

## Roman Baths may harbour novel antimicrobial natural products

The Hindu Bureau

The world-famous Roman Baths are home to a diverse range of microorganisms which could be critical in the global fight against antimicrobial resistance, a new study suggests. The investigation of extreme ecological niches, such as hot springs, has gained recent interest due to their unique ecosystems, increasing the chance for novel antimicrobial natural product

discovery. The study, published in the journal *The Microbe*, is the first to provide a detailed examination of the bacterial and archaeal communities found within the waters of the popular tourist attraction in the city of Bath (U.K.).

Scientists collected samples of water, sediment and biofilm from locations within the Roman Baths complex including the King's Spring (where the waters reach around 45 degree C) and the Great Bath,

where the temperatures are closer to 30 degree C. The samples were then analysed using cutting edge sequencing technology and traditional culturing techniques were employed to isolate bacteria with antibiotic activity.

Around 300 distinct types of bacteria were isolated across the Roman Baths site with different examples being more prominent within the varying water temperatures. Further tests showed 15 of

these isolates – including examples of *Proteobacteria* and *Firmicutes* – showed varying levels of inhibition against human pathogens including *E.coli*, *Staphylococcus Aureus* and *Shigella flexneri*.

“From initial isolation experiments, 297 isolates were purified, of which 15 showed broad spectrum activity against human pathogens, though interestingly these were not from target genera in

the *Actinobacteria*. From these data, there is clear potential for novel antimicrobial natural products discovery from the Roman Baths, as has been demonstrated from other thermal hot springs globally,” the authors write.

The research comes at a time when the need for new sources of antibiotics is at unprecedented levels, with resistance of bacteria to currently used medication estimated to be responsible for more than 1.25

million deaths globally each year. The researchers say a significant amount of additional investigation is required before the microorganisms found in the Roman Baths can be applied in the fight against disease and infection globally. However, they add that this initial study has shown there is clear potential for novel antimicrobial natural products contained within its hot springs to be explored further for that purpose.

### SNAPSHOTS



#### Why some cuckoo birds have higher rates of speciation

Cuckoos, which lay their eggs in nests of other birds, have higher speciation rates when they lay their eggs in a broader range of host bird species' nests. This higher speciation rate is driven by host rejection and cuckoo selection for mimetic nestling traits. In some species, cuckoo chicks kick the host young from the nest, whereas in others, cuckoo birds are reared alongside the host young. This variation places a high selective pressure on hosts to develop defenses and the emergence of counter adaptations in cuckoos.

# Cities warming due to effect of urbanisation, climate change

The rate of warming in cities is nearly twice that of the rest of the country, with local-scale urbanisation alone causing additional warming of about 60%

V. Vinoj  
S.S. Sethi

Recently, for two consecutive days, Delhi reported daytime temperatures above 50 degrees C, the highest ever recorded in the city. There is a reason why cities are experiencing higher temperatures than non-urban and rural areas. The ongoing climate change and rapid urbanisation are now defining the Anthropocene, with the cities experiencing both thereby making the urban population vulnerable to the compounding impact. India's urban landscape (especially population) is projected to double by 2050, adding more than 450 million residents. This rise outnumbers the present total population of the United States and the European Union, signaling a huge historical shift. Given the breakneck urbanisation, our cities must be prepared for future challenges.

The altered thermodynamic, and aerodynamic properties of the cities tend to trap more heat, making cities warmer than their rural and suburban counterparts, a phenomenon well-known as the urban heat island (UHI) effect. In addition, climate change is causing a significant increase in record-breaking temperatures and frequent prolonged heat waves. Therefore, the overall warming in any city tends to be complex with both urbanisation and global warming playing a pivotal role. This alters the resultant micro-climate of the cities with an influence on heat, rainfall distribution and even air pollution



dispersion with implications for public health.

In a study published recently, we seek to separate the warming caused by local scale urbanisation and regional scale climate change in the context of 141 major cities in India and quantify their relative contributions. This kind of segregation is scientifically quite complex. One strategy is to determine the contributions of various factors to warming over time. These factors include information on concrete structures, roads, industries, parks, water bodies, residential activities, air conditioning, vehicular activities, and so on. Such detailed analysis requires enormous time, effort and

investment, even for just one city and has to be incorporated into models or combined with extremely high-resolution satellite images for further analysis. A much simpler approach was followed using high-resolution night-time land surface temperature from MODIS, a sensor aboard Aqua satellite in NASA's A-train constellation. Under the assumption that the observed changes in warming (2003 to 2020) over the rural areas are driven primarily by regional climate change, the warming over the urban built-up areas for each city was compared to its rural counterpart at every one sq. km area. Thus, after the removal of regional warming sig-

natures from the urban areas, the signal related to urbanisation was estimated for 141 major and minor cities providing first-time information on global warming-free urbanisation signatures.

