

Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels Ltd.
Apeejay TechnoPark
B-II/42
Mohan Co-operative Industrial Estate
Mathura Road
New Delhi 110 044
India

Toll free 1800 11 PARK (7275)
www.theparkhotels.com

X S

LIVING spotlights global trends, glimpsed through the unique lens of The Park Hotels. It reflects on contemporary lifestyles by examining shifts in design, cuisine, technology, business, media and more, rejoicing in the unique 21st Century blend of good living and unfettered thinking.

This issue of LIVING zooms in on how small is the new big. It looks at the worldwide phenomenon of people relishing smaller, more intimate pleasures, creating a simpler existence, and moving towards fulfilling microdesires in every aspect of life.

The Park Hotels' newest property floats free on the gentle backwaters that form Lake Vembanad in Kerala. Apsara, an 8-cabin luxury cruiser, offers guests panoramic views of the tropical countryside while gliding through the green backwaters.
(Read more in The Park Scoop)

Cover Kathakali dancer applying makeup

Photo
Joep Clason
joep.clason@gmail.com

C O N T E N T S

02 XS

14 Unimagined Worlds / Mukund Thattai

18 5 Reasons I Love The Park / Sabyasachi Mukherjee

20 The Park Explorer / Chennai

24 The Science of Deliciousness

26 Miniature as Style – A Small Revolution / Annapurna Garimella

32 A Slice of The Park

34 The Park Spotlight

36 The Park Scoop



+ Small is Big

“ ‘What a curious feeling!’ said Alice; ‘I must be shutting up like a telescope.’ And so it was indeed: she was now only ten inches high, and her face brightened up at the thought that she was now the right size for going through the door into that lovely garden.”

Getting smaller was Alice’s passport into Wonderland. More than a hundred years later in a time that would have defied even Lewis Carroll’s imagination, we’ve come full circle. From big corporations to big computers, big money to big brands, the idea that size matters has been turned on its head.

In a world that is shrinking every day, small is the new big. Does this pursuit of the tiny grow from a belief that God is in the details? Or is humankind rendering itself giant by encouraging the small? Perhaps this interest emerges from contemporary journeys of self-discovery and the search for inner peace as an evolution of the ‘me’ generation. A generation fed up of huge global conflicts, the binary barrage of information and the excess of consumerism; that yearns for wee pleasures.

At The Park Hotels, we recognise microdesires and the benefits of small luxuries. We carry this idea through in many ways, bringing a personalised feel to every guest’s experience. In the Bangalore Hotel incense is lit every day in the lobby to gently envelop guests in a sensual fragrance. At The Chennai Hotel, jasmine flowers in locally made cane baskets, and small portions of authentic Chennai sweets greet guests in rooms. In the exclusive rooms at The Residence in the Delhi, Kolkata, Bangalore and Chennai Hotels, i-Pods and docks allow guests to customise their music. Special touches that satisfy the senses and add to the overall quality of luxury are seamlessly integrated into each interaction. The stylized row of Philippe Starck Miss K lamps brings a small yet fiery touch to the cavernous volume of the space at Roxy in The Park, Kolkata. In each room, guests find a 10-inch mattress (especially sourced to be super comfortable even for guests with back problems), handcrafted designer bathrobes by Abraham and Thakore, and soothing aroma oil sachets on their pillows customised for us by Blossom Kochhar, India’s best known aromatherapist. The bathrooms are delicately scented with luxurious Kama Ayurveda bath products, welcoming weary travellers to a relaxing stay.

Left Floaty gazebos on the rooftop of The Park, Chennai offer a small haven and a 360 degree view of the sky to guests by the poolside at Aqua

From small luxuries in the private sphere to small discoveries that will change the course of humankind's progress in enormous ways, the world's gaze is turning towards the tiny. Our curiosity about the complex minutiae of life has driven us to fiddle with the genome, that tiny unit of existence, working on DNA's potential to foretell personality traits and predispositions to disease. In tandem, spurred on by the quest to better the quality of our lives in very specific ways, we're pouring millions of dollars into nanotechnology, or the science of very small things, which promises improved life by tweaking products, food and medicine at a molecular level. Experts are suggesting that micro-scale measures worked by the local community are much more efficient in conserving energy and the environment than big, government-level models. And now, in a time where the world's most booming, large economies are reduced to a slow crawl, governments are rethinking fiscal and other policies at a Lilliputian level – inviting growth from the bottom up. In every way, the global turn is towards looking through more powerful microscopes, and using the small to give big results.

