- 200g All Purpose Flour
- 1¼ tsp Baking Powder
- ¼ tsp Salt
- 60g Ground Almonds

Frosting

- 150g Cream Cheese
- 100 g Salted Butter
- 350 g sifted Icing Sugar
- ½ tsp Vanilla Extract

Filling and topping

- Good quality strawberry jam (Store bought or homemade)
- Thinly sliced fresh strawberries

PREPARATION

1. Grease and line three 6-inch round cake pans and preheat your oven to 175°C.
2. Sift the flour, malt powder, sugar, baking powder and salt into a medium-large bowl (If using a stand mixer, you may do so in the bowl of the mixer) you can also use a hand held mixer.
3. Now add the cubed room temperature butter into the sifted dry ingredients and start mixing at a low speed (use the paddle attachment), increase the speed after 10-15 seconds and mix for about 25-30 seconds until the flour looks like wet sand.
4. Take a separate bowl, combine the eggs, low fat cream and vanilla and whisk until well combined.
5. Now add half of this mixture

to your flour and butter, mix it on medium high speed for one minute. This step will build the structure of the cake. It is very important to make sure that you beat the mixture for at least one minute otherwise your cake will not have structure

6. After one minute, stop the mixer and add half of the remaining liquid and whip for 20-30 seconds, do the same with the remaining amount of liquid.
7. Once the batter looks smooth stop mixing and pour the batter evenly into the three pans and bake for roughly 25-30 minutes or until a skewer inserted in the middle comes out clean.
8. Let the cakes cool completely before assembling.

For the frosting

1. Blend the room temperature cream cheese and butter on medium-high speed for 2-3 minutes until light and fluffy.
2. Add the sifted icing sugar one tablespoon and a time followed by the vanilla while whipping on high and mix for roughly 5 minutes.

Assemble the cake

1. Once the cake is cooled, remove each layer and level them off to make them straight.
2. Spread a generous layer of frosting on the first layer and add around 2 tablespoons of strawberry jam in the center, now place the second cake layer on top. Repeat the same step for this layer.
3. Place the third and last layer on top and over the cake with a thin layer of frosting. Refrigerate till the butter is hardened and then slather on more frosting to give the cake a finished look.
4. Decorate with thinly sliced fresh strawberries and enjoy. Keep the cake refrigerated.





STRAWBERRY & RASPBERRY POPSICLES

Your ideal dessert or snack for a hot summer evening. It is so healthy that you can have it for breakfast too. Loaded with the goodness of berries and coconut milk, these popsicles are a treat to the eyes and to the tastebuds!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup* Strawberries (I used frozen)
- 1 cup* Raspberries (I used frozen)
- 4 tbsp* sugar
- 4 tbsp* water
- 1 cup* water (or according to desired consistency)
- 350 ml* Coconut milk (I used unsweetened) (or milk of choice)
- A pinch* Salt

PREPARATION

- 1.** Mix the 4 tbsp water with 4 tbsp sugar and microwave till the sugar dissolves.
- 2.** Add all the remaining ingredients in the blender along with the simple syrup and blend until smooth.
- 3.** Taste and add more sweetener if you like. Adjust consistency of your liquid by add by adding water
- 4.** Pour into your popsicle moulds and freeze for a minimum of 8 hours.

Note: You can use any berries that you have on hand, they will work perfectly. Do strain the mixture if you do not like seeds in your popsicles.



THE EASIEST STRAWBERRY MARSHMALLOWS

4 ingredients to make the fluffiest, melt-in-the-mouth strawberry marshmallows.

INGREDIENTS

Strawberry Base

85 g Strawberry Jell-O One Pack
80 ml water

Sugar Syrup

150 ml light corn syrup
190 g Sugar (regular or granulated)
100 ml water

For The Pan

200 g icing sugar
200 g cornflour

PREPARATION

Marshmallows

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, empty the contents of the strawberry jell-o pack and add the 80 ml water. Stir to combine and set it aside.
2. Take a 9×9 inch baking pan grease

it with a flavourless oil generously everywhere. Coat the insides of the pan with equal parts icing sugar and cornflour. I sift the mixture onto the pan and shake it to coat evenly. **This is an important step** to avoid the marshmallows from sticking to the pan.

3. In a heavy bottomed saucepan add the sugar, light corn syrup and water. On medium-low heat, bring this mixture up to 240F (use a candy thermometer).
4. When the mixture reaches 240F take it off the heat. Start the stand mixer on low speed and very slowly drizzle this hot sugar syrup along the side of the bowl as the mixer keeps running. **Be extremely careful.**
5. Once all the syrup is poured, crank up the speed to high and let it whip for 8 minutes or until the bowl is cool to touch. The mixture will become

extremely light and fluffy.

6. At this stage, work quickly and transfer this marshmallow fluff to the prepared pan and spread it evenly as best as you can. The mixture will start setting very quickly and it will be extremely sticky. Sift some of the icing sugar and cornstarch mixture on the top surface and let it sit outside on the counter to dry overnight.

Cut into squares

1. One a clean and dry surface, sift the icing sugar and cornstarch mixture evenly and invert the dried marshmallow from the baking pan.
2. Take a very sharp knife, grease it slightly with a flavourless oil and make straight sharp cuts to cut your marshmallow to your desired size.
3. Sprinkle more icing sugar and cornflour mix and toss to coat all sides.

RASPBERRY CHEESECAKE SWIRLED BROWNIES

Nothing screams love more than the divine combination of chocolate, berries and cream cheese. Make this cheesecake for your Valentine and win their heart!



INGREDIENTS

Brownie

170g Unsalted Butter
270g Dark Chocolate
3 Large Eggs
200g Dark Brown Sugar
1 tsp Vanilla Extract
1 tsp Coffee + 1 tbsp Warm Water
110g All-Purpose Flour
20g Unsweetened Cocoa Powder
1/4 tsp Baking Powder
1/4 tsp Salt

Cheesecake

200g Cream Cheese
30g Dark Brown Sugar/Castor Sugar
1 tsp Vanilla Extract
100g Fresh/Frozen Raspberries
blended into a chunky puree

PREPARATION

1. Grease and line a 10×10 inch baking pan and Preheat your oven to 170 C. Melt the chocolate and butter in the microwave or in the double boiler, add the sugar and whisk it in once the chocolate is melted.
2. Once the mixture is cool enough, add the eggs and whisk it in well, then add the vanilla and coffee mixture.
3. Sift the dry ingredients into the wet ingredients and fold in with a spatula until just combined.
4. Pour this mixture into the prepared pan and keep it aside.
5. In a separate bowl, mix the room temperature cream cheese, sugar and vanilla and whisk well. Lastly, add the raspberries but do not mix them all the way to have a swirl effect.
6. Dollop this mixture on the brownie mixture and using a butter knife or a spoon, swirl it around till you are satisfied with the look of the brownie.
7. Bake this for around 35-40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted comes out almost clean (For gooey fudgy brownie) Let the brownies cool down completely in the pan before cutting a piece, otherwise, they will fall apart.