Overall, the rate of warming in cities is near twice that of the rest of the country, with local-scale urbanisation alone causing additional warming of about 60%. While all cities showed an increase in night-time land surface temperature, with an average increase of 0.53 degree C per decade, a large divide among cities was seen. The tier-II cities in the eastern part of the country have stronger urbanisation-driven warm-

ing, surprisingly not seen even for the larger metros and mega cities. This may be indicating a window of opportunity.

India is aggressively acting to reduce emissions and shift to non-fossil fuel based energy sources as clearly stated in the updated nationally determined contribution (NDC) working towards climate justice. State level heat action plans and implementation of early warning and forecasting systems for heat-waves show India's commitment to saving lives by reducing heat related mortality.

Based on the predominant contribution to warming, the study emphasises that urban heat management must follow a differential approach for each city. Cities with a large urbanisation contribution may benefit from local scale interventions – use of sustainable materials like cool roofs and cool/permeable pavements, green infrastructures, creation of maintenance of lakes and parks, urban forests, and comprehensive emission reduction strategies. While other cities may require more regional scale efforts – national or regional level emission reduction, large-scale afforestation/ plantation, rejuvenation of surrounding water bodies – for effective warming mitigation with both having implications for extreme urban rainfall, floods, air pollution, etc.

(V. Vinoj is Associate Professor, School of Earth, Ocean and Climate Sciences, IIT Bhubaneswar, and S.S. Sethi is PhD scholar at the School of Earth, Ocean and Climate Sciences, IIT Bhubaneswar)

## H5N1 remains infectious on milking equipment

R. Prasad

Even as the Atlanta-based CDC has cautioned people to avoid drinking raw milk, especially in the States where H5N1 has been reported in cattle herds, there has been increased demand for raw milk. From the day H5N1 (bird flu) was confirmed in cattle in mid-March this year to mid-May, the sales of raw milk has increased 21-65% compared with the same period last year. However, no human case of H5N1 infection in people who consume raw milk has been reported so far in the U.S. despite the increase in raw milk consumption.

“The asymptomatic avian influenza surveillance programme in the U.K. has found that human infection can be very asymptomatic,” says Dr. Vinod Scaria, a senior consultant at Vishwanath Cancer Care Foundation told *The Hindu*. Two people in the U.K. who had worked on an infected poultry farm in England and tested positive for H5N1 did not show any symptoms and were detected only because of the asymptomatic surveillance programme. “Testing of people, including those who consume raw milk that may be infected with H5N1 has been very low in the U.S.,” says Dr. Scaria. According to the CDC, there has been “no sign of unusual influenza activity in people, including in syndromic surveillance”.

On May 30, the CDC reported a third case of H5N1 infection in a farm worker in Michigan who had direct exposure to infected cows. Eight days earlier, CDC reported the second case of H5N1 infection in a farm



Caution: Influenza virus is stable in unpasteurised milk. REUTERS

worker in the U.S., and the first in the State of Michigan. The first human case in the U.S. was also in a farm worker in Texas. Similar to the first two cases, the latest case of H5N1 infection had eye discomfort with watery discharge. But unlike the earlier two cases, the case reported on May 30 had “more typical symptoms of acute respiratory illness associated with influenza virus infection,

including A(H5N1) viruses”. In the second case reported on May 22, two specimens were collected – upper respiratory tract and eye specimens. While the nasal specimen tested negative at both the State health department and the CDC, the eye specimen sent to the CDC for testing was positive for H5N1.

The route of transmission has not been ascertained, though it is likely to

be airborne.

Meanwhile, researchers from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory carried out a study to assess the risk that H5N1-containing milk poses to animals and humans and fed droplets of raw milk from infected dairy cattle to five mice. The mice showed signs of illness one day after they were fed raw milk containing the virus. The researchers found high virus titers in the respiratory organs of the mice and moderate virus titers in several other organs. Since the mice were only fed raw milk, the infection in the nasal passages, trachea and lungs, suggests that infection may have occurred through the pharynx, the researchers note in a Letter published in *The New England Journal of Medi-*

*cine*. The H5N1 virus was also found in the mammary glands of two mice even though these mice were not lactating.