From big corporations to big computers, big money to big brands, the idea that size matters has been turned on its head.

Consider the following: The Tata Nano is the next big/small thing, promising a dream to every Indian. Dr. Muhammad Yunus has won a Nobel Prize for his work in microfinance, a relatively new tool to alleviate poverty and create income for small entrepreneurs. Mozilla Firefox has taken on the giant might of Internet Explorer, offering better speed, security and features, and has recently, with more than 100 million users worldwide, grabbed more than 20% of the market share; blogging has overtaken publishing; and the radical documentary *Supersize Me* has made big burgers *infra dig*, bringing on the near downfall of junk food.

Boutique stores like The Box at The Park Hotels, Few and Far in London and Merci in Paris represent the philosophy that high street global brands are numbing and impersonal, and that unique, small brands are much more cherished because they involve the customer in their narratives. Many stores are beginning to do away with big labels and stock smaller, quirkier designers. Small design shops are at the cutting edge of innovation – they just happen to be better at their jobs because they have more freedom and fewer corporate frameworks to contend with. The Park Hotels have always adhered to the policy of encouraging small designers and craftspersons from cottage industries. The products used in the rooms (the *Kantha* frames, terracotta objects, traditional art forms and murals in luxury suites in the Kolkata Hotel, for example) as well as those sold at The Box are sourced from small, independent designers and collectives.

Right The Snug at The Park, Navi Mumbai is a cozy alcove, creating plush privacy in the bustle of the lobby





This Page The beds in the rooms at the Park Hotels have specially sourced luxury mattresses – 10 inches of ergonomic comfort for guests

Products from the Women Artisan's Marketing Agency (WAMA); shawls and stoles by Pasma; photo frames by Arca India; crafts maps and wooden items by Dastkari; funky kitsch bags by 500 BC and May All *papier mache* games are all part of the offerings at The Box at The Park Hotels. And for the gourmet, The Park Kolkata offers little delicacies like the specialty Bandel cheese available at The Street retail counter, found only in the suburb of Kolkata with the same name.

Smallness is looming large. In everyday technology, the smaller your gadget, the more flexible, more mobile, and therefore more efficient you are. Indie and small films like *Slumdog Millionaire* are raking in awards and money at the box office and small citizen initiatives like *Jaago Re* have stirred up the sleeping tiger of Indian democracy like never before. *SMALL COOL 2009*, a contest on the website Apartment Therapy promises thousands of dollars in prizes to "the beautiful, inspiring and ingenious use of small spaces..." i.e. interiors of homes less than 1,200 sqft.

Small businesses with big ideas are changing the way we perceive success. Engineering more streamlined business practices is the new thinking: to be free of traditional corporate hierarchies; to use the social nature of the internet to band together – as a smaller, more productive, empowered group respectful of individual creativity – towards a common purpose. More outsourcing and strategic partnerships, and excelling in one's niche rather than spreading operations too wide have all suddenly made downsizing not such a bad word anymore. The mom-and-pop-store philosophy is making a comeback in the form of homegrown websites that want to stay small like *digg.com*, where web users can discover and share content from the internet.

In The Park Hotels, special little touches that satisfy the senses and add to the overall quality of luxury are seamlessly integrated into the overall experience.

Seth Godin's popular blog says in a post titled *Small is the New Big*, "Today, little companies often make more money than big companies. Little churches grow faster than worldwide ones... Small means the founder makes a far greater percentage of the customer interactions. Small means the founder is close to the decisions that matter and can make them, quickly."