VALENTINE'S SPECIAL MACARONS

Woo your loved one with these delectable French cookies sandwiched with a luscious chocolate ganache.

INGREDIENTS

For Macarons

- 75 g Whole Unblanched Almonds
(ground in a food processor/grinder)
- 110 g Icing Sugar
- ¼ tsp Vanilla Extract
- 5 g Cocoa Powder
- 65 ml Egg Whites (about 2 eggs)
- 55 g Superfine Castor Sugar
- ¼ tsp Salt
- ½ tsp White Vinegar
- 5-6 drops Concentrated Red Gel Food
Colouring

Filling

- 120 ml Cream (20% fat or 35% fat)
- 180 g Dark (72%) Chocolate

PREPARATION

Make the macarons:

1. In a food processor add the whole almonds, icing sugar and cocoa powder and pulse till everything is well ground and combined. Make sure that you don't blend and only pulse.
2. Sift this mixture once into a bowl. there will be about 1 tablespoon worth of ground mixture remaining in the sieve, discard it. Set aside.
3. In a large bowl that is very clean and without grease (ensure that the beating attachments of your stand mixer/hand mixer are also clean and grease-free). Add the egg whites and salt. Start whipping at a slow speed.
4. Once the egg whites start foaming up, add the vinegar.
5. When bubbles start forming, slowly add in the caster sugar in small additions.
6. Once all the icing sugar is added,

increase the speed and whip, add the vanilla & the food colouring and keep whipping till you reach stiff peaks.

7. After you reach stiff peaks, add the sifted almond mixture in three stages, folding gently. Keep folding till the batter is flowing in ribbons from your spatula and you can make a figure 8.
8. Transfer this mixture into a piping bag and cut a hole about 1/2-inch in diameter. Pipe little mounds into prepared and lined baking sheets.

Leave some space between the macarons.

9. Tap your baking sheet against the counter about 5-6 times to remove air bubbles.

10. Let your macarons dry for about 15-45 minutes or till it forms a light skin on the surface and it's top is matte. Meanwhile, preheat your oven to 150 C

11. Bake your macarons for about 16 minutes or until set.

12. Once baked, let your macarons cool on the baking sheet before removing.

Prepare the filling

1. Heat your cream in the microwave, once it starts to simmer, add the chocolate and salt. Leave it for 2-3 minutes, then stir to combine. Leave to cool. Refrigerate until it reaches pipable/spreadable consistency.

Assembling

1. Match the cookies according to size, pipe a generous amount of the ganache and sandwich them.

1. Refrigerate the cookies for about 2 hours minimum to have the best consistency. ■

New Lease on Life

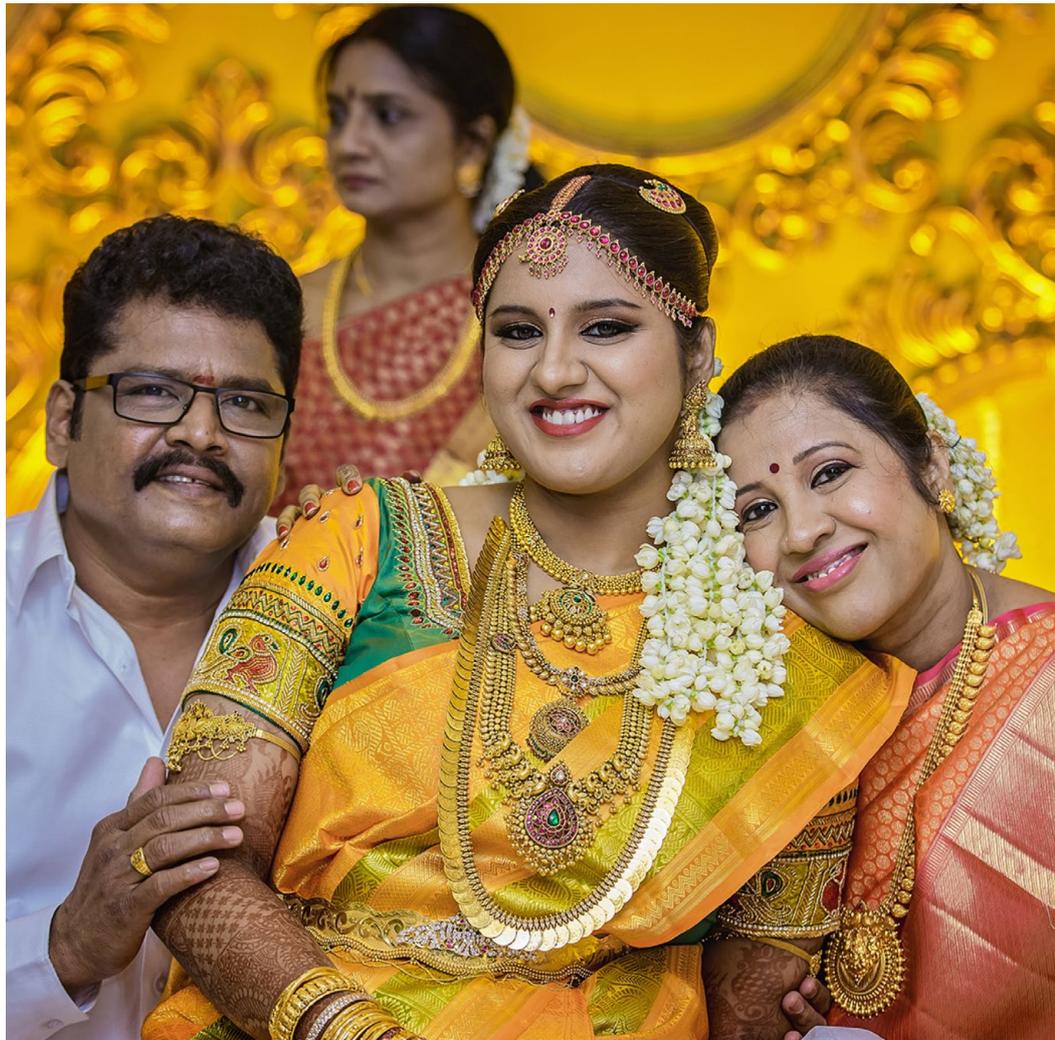
Bringing home a new-born is always an adjustment; more so in the midst of a pandemic. And most of the time, as we celebrate the new miracle of life, mothers don't seem to be getting the kind of attention that they should. In a conversation with **Sruthi Ravinder, Maalica KSR Arjun Krishnan** takes us through the untold tales of new motherhood.