In another study posted as a preprint (which is yet to be peer-reviewed), researchers found H5N1 virus in unpasteurised milk remains infectious on milking equipment for over one hour. The researchers then used H1N1 as a surrogate for the H5N1 virus found in cattle to study the viral persistence in raw milk. They found the H1N1 virus in unpasteurised milk persisted for at least three hours on rubber and at least one hour on stainless steel. “These results indicate that influenza virus is very stable in unpasteurised milk and that deposited H5N1 on milking equipment could remain infectious for long periods of time,” they write.



#### A history of Zika virus raises risk of symptomatic dengue

People who have already been exposed to the Zika virus are more vulnerable to symptomatic infections with some types of dengue virus later on, according to a comprehensive study in Nicaragua during an unusual dengue outbreak in 2022. The results, which involved more than 3,400 participants, support the idea that the interplay between Zika and dengue can influence the risk of severe dengue infections in vulnerable populations – a finding with implications for the safe rollout of vaccination campaigns.



#### Capturing data on brain activity through skull 'window'

Researchers have engineered a custom-made skull “window” that allowed them to visualise the brain's activity with ultrasound imaging in one living volunteer outside of the operating room. The window captured useful data on brain activity as the volunteer performed tasks such as playing games and playing the guitar. The technology could offer clinicians and neuroscientists a less invasive way to study the brain with high resolution during active tasks.



### Question Corner

#### Blood proteins

Besides the red pigment, what material was used in the red paint by people of Peru's Sicán culture?

Thirty years ago, archeologists excavated the tomb of an elite 40-50-year-old man from the Sicán culture of Peru, a society that predated the Incas. The man's seated, upside-down skeleton was painted bright red. Researchers analysed the paint and found that it contains human blood and bird egg proteins in addition to a red pigment. The study began when researchers wondered what the Sicán people had used in the paint mix as a binding material. As per a

release, the researchers analysed a small sample of the mask's red paint. Using sophisticated equipment they found that the sample contained proteins, so proteomic analysis was done, which revealed six proteins from human blood in the red paint, including serum albumin and immunoglobulin G. Other proteins, such as ovalbumin, came from egg whites. Because the proteins were degraded, the researchers could not identify the exact species of bird's egg used to make the paint, but likely is the Muscovy duck.

Readers may send their questions / answers to questioncorner@thehindu.co.in



















Explore the artistic brilliance and cultural legacy of Sonal Mansingh through the fascinating world of classical dance with GYANESHWAR DAYAL

# THE LIVING LEGEND OF SONAL MANSINGH

In the realm of Indian classical dance, few names carry as much weight and reverence as that of Sonal Mansingh. Her life's journey is not just a tale of individual accomplishment but a testament to the power of art in transcending boundaries and enriching lives.

Sonal Mansingh's relationship with dance began at an early age. Raised in a family that valued both tradition and modernity, she was exposed to various forms of art and culture from childhood. Her initial training in Bharatanatyam began under the tutelage of renowned Guru Shri Chandralekha. However, it was her encounter with the legendary Odissi guru, Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, that shaped her destiny. Under his guidance, Sonal delved deep into the intricate nuances of Odissi, a classical dance form from the eastern state of Odisha, India. She mastered the art with such finesse that she became one of its foremost exponents, earning acclaim both nationally and internationally. Sonal Mansingh's journey has not been without its share of challenges. As a woman navigating the patriarchal landscape of Indian society, she faced skepticism and resistance from traditional quarters. Yet, with unwavering determination and resilience, she shattered stereotypes and carved a niche for herself in a male-dominated field. Her artistic integrity and commitment to her craft have been unwavering, even in the face of adversity. Through her performances, workshops, and lectures, she has tirelessly worked towards preserving and promoting India's rich cultural heritage, inspiring generations of artists to follow in her footsteps. As a cultural icon, Sonal Mansingh's legacy transcends boundaries of time and geography. She has not only enriched the world of dance with her unparalleled talent but has also left an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of millions