At The Park Hotels, the very size of the Hotels is compact, our offerings boutique, our service highly personalised and in tune with our guests. A culture of attention to the tiniest details is inculcated in the staff. Little niches carve out restful spaces for guests to take a breath. The Snug at The Park, Navi Mumbai, a cozy alcove right next to lobby, creates plush privacy in the bustle of the lobby. The private lounge in Roxy at The Park, Kolkata floats on a blue-lit mezzanine right in the middle of the bar, giving seclusion within the buzz. The Leather Bar at The Park, Chennai, with its suede walls and leather floor forms a private den with a masculine, sexy air. The outdoor gazebos at The Park, Bangalore allow guests to enjoy the beautiful weather while creating their own intimate oasis.



This page A row of red Philippe Starck Miss K lamps are an eye-catching detail in Roxy at The Park, Kolkata

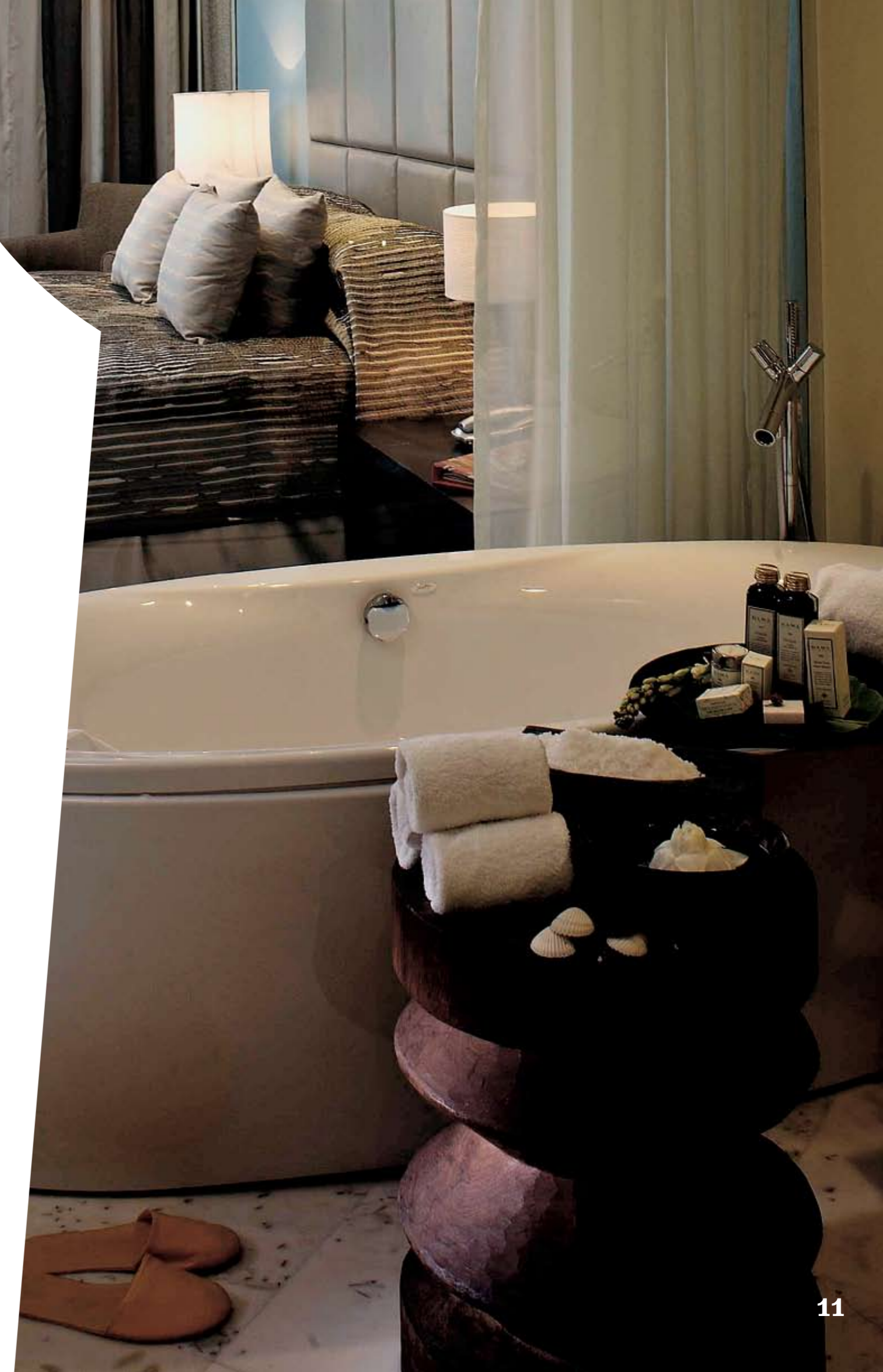


At Zen, the pan-Asian eatery in The Park, Kolkata, there is a private dining space tucked away behind carved wooden partitions forming a space within a space. At Aqua in the Delhi Hotel, the private pavilions are very popular – enclosed on three sides with a swing and a LCD screen, allowing guests to relax barefoot and carefree in a completely personal space. And in the new ItALIA in Delhi, the private Wine Room seats 12 people in its intimate, mirror lined space.

We believe that true luxury lies in small things done well, and your individual, smallest needs being fully met. The Park Hotels are meticulously designed for every guest to feel perfectly at home – a place where everybody knows your name.

Left The lobby of The Park, Chennai is dotted with unexpected elements like the bamboo installation and the jasmine petals that indulge the senses in little ways

Right The guest bathrooms at The Park, Chennai have heavenly Ayurvedic products and designer bathrobes to pamper guests





Believing that true luxury lies in small things done well, your individual needs are wholly met at The Park Hotels, a place where everybody knows your name.

For billions of years bacteria were the sole form of life on the planet, self-sufficient in every respect. Take them out of the equation, and all life would cease to exist.

UN IMAG INED WORLDS

Dr. Mukund Thattai

Mukund Thattai is a scientist who works at the interface between physics and biology. After completing his Ph.D. in physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he returned to Bangalore in 2005 to set up his laboratory at the National Centre for Biological Sciences. His research involves building and testing genetic circuits in living bacterial cells, inspired by the engineering principles used to design electronic circuits. He spends much of his time contemplating the role of numbers, big and small, in biology.