Pregnant women and new moms certainly had an especially crazy 2020. “2020 was a year I was looking forward to. It was the year I delivered my baby girl. I delivered on March 11th, 2020, exactly 12 days before they announced the lockdown. I was already suffering from post-partum depression when COVID anxiety started settling in. I was so worried about how I was going to protect my baby from the virus.”

While the world is reporting mood swings, sadness, and irritability, post-partum depression seemed to get lost in the mix – something a lot of new moms battle but don’t talk about much. “Now my baby is my life, but initially when I delivered her, I did not have any connection with her. People around me were showering her with love but for me, she felt like a little stranger. The things that were running on my mind were about how this baby was not going to let me sleep, how I had to constantly feed her. Nevertheless, it didn’t stop me from doing my duties. But there isn’t too much awareness on this and a lot of people around me felt that I was being dramatic.”

Anxiety and depression coupled with sleepless nights led Maalica into an array of unhealthy habits. “I gained a lot of unhealthy weight! I stopped taking care of myself, my skin my body. When you have depression you are constantly fighting your negative thoughts.”



Emerging From The Storm

People around Maalica had no idea about post-partum depression and with time she started feeling more alone than ever. “There came a point when everyone around me stopped listening to my problems. They were so focused on wanting to take care of the baby that the mother was left out. That is when I realised I need to fend for myself. I had to come out of this and no one could help me.”

On yet one of those sleepless nights, Maalica found herself scrolling through her Instagram mindlessly. It was

“**THERE CAME A POINT WHEN EVERYONE AROUND ME STOPPED LISTENING TO MY PROBLEMS. THEY WERE SO FOCUSED ON WANTING TO TAKE CARE OF THE BABY THAT THE MOTHER WAS LEFT OUT.**”

the time when the whole world was making Dalgano coffee, baking banana bread, working out, and picking up other exotic skills. “First two months of the lockdown people were their most productive self. It was so nice to see... it was a positive vibe. The next day I went on a random Instagram live with my cousin who is a dermatologist. She wanted to do a session on newborn skincare. I did not think much of it and agreed. I’ve always been a good public speaker. The live was a success but more than that it kept my mind off things for a brief period.”

This live episode bolstered her confidence. 'I thought I had to do something on the same lines and that is how 'Masks-Off with Maalica' started. My first live was on Father's Day and my dad KS Ravikumar was my first guest. Then, it was my very close friend and vocalist Saindhavi... I didn't have big plans when I started but after 7-8 episodes which is about 7-8 weeks, I realised I was not depressed anymore. The whole process of planning each episode, thinking about guests to feature, what questions to ask them, what to wear and so on, kept my mind occupied. It's been 7 months now and I've never looked back."

Her take-away from this experience is inspiring: "Creativity is like therapy. I started something to keep my mind off things and it has been therapeutic and has helped me come so far."

Family To Fall Back On

As director KS Ravikumar's daughter, one would expect from her a grander, more glamorous life. But Maalica grew up away from the spotlight and her family was just like any other, with protective parents who loved and cherished her. "My Dad is my biggest inspiration. He is an extremely disciplined person. After the shoot, he comes back at 4am or 5am, and even then he makes sure to clear up his luggage, put things back in place. He does not postpone things. I think when you have a disciplined lifestyle it leads you to success." "My mom is a very patient person. She has raised

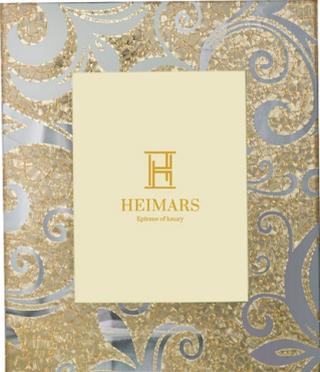
three daughters which is not an easy thing. My husband is my rock. He understands me on a deep level. Naturally, I regard him as my non-judgemental space and my strength."

When Maalica gave birth to her baby girl she knew her world had changed. What she didn't expect was that this little bundle of joy will change her. "Until the time my daughter was born I was quite a laid back person. After I delivered her I'm seeing a new version

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of myself. I'm working harder in life because I want to set an example for her. I don't want her to grow up seeing a mother who is not resourceful with her time. I want her to see me as a mom who has a dedicated career, is successful in her own ways." And she closes with resounding passion in her voice, that can only come from a fierce mother: "If my daughter can do at least one thing productive looking at me, that would be my success. She is my driving force." ■



<p>1.</p> 	<p>2.</p> 	<p>3.</p> 
<p>4.</p> 	<p>5.</p> 	<p>6.</p> 
<p>7.</p> 	<p>8.</p> 	<h1>Wall of Frames</h1> <p><i>Freeze your face and special moments within these charming picture frames and let them turn your living space more home-y.</i></p>
<p>1. Golden Metal and Glass Picture Frame by The Decor Kart ₹1,100; 2. Brown Wood Marina Jute Frame by Pepperfry ₹1,008; 3. Karo Store Harbour Handcrafted Wood Picture Frame by Jaypore ₹2,100; 4. Lerboda Frame in Gold by Ikea ₹499; 5. Vintage Green Photo Frame by Nestasia ₹1,290; 6. Curran Golden Photo Frame by Home Artisan ₹1,290; 7. Abstract Photo Holder Wall Grid by GingerCrush ₹1,999; 8. Monochrome Speckled Photo Frame Small by The Label Life ₹790; 9. Starry Night Beaded Photo Frame by The Wishing Chair ₹990; 10. Consilio Photo Frame by Heimars ₹2,212</p>	<p>9.</p> 	<p>10.</p> 

Auto-nomous!

Meet **Raji Ashok**, the woman who lives life on her terms while making a living on three wheels. She's the one to call when you're stranded in the metropolis of Chennai. By **Radhika Ramesh**



Women from all walks of life inspire us in different ways, but few stand out like Raji

Akka, as she's called. Auto rickshaw driver by profession, she has gone above and beyond her call of duty to help women in need. Raji Akka has been driving for 20 years and serving women around the city of Chennai in moments of crises. Her most recent urgent call came from a woman who needed to be picked up after visiting the graveyard at 12am. For most, that might draw the line. For Raji Akka, it was another day at work, as she steered her vehicle towards the strange pickup location.