SONAL MANSINGH'S JOURNEY HAS NOT BEEN WITHOUT ITS SHARE OF CHALLENGES. AS A WOMAN NAVIGATING THE PATRIARCHAL LANDSCAPE OF INDIAN SOCIETY, SHE FACED SKEPTICISM AND RESISTANCE FROM TRADITIONAL QUARTERS. YET, WITH UNWAVERING DETERMINATION AND RESILIENCE, SHE SHATTERED STEREOTYPES AND CARVED A NICHE FOR HERSELF IN A MALE-DOMINATED FIELD. HER ARTISTIC INTEGRITY AND COMMITMENT TO HER CRAFT HAVE BEEN UNWAVERING, EVEN IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

around the world. Her life's journey is a testament to the transformative power of art and its ability to bridge divides, foster dialogue, and celebrate the beauty of human expression. In an ever-changing world, where the allure of tradition often clashes with the forces of modernity, Sonal Mansingh stands as a beacon of a vibrant tradition, innovation, and timeless grace, reminding us of the enduring relevance of our cultural roots. As she continues to inspire and enchant audiences with her artistry, her legacy remains etched in the annals of Indian classical dance, a shining testament to the enduring power of the human spirit. Sonal Mansingh's dance themes often encompass a rich tapestry of mythological narratives, cultural traditions, and social issues. Through her performances, she weaves together stories from Indian history and legends, ancient and contemporary texts exploring the tales of gods and goddesses with intricate choreography and expressive movements. Her interpretations of classical dance are imbued with deep spiritual and philosophical elements, reflecting her profound understanding of Indian culture and traditions. Additionally, she often addresses contemporary social issues through her choreography, using dance as a medium for commentary and reflection. Whether addressing themes of gender equality, environmental consciousness, or the human experience, Mansingh infuses her performances with relevance and meaning, engaging audiences on both artistic and intellectual levels. Overall, Sonal Mansingh's dance themes transcend mere entertainment, serving as a platform for storytelling, cultural preservation,

and social advocacy. Through her artistry, she continues to captivate and inspire audiences around the world, leaving a lasting impression with each graceful movement. Sonal Mansingh, a prominent figure in the world of Indian classical dance, also had a notable involvement in politics. While she is primarily celebrated for her contributions to dance, her engagement in political discourse arose when she was nominated to the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of the Indian Parliament, in 2018. Her nomination was a recognition of her achievements and contributions to Indian culture and arts, acknowledging the importance of promoting and preserving India's rich cultural heritage within the political sphere. As a member of the Rajya Sabha, Mansingh has used the platform to advocate for the arts, cultural preservation, and the promotion of Indian dance forms. She actively participated in debates and discussions concerning cultural policies, education, sociology of culture and the role of the arts in society. Mansingh's foray into politics highlighted the intersection of culture, arts, and governance in India. Her journey serves as a reminder of the importance of recognizing and supporting cultural icons within the political landscape, ensuring that the nation's rich artistic heritage continues to thrive and flourish. Sonal Mansingh, a luminary in the realm of Indian classical dance, has left an indelible mark through her illustrious career. Honored with the Padma Bhushan in 1992, and the Padma Vibhushan in 2003, she has been lauded for her exceptional contributions to the performing arts.

As the founder of the Centre for Indian Classical Dances (CICD) in New Delhi, Mansingh established a bastion for the promotion and preservation of various classical dance forms, nurturing young talent and disseminating awareness of India's rich cultural heritage. Her mesmerizing performances have graced prestigious stages worldwide, serving as a cultural ambassador and fostering appreciation for Indian art and heritage. Appointed as a UNESCO Artist for Peace in 2003, Mansingh's efforts in promoting intercultural dialogue through dance have been globally recognized. Beyond tradition, her artistic vision fearlessly explores new themes, narratives, and choreographic styles, breathing fresh life into age-old traditions and inspiring generations of artists. Sonal Mansingh's life is a tapestry of devotion to Indian classical dance, and a commitment to preserving and promoting India's cultural heritage. Born in 1944 in Bombay, she began her dance training at a young age, later becoming a trailblazer in the field. With a career spanning over six decades, Mansingh has dazzled audiences worldwide with her performances, lectures & interviews earning numerous accolades and honors along the way. Beyond her contributions to dance, Mansingh has been a cultural ambassador for India, spreading awareness of its rich artistic traditions.

## “As in life, so in dance, character is essential”

SONAL MANSINGH talks about her art, life and life philosophy that went into making the person she is. She opened up to THE PIONEER. Excerpts

**What are some memorable performances or collaborations that have shaped your artistic journey?** Well, memorable performances and collaborations are different. From the very beginning in 1961, when I gave my maiden solo performance, to this day, every performance has been memorable for one reason or another. Whether it was in Venezuela or China, Mongolia or Mandi, in a big opera house of a megapolis or on a small-town stage, each one was memorable. Choosing the best among them all is rather difficult. However, the performance in Delhi after my car accident in Germany in 1975 stands out. Many dancers told me they were inspired by it, saying that at times they didn't see me but saw sparks. The performance for the Dalai Lama in McLeod Ganj in 1994 was also significant for its content, which moved him to tears. Performing in front of Mount Kailash was a once-in-a-lifetime divine experience.