No wider than a wavelength of light, bacteria are easy to ignore. A million of them end-to-end would stretch a mere meter.

Why do bacteria matter?

More than 300 years ago, Antonie van Leeuwenhoek became the first person to see individual bacterial cells. The Dutch scientist's remarkable microscopes provided the first tantalizing glimpses of an unimagined world, one of geometric and organic shapes and forms, of frenetic activity, of life at the smallest scales. Today, we can zoom in much further. Electron microscopes can reveal the individual wrinkles on a cell's surface, and atomic-force microscopes allow us to tug at its DNA. Every time we magnify these smallest of living things, some questions are answered – but new mysteries are generated. It is easy to imagine how van Leeuwenhoek must have felt.

The discovery and study of bacteria has changed our conception of the world. Through the 1800s, the 'germ theory' was born: the understanding that many diseases were caused by invisible but very real microorganisms, not by some intangible miasma. This led to the acceptance of simple hygiene and sanitation practices, which, along with the development of antibiotics, have since saved countless human lives. Unfortunately the very success of these discoveries has typecast bacteria as the bad guys, and with each sensational news story about the latest global pandemic, their notoriety grows. How undeserving they are of this reputation.

Bacteria don't exist just to punish you and me with infections, and we don't study them merely in the hope that we might one day stamp them out forever. Think of it: if all bacteria on earth were suddenly to vanish, the results would be catastrophic. Atmospheric nitrogen could no longer be converted into biomass; the oceans would lose the ability to photosynthesize, diminishing the supply of fresh oxygen; dead tissue would no longer decompose; the planet's biogeochemical cycles would simply grind to a halt. Even our own bodies would no longer function without the trillions of cells comprising thousands of bacterial species in our gut and on our skin, helping us digest food, generate essential nutrients, and acting as our first line of defence against infection. For billions of years bacteria were the sole form of life on the planet, self-sufficient in every respect. Take them out of the equation, and all life would cease to exist.

Since life as we understand it seems to have arisen on earth only once, bacteria are our cousins: we are descended from a common ancestor. This means we are all essentially identical at the molecular level. So, by studying bacteria we can figure out how our own cells function! 20th Century experiments on bacteria have revealed to us the biological basis of inheritance, the role of DNA, and the nature of the genetic code, continuing the revolution started by Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*.