“Whether it is the middle of the night or an insufferably hot afternoon, I never refuse a ride to a woman. Even after my 8-9 hour shift has ended,” says 48-year-old Raji.

In a time when women are finding it hard to trust cab and auto drivers after sundown, Raji is pretty much a beacon of hope and solace for Chennai's urban female community. “From trips to the airport at odd hours to women working late shifts, I've seen it all,” she shares. “I accept every request, the only

“Over the past few years, I have given motivational talks in over 13 colleges in Chennai. I also give free auto driving lessons to women who are interested. If there is a woman out there hesitant to pick up auto driving, I want to assure her that it's a skill worth learning and a livelihood worth taking up



“Whether it is the middle of the night or an insufferably hot afternoon, I never refuse a ride to a woman. Even after my 8-9 hour shift has ended.

says. “After several failed interviews, I decided to start driving an auto for a living just like my husband.”

Raji received her license from Coimbatore, but she believed she needed to learn more as a skilled auto driver to understand the traffic scenario in Chennai. “These were hiccups in my journey but could not stop me from getting better. I traded my new auto for a second-hand one and practiced even more. Soon, there was no street in Chennai that was alien to me, and I could manage driving in the traffic as well as any local,” she declares confidently.

“Over the past few years, I have given motivational talks in over 13 colleges in Chennai. I also give free auto driving lessons to women who are interested. If there is a woman out there hesitant to pick up auto driving, I want to assure her that it’s a skill worth learning and a livelihood worth taking up,” closes Raji, with an unmistakable mark of courage and steadiness in her voice. ■

condition being that they book the ride at least one hour in advance so I can schedule them.” Besides being a brave heart, Raji has a generous one too. She offers free rides to young kids, senior citizens and those women who may not have the fare to pay. On an average, she completes 30 trips everyday and earns about 30,000 to 40,000 as her monthly income.

Raji is originally from Palakkad, Kerala and has a BA in Philosophy. While she was still a student, she fell in love with Ashok, an auto-driver from the village, whom she married later. Although she doesn’t like to go into the details of the struggles the couple initially faced she reveals that

the two decided to shift to Coimbatore. Here, while Ashok drove an auto, Raji worked as an accountant at a travel agency. However, the couple shifted base to Chennai after the 1998 bomb blasts in Coimbatore that took nearly 60 lives.

“The horrific blasts had affected hundreds of people, and we were two of them,” she recalls. “We had no option but to restart our lives and so we came to Chennai. My brother worked here in the railways, so we had something to go on.” This change of scene however, brought with it its share of challenges. “For one, I could not find a job despite my qualification and experience,” she

Lessons from the Blue Zones

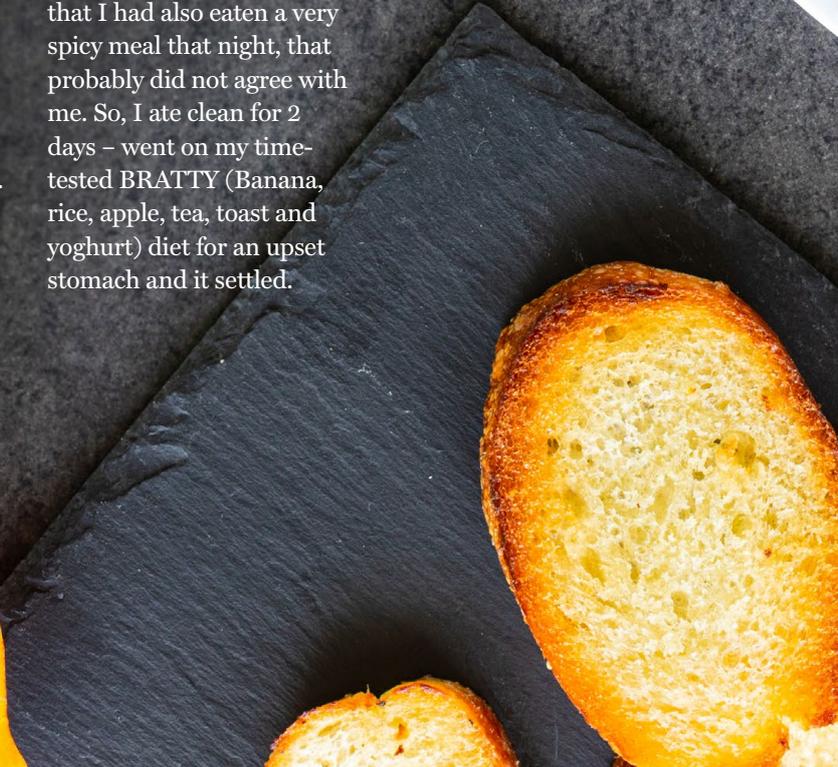
MY HEALTH RESOLUTIONS FOR 2021

Here are the lessons that I am taking from the Blue Zones to help improve my health and well-being in 2021, with the hope that they will lead to a good quality of life and longevity.

It's a new year! 2020 is behind us and if you've made it through the year with your health intact, you must be full of gratitude, as I am. What a year it's been! I don't think we have gone through so much stress ever. The slightest throat itch, headache or sniffle and

immediately the dreaded C word would come to mind. Not Cancer but Covid 19. I remember that one week after I had travelled to Belgaum to bring my mum to my home, I got a terrible stomach flu that continued through the night. By 3 a.m. I had googled and found several studies that listed stomach flu as the first

symptom of Covid 19. I was all set to get tested in the morning, when I realized that I had also eaten a very spicy meal that night, that probably did not agree with me. So, I ate clean for 2 days – went on my time-tested BRATTY (Banana, rice, apple, tea, toast and yoghurt) diet for an upset stomach and it settled.





About the writer:

Sharmila Ribeiro is an agricultural economist and mother of 3 ever-hungry boys. She is the author of an award-winning family cookbook- *Everyday Love - A Mother's Guide to Healthy Cooking for Kids*. Follow her blog at

sharmilacooksforkids.com

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Surviving 2020 and avoiding or surviving Covid-19 has been the main goal for this past year for most us. When reflecting on good health and long-term lifestyle changes for a series of Zoom talks I gave to various Rotary clubs, I came across a fascinating study that was done by the National Geographic Society, led by journalist Dan Buettner. It's called Lessons from the Blue

Zone. The Blue Zone refers to 5 places that are hot spots of longevity, places that had the highest concentration of 100-year olds, who had grown old without diseases like heart problems, diabetes, obesity and cancer.