**Tell us something about your collaborations.** Regarding collaborations, I haven't had many. My performances in Bharatnatyam, Odissi, or Chhau are



collaborations with musicians, my guide and Guru Shri Jeevan Pani Ji, researchers, gurus, yoga gurus, and anyone from whom I learned something. Life itself is a great collaboration. Learning is an effort unto itself. Things keep happening, and one must become aware of them. Life is a jigsaw puzzle from which one picks little nuggets of wisdom.

**What values are essential in classical dance?** As in life, so in dance, character is essential. Character building starts in mother's womb or even from previous births (poorva janma) and karma samskara. It then grows with upbringing, nurturing, travel, and learning. Due diligence is essential. Even slight lethargy or negativity can creep in if you leave the door of consciousness ajar, so one must always be aware. What must be

done should be done in a timely manner, and every detail must be worked out. Humility is important. Remember, reevaluate, reassess, and move on (manan chintan). Reading is essential, especially in times of dependence on social media: read, discuss, understand, and carve your own path.

**How do you approach interpreting classical dance forms to suit contemporary audiences?** I always did what I wanted to do, and this tendency was further encouraged by my Bharatnatyam guru, U.S. Krishna Rao. We are different from Western classical dancers, where brochures are distributed at the beginning, and ballerinas dance with 50 other dancers. Audience should read the brochure before the performance begins because



later there are no commentaries or announcements. That stuck with me. You cannot give a rundown of every performance you give. Every sanchari (to convey a story or series of events through body language, hand gestures, and facial expressions) must be spontaneous. If it is pre-decided, it doesn't stay spontaneous. But I leave it to each dancer, as it depends on her training, way of thinking, and approach to dance.

**Tell us something about the themes and content of your choreographic works.** I have always chosen themes of women empowerment, such as Devi, Draupadi, Panchkanya, river pollution (Krishna-Kaliya) atmospheric pollution, and thought pollution. I always say the three Vs-vichar (thought), vaani (speech), and vyavhaar

(behavior)-need to be cleansed from time to time to ward off negativity. Today, people are stressed, tired, and emotionally burdened. Our dances address these issues and uplift emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

**What advice do you have for aspiring classical dancers regarding training and technique?** Many things have changed over the years, but some things remain the same. Ekagrachitta (एकाग्रचित्त), or focus and commitment, is one such tenet all students must observe. When you go to a Guru to learn, you must be well-prepared for the next class. You must have respect for the teacher, the traditions, the place you perform, the iconography, the messages contained in the Puranas, the temples, their



architecture, and so on. **What do you have to say about the mythology of the Puranas from where you draw your themes?** I would say mythology is the wrong word. Mythology comes from 'mythos' (in Greek) which is akin to fairy tales. Our stories are not fairy tales; they are actual events that took place long ago. They have messages and inspirations that transcend time. We must honor, respect, and work according to these stories. **What are some of the challenges you've faced in your career, and how have you overcome them?** Life is a journey full of challenges, and these challenges shape who you are and how you deal with them. They help you grow, evolve, and become a

better person. I took two vows with my grandfather: I will never commercialize dance, so I give all the money from my performances to my institute, Shri Kamakhya Kalapeeth (Centre for Indian Classical Dances). I have lived in rented accommodations and will continue to do so, after my term as Member of Parliament is over.

**Could you share a particularly rewarding or transformative experience you've had?** There are not just one but many. If one allows oneself to be like a lotus and opens up to Sun, every moment is transformative and rewarding. One needs to open up to accept beauty with one's eyes, ears, mind, and heart-Satyam Shivam Sundaram. There is a beautiful prayer, "Asatoma Sadgamaya" (Lead me from ignorance to truth), "Tamasoma Jyotir Gamaya" (Lead me from darkness to light), "Mriyorma Amritam Gamaya" (Lead me from time-bound consciousness to the timeless state of Being). May we all have that rewarding journey. Through my dance, learning, and friends, I have lived a fulfilling and rewarding life. The human avatar is very rare; let's make the most of it.



# WHERE FOOD MEETS ART IN PLATING

It is not just about cooking the dish well but also plating them right is the idea is to engage all the senses for an overall dining experience, says **SHARMILA CHAND**



Sculpt, layer, paint, drizzle. Splash, a squiggle, dots, the just, the sauce... there is an artist at work, bent, eyes fixed at his plate, in front of you at your table in the restaurant. He is undeterred till he finishes his task. Another few minutes, he finally looks up and tells you, your dish is ready. The artist is none other than the chef who has been busy meticulously plating the dish you ordered. The plate is his canvas and he is creating a visual masterpiece.

