



The manned Soviet spacecraft Vostok 5 was launched (on this day in 1963) and was followed two days later by Vostok 6 carrying Valentina V Tereshkova, the first woman to travel in space.



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MEENA MURTHY KAKKAR, design head and partner, Envisage



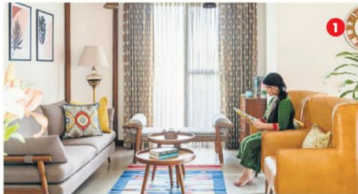
Planning colours is a fantastic way of having a conscious living space. Therapeutic and soothing colour schemes that provide a source of happiness and calmness are the ones that we should decorate our surroundings in.

SHRUTI SODHI, interior designer



Spaces should be optimally designed to nourish, energise, and enrich one's living experience. Blending functionality with aesthetics is key to conscious living.

RACHNA AGARWAL, founder and design ideator, Studio IAAD



MASTERING MINDFUL INTERIORS

ANJANI CHADHA

1 CONSTANT deadlines, the pressure of meeting one's goals, and the need to be digitally connected 24x7—daily hustle can make 'staying in the present' feel like a struggle. In such a world, a few moments of respite can feel like a privilege. This is where mindful living—living with awareness in the present moment—becomes important.

Mindfulness is a way of life that isn't just about our daily habits, but also about our living spaces. Interiors, today, are governed by choices related to overall well-being and conscious living. Emphasising on the need to design our living spaces thoughtfully, Rachna Agarwal, founder and design ideator at Studio IAAD, a Gurugram-based architectural and interior design firm, says, "Spaces should be optimally designed to nourish, energise, and enrich one's living experience. One can imbue a sense of consciousness by curating interiors with a soul. Blending functionality with aesthetics is key to conscious living."

2 Give it a personal touch The home is meant to be a place where one is ideally stress-free. The key to a 'happy home' however, differs from individual to individual. There is no common guide to creating a comfortable living space. The choices vary from minimalist design to sustainable spaces, and so on. Explaining how the first step toward creating conscious living spaces is personal intro-

CONSCIOUS CORNERS

■ A well-ventilated and naturally-lit place can do wonders for the home.

—Meena Murthy Kakkar

■ Multi-functional furniture pieces such as a folding dining table that doubles as a workstation can help make the most of available space.

—Rachna Agarwal

■ Infusing greenery with interiors can be therapeutic. Paintings that showcase natural elements also add to the space.

—Shruti Sodhi

spection, Meena Murthy Kakkar, Design Head at Envisage, a Gurugram-based interior and architecture firm, says, "It is extremely necessary to be aware of what you really want, define your own true self, and identify what makes you happy. Houses have morphed into places that must resonate with the owner and not others. It is important that the place we live in responds to our emotional, mental, and physical health."

Individuals can, therefore, designate spaces within their homes to help them unwind as per their interests. Greater Kailash-based interior designer Shruti Sodhi, who runs Shruti Sodhi Interior Designs, a multi-disciplinary design firm, suggests one to designate a corner at their place as an 'experience corner'. This space can be decorated with all the things you love—planters, books, photographs, mementos, instru-

Want to transform your abode into a tranquil space? Read on to find out how to amp up your home's style credentials so you can be in Zen mode day in, day out



Projects that represent mindful interiors by (1 & 4) Meena Murthy Kakkar; (2 & 5) Shruti Sodhi; (3) Rachna Agarwal

ments, etc. "One can create such corners to create a space for happiness and joy; somewhere you can spend some time at peace," shares Sodhi.

It's all in the hue

Colours are important tools of communication and significantly impact our psychological well-being. While some colours can instil calmness, some may cause anxiety—it is thus important to be mindful when selecting colours for one's home. Sodhi suggests the use of colours such as orange and purples in living spaces. "Planning colour and textures is a fantastic way of having a perfect conscious

Green to the rescue

There is no negative emotion that a bunch of plants cannot fix. "Biophilic elements bring in connection with nature. One can introduce water sounds, music, natural scents, etc.," mentions Agarwal. Affirming the principal thought behind conscious living, Kakkar concludes, "One must remember that interiors are meant to be spaces for living, not to impress."

WHEN FASHION MEETS PRIDE

DYUTI ROY

It was in 2016 when Ashish Chopra (27) started his quest to find men's footwear with heels in his shoe size. After years, and on being disappointed about not finding a pair, Ashish—he is a drag artist who performs under the name, Cumsin Haseena—decided to rope in his family to launch a footwear brand. "It is difficult to find men's heels in India. My mother had been working for a shoe brand at that time and I asked her to start her own shoe brand that would be inclusive," he shares. This was how BeUnic, a label that caters to the sartorial needs of the LGBTQIA+ community, was born in 2019.

While the brand was launched with the idea to present designs created by Ashish's mother, it has—over the years—grown to become more of a community-oriented e-commerce platform. Apart from featuring apparel, accessories, and home decor on their platform, the team also aims to inspire and influence other queer brands to showcase their talent in the evolving market space. "During our initial stage, we attended an LGBTQIA+ entrepreneur conference. It was there that we met a number of smaller queer brands that were selling their products on Instagram. BeUnic evolved with the thought of giving these people the recognition they deserve," adds Ashish, who shuttles between Noida and Bengaluru.