While many factors contribute to longevity in each Blue Zone, the core is an interconnected set of factors – what we eat, social networks, daily rituals, physical environment and a sense of purpose that

gives our lives meaning. Since food is often at the centre of our ecosystems and defines the choices we make, it takes on a greater significance. We make food choices several times a day – do we choose to cook or

buy? Eat processed food or fresh food? Do we support local organic, seasonal produce from farmers markets? Do we eat alone in front of a screen or at a table with family?

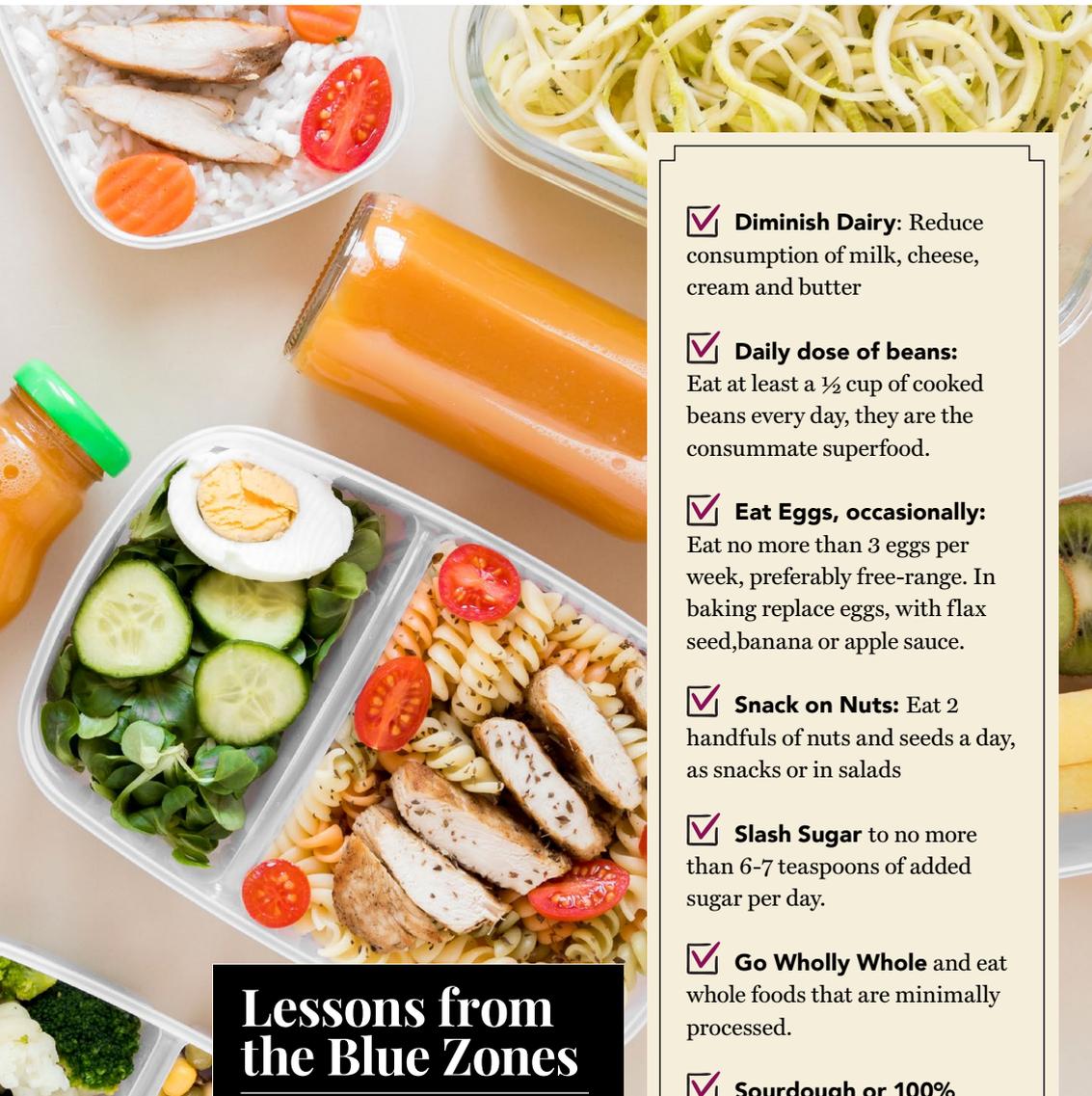
I was fascinated by the

stories of each community and bought one of the books as a reference. At the core of the Blue Zones, are lessons related to food ideas and eating practices that we can easily take from them to implement in our daily lives.



The Researchers Found That there were similar factors at work in each community

FIND A SENSE OF PURPOSE or reasons for why you wake up every morning. **DOWN SHIFT OR FIND WAYS TO REDUCE STRESS** some pray, some take a nap, some remember their ancestors. **THE 80 PERCENT RULE** (stop eating before your stomach is full). The last and smallest meal is eaten in the late afternoon or early evening. **FIND YOUR TRIBE OR YOUR SOCIAL CIRCLE:** Surround yourselves with a few good friends (Okinawans have moais - groups of 5 five friends that commit to each other for life) **BELONGING TO A FAITH BASED COMMUNITY**, whatever the religion or denomination, seemed to increase life expectancy. **PUTTING FAMILY FIRST** and keeping them close was found to be at the core of a Blue Zone life.



Lessons from the Blue Zones

TO HELP IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

- ✓ **Plant Slant:** See that 95% of your food comes from plants. Eat a cup of leafy greens every day, plus fruit, vegetables, beans and whole grains.
- ✓ **Retreat from meat:** Eat meat only twice a week with 60g/ serving
- ✓ **Fish is fine:** Eat mid-chain and small fish a few times a week, up to 90g/serving

✓ **Diminish Dairy:** Reduce consumption of milk, cheese, cream and butter

✓ **Daily dose of beans:** Eat at least a ½ cup of cooked beans every day, they are the consummate superfood.

✓ **Eat Eggs, occasionally:** Eat no more than 3 eggs per week, preferably free-range. In baking replace eggs, with flax seed, banana or apple sauce.

✓ **Snack on Nuts:** Eat 2 handfuls of nuts and seeds a day, as snacks or in salads

✓ **Slash Sugar** to no more than 6-7 teaspoons of added sugar per day.

✓ **Go Wholly Whole** and eat whole foods that are minimally processed.

✓ **Sourdough or 100% whole wheat bread** that are dense and incorporate nuts, seeds, dried fruits and whole grains, are the best breads.

✓ **Blue Zone beverages** include water, coffee, green/ herbal tea and 1 or 2 glasses of red wine, with food. Sweeten tea with honey, if at all.