It's not just about cooking the dish right but the idea is to engage all the senses for an overall dining experience. "I find the process of plating to be as crucial as the preparation of the dish itself," says Chef Amandeep Singh, Executive Sous Chef at The Westin Mumbai Garden City. For him, "Plating is an art form cherished by food connoisseurs worldwide, where every element on the plate serves as a canvas for creativity and expression."

Colour and Shape Chef Amandeep's preference leans towards minimalist, neutral-coloured plates that allow the vibrant hues of the dish to shine. "The shape of the plate is equally significant; I favour plates with clean lines and ample space for artistic arrangement. Each dish has its personality, and the shape of the plate can either accentuate or detract from its essence. For instance, a circular plate complements dishes with symmetrical components, while elongated plates are ideal for showcasing linear arrangements," he says.

"The colour of the dish and its ingredients wield immense influence over the plating process. Take, for example, my signature dish, Tandoori Salmon with Mango Salsa. The vibrant hues of the succulent salmon and the vibrant mango salsa pop against a pristine white plate, creating a visually captivating presentation that entices the palate even before the first bite," adds Chef Amandeep.

According to Chef Sandeep Kalra, Director of Culinary, Pullman Novotel, New Delhi, Aerocity, "The colour of the plate totally depends on the colour and textures of the dish. Both have to complement each other. The colour of the plate one chooses can make a big difference in how the dish looks. If you want your food to really stand out, pick a plate colour that is different from the colours of the food. White plates are a good choice for colourful dishes because they make the colours pop. On the other hand, if you want the colours

to blend well together, choose a plate colour that goes well with the food colours. Earthy tones like beige or light brown can make green vegetables look even better. Also, consider the theme of your meal. If you're going for a modern look, white or black plates are often a good choice. Dark plates can also help keep food warm longer. Ultimately, the plate colour should match the style of your meal to create a beautiful and cohesive presentation."

Simran Singh Thapar, Executive Chef, The Leela Palace Bengaluru echoes the sentiment: "Play with complementary hues and remember, a pop of colour can make all the difference. Adding a variety of textures can make your dish visually interesting and enticing. Combine crunchy elements with smooth components, as I like to do in my dish 'Truffled Russet Mille Feuille with Butternut Squash Quasar -e- Pukhtan, Golden Almonds and Charcoal touille.' A crisp potato Mille Feuille is paired with a velvety smooth and rich sauce. Layering ingredients not only adds depth but also adds a sense of complexity to your presentation. I have used green microgreens to pop up the otherwise warm hues of orange and brown. An almond charcoal touille creates a visual and texture impact on my plate."

"Creating a theme or a story with your plating can make your dish more memorable," adds chef Simran. "A theme can tie everything together and captivate your audience. On my plate, I have created a theme of classics from two cuisines pairing together to create magic -- Classic French and Classic Indian."

Ingredient is the Key Chef Sandeep emphasises on the 'ingredient' as the key focus. "Using the main ingredient as the central focus and organising the rest of the ingredients in various forms of purees, gels, mousse or whole forms works the best. There is no specific style that I incorporate but looking at the ingredients I adapt to plating techniques and style that complements the textures and enhances the look of the dish. One favourite dish that I love to plate often is the grilled chicken breast with sweet potato mash and sautéed green beans. The dish features a perfectly grilled chicken breast placed slightly off-centre on the



Chef Simran Singh Thapar

plate. Alongside, a generous serving of creamy sweet potato mash, flavored with cinnamon and nutmeg, provides contrast. Crisp green beans are delicately piled next to the mash, adding a fresh touch. A sprinkle of finely chopped parsley garnishes the plate, adding a pop of green. Presented on a square, off-white plate, this dish is not just delicious but also visually appealing, designed to delight both the eye and the palate."

Garnishing Lends visual Allure "When it comes to garnishes, I believe in the power of simplicity," tells Chef Amandeep. "Fresh herbs like cilantro and microgreens add a burst of colour and flavour without overwhelming the dish. A delicate sprinkle of sea salt or a drizzle of high-quality olive oil can elevate even the simplest of presentations," he says. Likewise for Chef Sandeep, it is important to give vitality to the dish with microgreens or herbs and add a touch of elegance and beauty through edible flowers. "Show off the dish and keep room for theatrics," is his mantra.