News stories about global pandemics have typecast bacteria as the bad guys. How undeserving they are of this reputation.

In today's world, our efforts have been focussed on using the knowledge we have gained of bacteria to address some of the great challenges of our time: improving human health, developing renewable energy sources, and tackling climate change. Nanotechnology has attracted a lot of attention recently, with its idea of manipulating matter at the tiniest atomic scales to improve human lives. What is often not appreciated is that we already have a fully functioning nanotechnology, though not of our own invention – it's called biology.

Through billions of years of evolution, living cells like bacteria have developed a toolkit of amazing molecules which can recognize one another, generate forces, make and break chemical bonds, and constantly supply the energy that keeps all this running. Humans have been diverting these processes for their own use for thousands of years: bacteria and single-celled yeast have given us curds, cheese, beer and wine. Nowadays, pharmaceutical companies use bacteria as microscopic bioreactors, to make a range of therapeutics, including insulin.

The majority of antibiotics we use to treat diseases are bacterial in origin, which seems surprising until you realize that they are part of a vast inter-bacterial arms race.

Bacteria are quick to mutate and evolve, properties that can assist us in our search for new molecules which can degrade waste or generate fuel. When the first genome of a living organism was sequenced in 1995, that of the bacterium *haemophilus influenzae*, nobody would have guessed that less than a decade later we would be creating synthetic bacterial genomes from scratch. And that is precisely what happened in 2008. This means that we will soon be able to build bacteria to order, inserting groups of genes to suit our needs, designing and trading components much as we do computer applications today. And unlike the physical machines we are used to, once you make a bacterial factory it can be replicated for free.

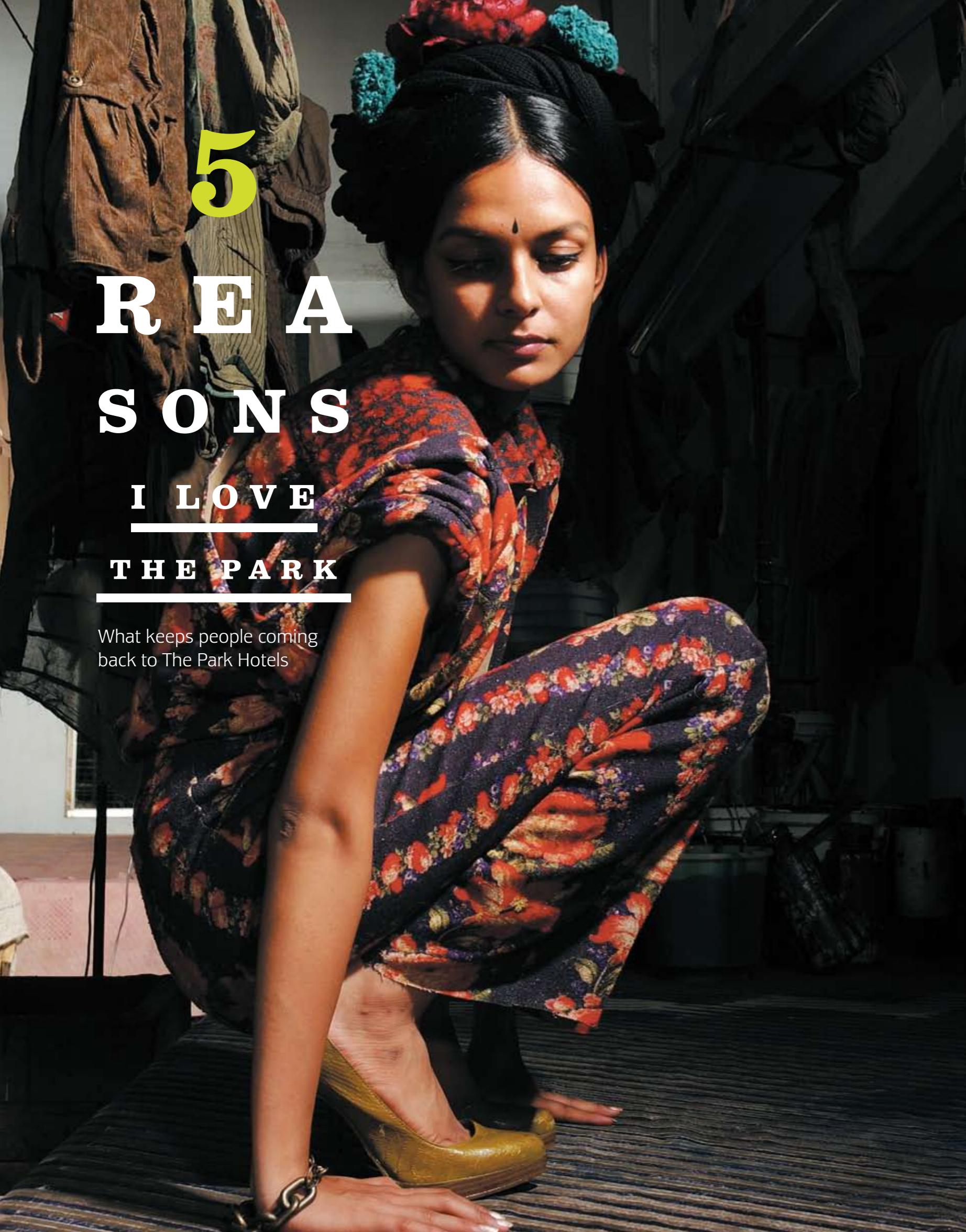
Of course, to bacteria, the travails of six billion human beings are surely irrelevant. There are ten times as many bacterial cells as human cells in our own bodies. Bacteria are the planet's dominant life form. The first living cells, the common ancestors to all life on earth, would have looked much like present-day bacteria. Their ilk can be found in the deepest oceans, and in the frozen Antarctic sea ice, 4km below the earth's surface, where temperatures reach 125°C, and 40km above it, buffeted by the sun's UV radiation. The discovery of bacteria which thrive in the hellish sulphurous heat of deep sea hydrothermal vents has forced us to expand the very definitions of life, and to contemplate the thrilling possibility of life on planets orbiting distant stars.