✓ **Eat some super foods daily** - beans, greens, sweet potatoes, nuts, olive oil, oats/ barley, fruits, green/herbal tea, turmeric and other herbs and spices.

If you find this list overwhelming, the simple takeaway is that Blue Zones diets are, in general, high in good carbohydrates (65%), are low fat (20%) and low protein (15%).

FOUR TO HAVE ALWAYS

100% whole wheat/whole grain breads; Nuts, Beans and Fruit

FOUR TO AVOID

Sugar-sweetened beverages, salty snacks, processed meats and packaged sweets (cookies, candy, energy bars etc.)

My wish for you is that you are able to celebrate each day of the year ahead with home-cooked good food, eaten in moderation in the company of friends and family. Wishing you a safe and healthy 2021. ■

References:
The Blue Zones: Lessons for Living Longer from the People Who've Lived the Longest, Dan Buettner, National Geographic Society, Washington D.C.

The Blue Zones Solution: Eating and Living like the World's Healthiest People, Dan Buettner, National Geographic Society, Washington D.C. 2015.

Stuck in the Mood to Brood?

Constant worrying and overthinking produce feelings of despair, distress & discomfort. Free your mind with some simple tips that can easily help tackle these precursors to anxiety and depression.



About the writer:
The Happy Space is a fresh and modern approach to diversify and broaden your perception on mental health issues initiated by a group of young girls hailing from various backgrounds. Follow them on Instagram at [@thehappyspace.ths](https://www.instagram.com/thehappyspace.ths)



Have you ever overspent your time excessively worrying about what grade you're going to get or where your next big promotion will come from? Do you spend more time than necessary thinking about all the things out of your control or perpetually wishing that you could alter your past a certain way? People claim that a little worrying can help individuals test their limit/ perform under pressure and guide one in making better decisions, but in contrast it can take a significant toll on your well-being, both physically and mentally. Picture yourself in an escape room where every problem you try to solve gets you farther away from opening the door - this is what overthinkers feel like because it is nothing but a bundle of obsessive thoughts your mind creates to stop you from confronting the issue at hand. It can impair your judgment and decision-making skills, leaving you unable to defend yourself from your problems; thus, leading to stress and anxiety.



ALLOW YOURSELF THE ROOM TO MAKE MISTAKES



Fortunately, there are a few ways that you can tackle excessive worrying and overthinking:

JOURNAL OR WRITE DOWN WHAT IS WORRYING YOU

It can help put things into perspective and show you a visual form of what you're fearful of.

ENGAGE YOUR BODY

Keeping your hands busy helps distract your mind; it lets you shift your focus from worrying onto the task you're performing.

GO FOR A WALK/RUN

Exercise is an extremely effective way to beat stress because it gets your heart pumping; it makes you feel alive and releases endorphins in your body that are instant mood lifters and can stop overthinking in its tracks.

BE PRESENT

Try to be in the here and now; practice being mindful and grounding yourself because worrying about the future only negatively impacts your present.

PERFORM BREATHING EXERCISES

Focusing on your breath and meditating can give you a sense of calm and create a zen-like state in your brain. It lowers your anxiety levels and allows you to regain control over your thinking patterns.



CREATE 'WORRY TIME'

Worrying about the fact that you are worrying about something is a dangerous and vicious cycle. So, learn to accept that you are worried so that you can focus on all the things you can do to make it better and regain control of your thoughts and actions rather than getting more anxious about the fact that you are worried.

Create a designated time of 30 minutes, and enforce the idea of only worrying within that period so that you don't end up wasting the whole day. Essentially, you're training your brain to spill out all of your worries, concerns and anxieties at a set time to try and find solutions to your problems.

It is impossible to be perfect at all times. So cut yourself some slack.

Worrying is a part of human nature. It doesn't make you weaker; instead, it gives you more understanding of the tools you need to improve your state of mind and quality of life.

It is okay if sometimes overthinking gets the best of you. Learn from it and give yourself room to grow instead of blaming yourself for not fixing it in the first go. ■

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Sometimes men become your girl gang. From fashion to make up to life advice they have your back! Agree?

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#1 This adorable video has been doing rounds!



#2 Fun bunch!
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[@jayamravi_official](https://www.instagram.com/jayamravi_official)
[@karthi_offl](https://www.instagram.com/karthi_offl) in #hydrebad



#3 Chennai Designer Shalini Visakan Designs For The Specially Challenged; here's her story!

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CINEMA CHRONICLES

Your monthly dose of Hollywood, Bollywood and South Cinema



SOORARAI POTTRU HEADS TO THE OSCARS

Sudha Kongara has yet again proved that a strong and a larger-than-life story narrated in a simple form can reach millions of people. Soorarai Pottru has joined the Oscar race in the Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Director and many other categories. Sudha Kongara has yet again proved that a strong and a larger-than-life story narrated in a simple form can reach millions of people. Suriya's acting has proven yet again that he is one of the finest actors of our times and Aparna Balamurali's performance as Bommi will be etched in our hearts forever.

BOLLYWOOD ACTOR VARUN DHAWAN TIES THE KNOT.

Bollywood actor and director David Dhawan's son Varun Dhawan tied the knot to his childhood friend and longtime girlfriend Natasha Dalal on Sunday in Alibaug's famous resort, The Mansion House. Varun took to Instagram to share the first photos. "Life long love just became official," he captioned the post. Natasha Dalal is a fashion designer. The couple has been in a relationship from the age of 17 and have been childhood friends before that.



AARI ARJUNA WINS BIGG BOSS TAMIL SEASON 4.

As expected, the man who had gotten the most positive attention from the audience this season of Bigg Boss Tamil, Aari Arjunan has won the title as the finalist. Although, Aari did not start out as people's favourite, he turned out to be the positive contestant which made people think that there was another side to him. The actor made himself deserving and emerged successful throughout the journey. His calm nature and his composure was what took him all the way. The top two finalists were Balaji Murugadoss and Aari who went on stage with the host. Rio Raj was announced the second runner-up.



ANUSHKA SHARMA AND VIRAT KOHLI WELCOME FIRST CHILD.

The couple who have been married from 2017, welcome their baby girl today. Virat made the announcement on Twitter – mother and baby are both doing well, he wrote and signed off with a request for privacy. Virat tweeted: “We are thrilled to share with you that we have been blessed with a baby girl this afternoon. We thank you all for your love, prayers and good wishes. Anushka and the baby are both healthy and we are feeling beyond blessed to start this new chapter of our lives. We hope that you can respect our privacy at this time.”