Gerwin D'souza, Pastry Sous Chef, The St Regis Goa Resort feels, "Perhaps a swirl of sauce, a fine scattering of berries to enhance. At our Italian restaurant, Oliveto, we serve tiramisu in a glass to show off the varied layering. To add that extra flair, we place a spoon made of solid chocolate on it. Now that's my style of garnishing." That expression of my diners at the first look of tiramisu says it all.



Chef Amandeep Singh



Executive Chef Anshul Dhyan



Sandeep Kalra

particular structure to it, I like to keep it simple and let the ingredients be as natural. I would like the ingredients and flavour to do the talking. Prefer to treat the plate as a canvas where every ingredient can show its own colours. For example in my dish, Seared Scallops with slow braised pork belly, granny smith puree and macerated golden raisins, Scallops and Pork belly are the main ingredients of the dish



Gerwin D'souza



Chef Subhankar Chitrakar

complemented by the raisins and apple puree. The dish has been plated in a free flow manner. All the ingredients are plated in a way that they all stand out and no single ingredient overshadows the other one. All the colours and textures are preserved and no ingredient loses its individuality but together bring about a complete culinary harmony."

"Indeed I am an artist," says Chef Aashutosh Shende, Executive Sous Chef of Paper Moon, Taj Fort Aguada Resort Spa. "For instance in my dish Tagliolini with Pesto Sauce and Pine Nuts, I treat the white plate as my blank canvas, the green pesto sauce is my vibrant paint. The green pesto sauce offers a colour palette to create a visually stunning composition on a white plate.

Composition of the dish is the king and arrangement is the key. Swirling the pesto in an artistic flourish and strategically placing the elements for balance and contrast. I build height with rolling the pasta around a large fork and then slide it on the plate. This gives not only clean lines but also height to the dish, techniques used by both chefs and artists. I express my personality and my expressions through my plating. I am not a fan of bold or dramatic swirls and many colours on my plate; I prefer a simple bed for a wild abstract masterpiece for my Tagliolini."

He has more to add: "I like to sign every dish that goes out of my kitchen and, as such, a final flourish on food plating has my signature. It could be a sprinkle of fresh herbs, in this case in particular a drizzle of balsamic reduction and a scattering of toasted pine nuts. These finishing touches showcase my creation from a meal to a work of art."

"I work in a bakery which can be at times devoid of human interaction and through my bakery items I express myself," says Chef Subhankar Chitrakar from Bakery of Taj Holiday Village Resort Spa, Goa. Citing an example of his dish, Caramel Porto, he tells, "This rich, decadent dessert - Caramel Porto - presents a fantastic opportunity every time to pique my inner artist. Considering the portion size -- if it is a single serving I prefer a small dessert plate with a rim, for four portions I choose a shallow bowl or couple glass which allows for beautiful layering. Choosing whether to keep the same colour or play a colour contrast game, I prefer a white plate to enhance the various hues of caramel. Sometimes I do use a dark plate to create a dramatic backdrop for a glistening sauce.

Considering the overall mood of the diner a classic white plate offers timeless elegance and on the other hand a more colourful bowl would add a touch of casual charm. I am not afraid to add a delicate web like swirl for a touch of whimsy. Or for a bolder statement, a thicker controlled pour creates a dramatic centre piece. Go ahead and experiment with what's at hand, add a spring of fresh mint or a sprinkle of chopped nuts or a dusting cocoa powder to add pops of colour and flavour like a bold brushstroke. I am an artist and this is my soul that I bare through my Caramel Porto."

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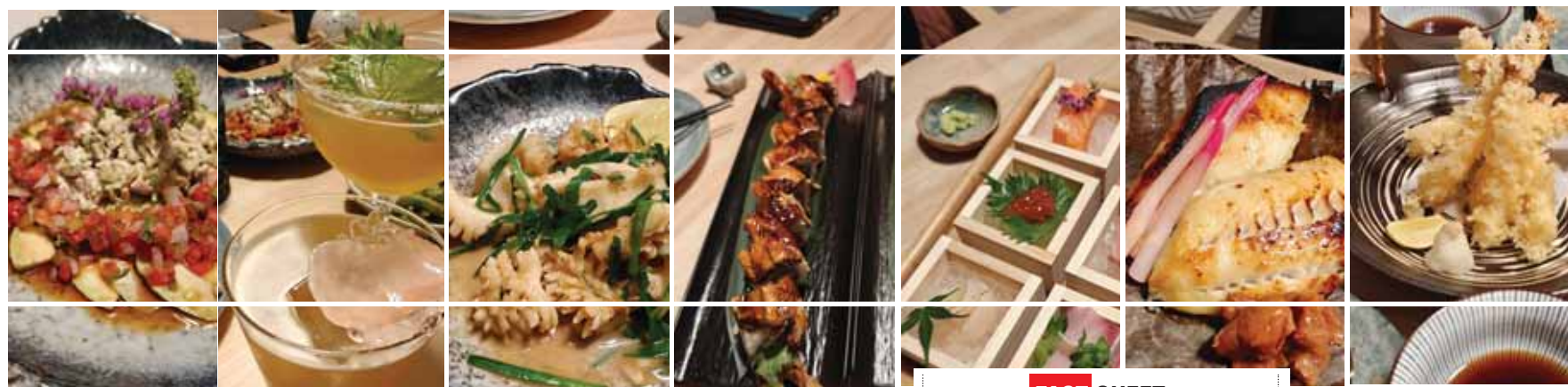
## FOOD TRENDS