Stronger together

As a child, Ashish knew he "felt different from the other boys" in school. "I don't have any fond memories from that time. I would be bullied and called names to the extent that I would avoid going to school. When you are a kid, these are the times when you start questioning yourself," shares Ashish. It was his brother, Vishesh Chopra (29) who supported him during this time and made Ashish feel accepted. Vishesh, who is the co-founder of BeUnic, mentions how important it is to have an open mind when interacting with the queer community. "Allies are extremely important. They help queer people feel accepted and [affirm] that there is nothing wrong with



Embracing your true self

My whole idea behind starting drag was to tell the world that I can wear a ghagra or a sari without shame. Clothes do not have any gender. I think all these notions are man-made and I wanted to break that completely.



them just because of their sexuality," shares Vishesh. Their brand, the brothers mention, is just another way of making people from the LGBTQIA+ community feel acknowledged. "The people from the community are creative and talented but they are scared to put themselves out in the world. We try to give them a small push in the right direction," adds Ashish.

Against all odds

Although convincing his mother was difficult at first, Ashish now proudly states that his mother is an ally in both his growth and the growth of BeUnic. "When I first came out, my mother was horrified. She even consulted a psychiatrist to help convert me back to being straight," says Ashish. However, it was a pride parade that his mother attended with Ashish that truly opened her eyes. Since then, they have been trying to mobilise the society to become inclusive.

Since the decriminalisation of Section 377 in 2018, Ashish shares that the attitude towards the queer community is slowly changing. "Kids these days know a lot and it feels great that they are trying their best to create a wholesome community," he concludes.

June is celebrated as Pride Month worldwide. Watch this space for stories from the LGBTQIA+ community



(Extreme top and above) Lookbook images from BeUnic's collection; (middle) Ashish's mother, Simmi Nanda, designing BeUnic's 'rainbow shoes'



A novel perspective on Indian flavours

DYUTI ROY

FOR THE LOVE OF STREET FOOD

RAUL Andea Borja is a Japanese chef from the Philippines who works with The Claridges, New Delhi. Borja shares how he has always been passionate about India's cuisine and culture. For street food lovers, he recommends *pani puri* from Kolkata, which is traditionally known as *puchka*. "I had my first *puchka* when I was working at The Oberoi Kolkata. I remember having *puchka* for a week straight after tasting it for the first time," says the chef. Nowadays, the chef's morning routine begins with a cup of cutting chai. He shares, "After my morning walk at Lodhi Gardens, I love to go to the Khan Market tea stall and have a cutting chai. It is also the time I connect with my family in Manila, Philippines." Another classic Indian favourite of the chef is *poori sabzi*. "It is such a comfort food for me. This is one dish I don't think I'll ever get bored of," he adds.



Cutting chai
Raul Andea Borja

TASTE OF SIMPLE HOME-COOKED MEALS

I cannot get better than a simple meal of yellow dal and rice or a South Indian coconut-based curry for liquid chef and mixologist, Joel Scholtens Lindsay from The Blue Bar at Taj Palace, New Delhi. "I truly admire the humble, simple Indian homestyle cooking—the kind prepared by mothers and grandmothers," he shares. A lover of wholesome meals, Lindsay adds that while travelling across the country, he loves to have different kinds of *thalis*. "It is always my first pick. The best I have had, was a vegetarian Manipuri *thali* during my travels to the Northeast." Similar to Borja, Lindsay is also an ardent fan of the masala chai so much so that he has created Joel's Gin Chai for the menu at The Blue Bar.



Yellow dal and rice
Joel Scholtens Lindsay



Zhang Hongsheng



Mutton Rogan Josh

INDULGING IN SCRUMPTIOUS DELIGHTS

It was in 2012, when China-based Chef Zhang Hongsheng first visited India. "That day, a friend had taken me to an Indian restaurant for a meal—I tried the Chicken Tikka and Mutton Rogan Josh," shares Hongsheng, who currently works at Hyatt Regency Delhi. Since then, these two dishes have been the chef's favourites. "The Mutton Rogan Josh has a unique taste. It is juicy and full of flavour. It can be eaten easily with rice and butter naan," he adds.



Zhang Hongsheng

GADGET REVIEW

Tech corner

Here's our round-up of the latest gadgets that are a perfect addition to your shopping list



Is there a shiny new gadget you'd like to tell us about? Mail ashokpandian@gmail.com



FOXIN FMS 4040

Foxin's multimedia audio system is a 4.1 channel system with 85W RMS power to boot. It connects to your phone, tab, PC etc., and also via SD card, USB, and AUX. The powerful system supports digital FM and comes with a wireless remote. foxin.in



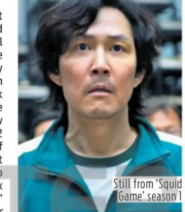
UA HOVR MACHINA 3

UA's HOVR Machina 3, which mixes the speed of a racing shoe with the comfort of a long-distance trainer, providing the complete package. The shoes are also smart and can connect to UA MapMyRun for real time coaching and metrics. underarmour.com

SHOWBIZ

Netflix announces the return of 'Squid Game'

Earlier this year, streaming giant Netflix announced that a second season of the Korean survival drama, *Squid Game*, was in the works. On Sunday, they confirmed the development with creator Hwang Dong-hyuk penning a heartfelt note for the support. He wrote, "A Whole New Round is Coming... It took 12 years to bring the first season of *Squid Game* to life last year. But it took 12 days for *Squid Game* to become the most popular Netflix series ever... Season 2 is coming."



Still from 'Squid Game' season 1