PAAVA KADHAIGAL ACTRESS BHAVANI SRE IN VETRIMAARAN’S NEXT.

Bhavani Sre is the new face of Tamil cinema today. She has been having an impressive lineup of films ever since she joined the industry. Her debut film was Ka Pae Ranasingham where she sported the role of Vijay Sethupathi’s sister. She was immediately recognised for naturally sporting the role. But it was in Paava Kadhaigal when she played Sathaar’s sister Sahira that she won hearts and immediately became an audience favourite. Not many know that Bhavani is also music composer GV Prakash’s younger sister. It has now been reported that Bhavani Sre will be the female lead in Vetrimaaran’s next with actor Soori.



VIJAY SETHUPATHI TO PAIR UP WITH KATRINA KAIF.

According to several media reports that are making rounds actor Vijay Sethupathi has bagged a major Bollywood project with Sriram Raghavan the director of ‘Andhadhun’ at the helm. The movie has roped in actress Katrina Kaif to play the female lead.

DIRECTOR SELVARAGHAVAN BLESSED WITH A BABY BOY.

Selvaraghavan and wife Gitanjali welcomed their third child home this new year. Taking to social media the director wrote, “A big thank you to each and everyone of you for all the blessings and hearty wishes. Truly touched by the support and love you’ve all shown us. Believe me, the feeling is mutual. You guys are the best!” Along with this positive message, the director confirmed that they have named him Rishikesh Selvaraghavan.



The Vistas of Bali

An island with the
power to call out
to your soul.





About the writer:

Vidya Gajapathi Raju is a travel blogger who takes her readers on exciting trips around the world and within India as well. Her blog, "Wanderlust Princess Vidya" features unique outlooks on any given destination. A strong advocate of multicultural experiences, Vidya has been the President of IWA (International Women's Association) and the President of Soroptomist International, a charitable organization, while also serving on the Committee of FLO for the past 4 years. Visit her blog at wanderlustprincessvidya.blogspot.com



BALI HAI MAY CALL
YOU
COME TO ME, COME
TO ME
LOST IN THE MIDDLE
OF A FOGGY SEA
IF YOU TRY TO FIND ME
WHERE THE SKY
MEETS THE SEA
HERE AM I YOUR
SPECIAL ISLAND
COME TO ME, COME
TO ME.

The lyrics of this beautiful ballad from the film South Pacific, seemed to echo in our ears, from the moment we landed, until we left. The call of this lovely island and her gentle people are very compelling. We come in to land from over the sea and as we fly in, I feel as if the pilot is about to set us down in the middle of the ocean, but suddenly a runway appears, just in time for him to touch down. We see the coastline stretching out on both sides, little white beaches interspersed with high cliffs. As we drive out of the airport, Bali begins to reveal itself in the beautiful architecture, in the buildings all along the drive.

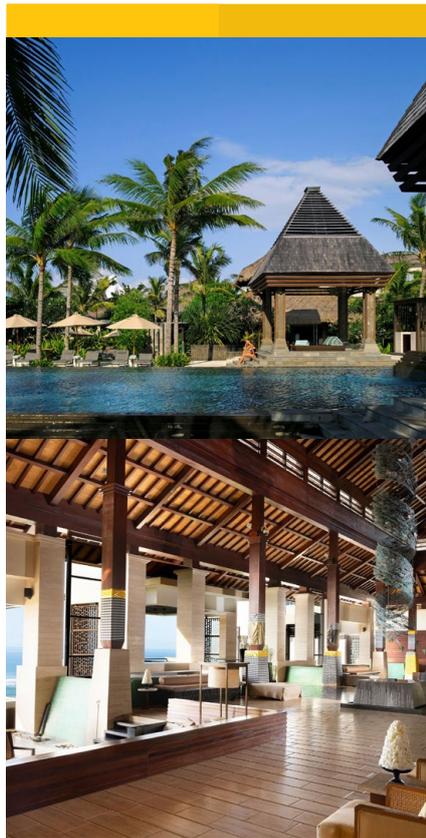


Jimbaran

Just south of the airport, this picturesque and hilly region, Jimbaran, is where we located ourselves during this visit. Beautiful beaches line this entire stretch, all hugging the coastline, with its high cliffs, interspersing the flatter beaches.

The Ngurah Rai Airport is in Bukit Peninsula and we drive out of here towards Jimbaran, where our hotel is located. The half-hour drive was a head-turning experience as all along we were overwhelmed, by not just the beautiful temples and buildings, but an almost continuous array of shops and small factories of Balinese furniture, ceramic sculpture and stone carvings. The effect on us caused us to exclaim every few seconds, much to the amusement of our taxi driver!

The Bukit Peninsula, Bukit meaning 'Hill' in Indonesian, was once the Royal hunting preserve. A vision in itself, it has rolling hills with high cliffs, which gently slope down to the ocean. Mass tourism got a fillip with the opening of the International Airport in 1969 and today, is streamlined for every type of traveller.



THE RITZ CARLTON

Our hotel, The Ritz Carlton, was located on a high cliff with the ocean visible as far as the eye could see. Set on about 800 acres of land, was a perfect walker's paradise, with the hills on the property, the landscaped walking trails that took us on a tough walk, ending at the cliffs. The seascapes with the spectacular sunrise could be quite overwhelming. Climbing down the rough stone steps to the tiny beaches was breathtaking, literally, as the seas at high tide would be lashing at the giant rock faces. Our morning walks on all the days that we had spent here were quite amazing, as we were able to walk in different areas of the vast compound of the hotel!



Dinner at PJ's was more than memorable, as the dining experience with Balinese food, was made more magical with the stars in the sky, the waves lapping the shore, twinkling lights in paper bags weighted down and set on the sand and of course the wonderful company.

Bali had been a part of the Indonesian archipelago since the 7th century; early inhabitants could have been Susaks, from India and Burma. For centuries Bali was ruled by independent dynasties of Kings. It had been predominantly Hindu due to the influence of the priest Nirartha, who has also been credited with building



the sea temples.

By the 16th century, there was a great exodus of artisans, artists, dancers and musicians, who all fled to Bali after the spread of Islam in other parts of Indonesia. The Dutch entered Bali in the late 16th century, when Cornelius de Houtman, the captain arrived and fell in love with the island.