# Falling in Love with Japanese cuisine

At Shin'ya, an Izakaya-inspired resto-bar at Hyatt Regency Gurugram, is drawing crowds because of the evident attention to detail and its commitment to source the best and freshest ingredients possible for a hearty Japanese meal, says **PAWAN SONI**

Japanese cuisine is winning hearts across the Indian community, and it is no surprise why. The dishes are light, nutritious, and packed with flavour, thanks to ingredients like seaweed, soy, and seafood. The freshness of these ingredients is crucial, leading to high prices for premium seafood and fruits in Japan and sold in auctions. In India, particularly in the North, seafood is not as accessible due to the lack of coastline. However, logistics can ensure a steady, fresh supply. During my recent visit to Shin'ya, the new Japanese restaurant at Hyatt Regency Gurugram, I was impressed by the quality of the ingredients used.

At Shin'ya, attention to detail is evident from the freshly grated wasabi to the sashimi made from yellowfin tuna, a step above the commonly used bluefin tuna. Sonale Zagade, Hyatt Regency's dynamic General Manager,



emphasised their commitment to sourcing the best ingredients, recalling her personal involvement in tasting each one before finalising. With seating for around 45 guests, this Izakaya-inspired resto-bar, with its light and minimalistic

decor, is perfect for small gatherings. On the recommendation of Shashwat Prasad, Shin'ya's mixologist, I started with a gari-infused bourbon mixed with yuzu juice and honey water. This mild drink perfectly set the tone for the

evening. The avocado carpaccio, chosen for my wife's vegetarian preference, was appreciated by both of us. The buttery avocado with caramelized onions, ponzu, and tomato salsa made a delightful start, while I enjoyed one of the lightest and crunchiest

**FACT SHEET**  
Food: 4.5/5 | Drinks: 4.5/5 | Service: 4.5/5  
Ambience: 4.0/5 | Overall: 4.5/5  
Address: Shin'ya, Hyatt Regency, NH48, Sector 83, Gurugram  
Phone: 9355816517  
Meal for Two: INR 4000 + Taxes  
Timing: 6:00 PM to 3:00 AM (Monday to Saturday), 12 Noon to 9:00 PM (Sundays)

prawn tempuras. Coated with a bit of potato starch and accompanied by a miso daikon dip, these were among the best prawn tempuras I've ever tasted. Each dish, from the selection of sashimi to sushi, was special. Apart from the Japanese fare,

Shin'ya also offers a small mix of Korean and Asian dishes. I tried the Korean-style sautéed garlic butter squid and prawn gyoza dumplings, each dish telling a unique story. Another cocktail, the Houji tea-infused tequila with agave nectar topped with fresh shiso leaf, further demonstrated the mixologist's expertise. Both food and drinks at Shin'ya are crafted to ensure guest delight. My meal concluded with the robata-grilled miso black cod. The silky pieces of fish, with slight charred edges, contrasted beautifully with the buttery flavours and pickled plum.

Shin'ya stands out for its high-quality ingredients and expertly prepared classic dishes. This restaurant is definitely one to watch in 2024.

— Author is a food critic and founder of the Big F Awards. He can be reached at Pawan.Soni@indianfoodfreak.com

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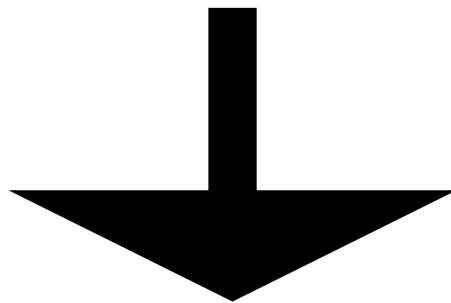
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