It was in 1710, a hundred years later that the Dutch began to conquer and by 1906, they were ruling all of Bali. The final kingdom that fell was Denpasar and the princes there decided to burn their palaces and fight to death. Independence came

THE BUKIT PENINSULA, BUKIT MEANING ‘HILL’ IN INDONESIAN, WAS ONCE THE ROYAL HUNTING PRESERVE. A VISION IN ITSELF, IT HAS ROLLING HILLS WITH HIGH CLIFFS, WHICH GENTLY SLOPE DOWN TO THE OCEAN.

in 1948. The Balinese Hindu religion is evident in every aspect of their lives and we see it as we drive around, in the innumerable temples. Every home has its temple. Everyday offerings to the gods are made, on the streets outside of shops and homes. We needed to watch where we walked, for fear of offending religious sentiments by stepping on the palm leaf offerings.

Dance, arts and craft is etched into the essence of Balinese culture and has seeped into every aspect of their lives. The origin of this aesthetic is in the fertility of the land and Balinese dance, with its haunting music and purity of form.

THIS BEAUTIFUL CITY DENPASAR, WITH ITS TREE-LINED STREETS AND LOVELY GARDENS, IS THE CAPITAL OF THE ISLAND. IT IS ALSO FAR MORE OF THE 'BIG CITY' WITH ITS SHOPPING MALLS AND RESTAURANTS.



Kuta

Just North of Jimbaran is Kuta, whose focal point is the beach. As we drive past the beach front, it seemed as if most of the activities in Kuta focus on the water. There is surfing, sailing, diving, swimming and fishing. There are shacks and restaurants all along this stretch and we see surfers carrying their boards and crossing over to the beach and heading to the water! There is even a Hard Rock Café here and of course our favourite watering hole, Starbucks, to which we beat a hasty retreat, after a morning of hard shopping!

The 1960s brought the “hippy” travelers and backpackers. From the 1970s, Kuta became a base from which to explore Bali. Shopping here is great, with crafts and clothes, from high end to the street stores, all selling a beautiful selection. Balinese lace, seems to be a specialty and was interestingly a lot like the ‘cut work’ that the nuns in our Indian convents specialise in. Uluwatu Lace is the best company to buy beautiful clothes from.



Denpasar

At the International Airport in Denpasar, is this magnificent sculpture depicting Karna and Ghatotkacha in battle. This beautiful city Denpasar, with its tree-lined streets and lovely gardens, is the capital of the island. It is also far more of the ‘Big City’ with its shopping malls and restaurants. The museum, a beautiful building was originally the palace of the King until 1906, when the Dutch conquered it.

The Pura Agung Jagatnatha was right next door, which we were charmed to visit and to say our prayers. By rule we had to rent sarongs, to wear over our clothes, to maintain the decorum of the temple.

The Padmasana Shrine is made of white coral and consists of an empty throne (symbolic of heaven) on top of the cosmic turtle and two Nagas (mythological serpents), which symbolise the foundation of the world. The walls are beautifully decorated with scenes from the Ramayana and the Mahabharatha.



THE VISIT TO TANAH LOT, MEANING THE LAND IN THE SEA; THE BEAUTIFUL OFF-SHORE TEMPLE, BUILT BY DANG HYANG NIRARTHA, A RESPECTED RELIGIOUS FIGURE IN BALI, IN THE 16TH CENTURY, IS LOCATED ABOUT 300M OFF THE COAST.



Ubud

The drive to Ubud was rather long, but had three interesting villages that we visited. The first stop with its green rice fields, was where Batik is a speciality. The next village, specialised in Balinese silver. The village which made Balinese kites, was rather charming and while we were looking around, we found a local grocer, who



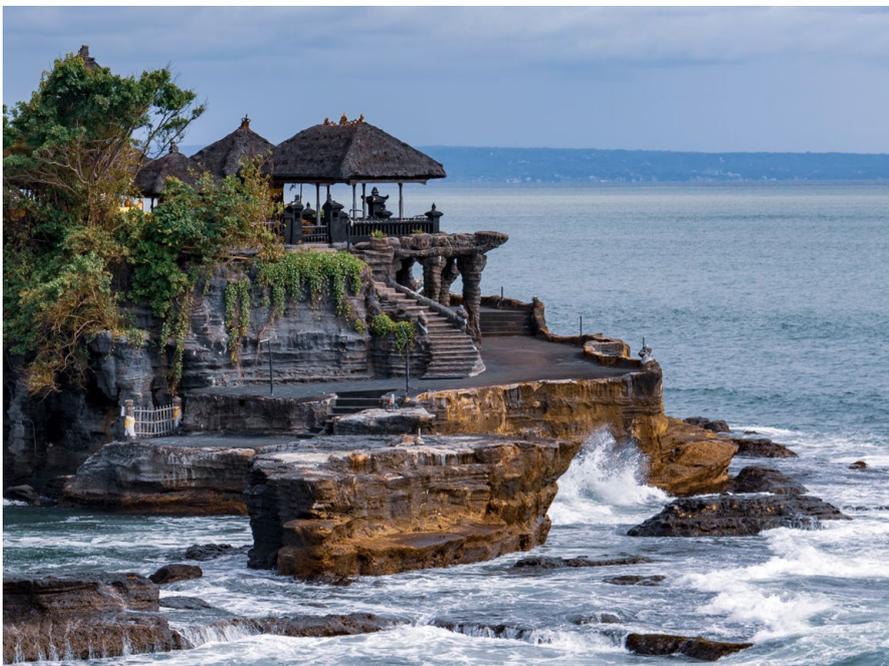
among the rice, lentils and vegetables that he was selling, had even a large cage with live cockroaches for sale! To our relief, he assured us that this was meant to feed the birds.

Ubud is the kind of place, where the pace of life seems to slow down and you really want time to look around and absorb its essence. There are several dance performances in and around Ubud, in addition to world-class spas, beautiful temples and ancient palaces. The shopping is also calm and leisurely, at the Central Market. The two streets, Monkey Forest Road and Hanuman Road are lined with a dazzling array of things.

The Ubud Palace was an interesting cluster of buildings with some ornate corners. The Royal Family still lives here, and some sections of it are open for us to wander about in. The Pura Taman Saraswati on Ji Raya Ubud, is totally spectacular, as water from the temple feeds a pond in front, which is filled with lotus blossoms. The highlight of our visit to Ubud was lunch at the Café Lotus, an open restaurant, overlooking this beautiful temple and the lotus pond.

The visit to Tanah Lot, meaning The Land in the Sea; the beautiful off-shore temple, built by Dang Hyang Nirartha, a respected religious figure in Bali, in the 16th century, is located about 300m off the coast. The walk across the rocks, to visit this temple, was a perfect way to complete the Bali experience.

The haunting lyrics of the song stay with us for several days after we return, “Any day any night, you can hear it call you, come to me come to me.” That is how Bali beckons a traveller for another visit. ■





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