Our efforts have been focussed on using the knowledge we have gained of bacteria to address some of the great challenges of our time: improving human health, developing renewable energy sources, and tackling climate change.

In 1998 a group of microbiologists set out to count for the first time the total number of bacterial cells on earth. Here is their estimate:

***5,000,000,000,000,000,
000,000,000,000,000.***

End-to-end, these cells would stretch half a billion light years. To put that in perspective, the Andromeda galaxy is only 2.5 million light years away.



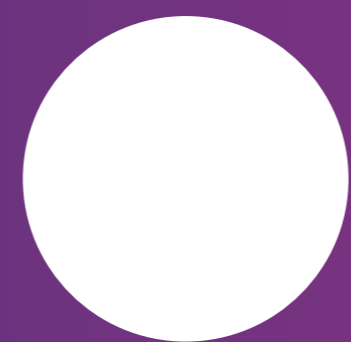
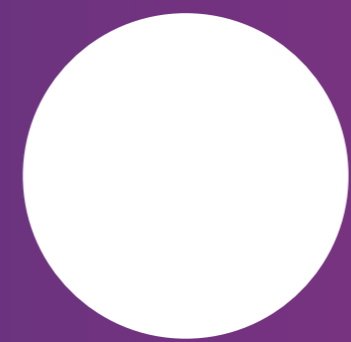
5

REASONS

I LOVE

THE PARK

What keeps people coming back to The Park Hotels



Very few Indian designers have featured as prominently on the international fashion circuit as Sabyasachi Mukherjee. From Paris with Gaultier, to shows in Milan, Singapore, Moscow and New York, he has defined a fabulous new face of Indian fashion to the world. First noticed for constructing ultra-modern silhouettes using indigenous techniques, Sabya believes in the '...personalized imperfection of the human hand'. Deserts, gypsies & folklore, antique textiles, modern architecture & impressionist painters, and the culture of his home town, Kolkata are all his muses. Unerringly combining fabrics & textures, and detailing patch-work with gorgeous embellishments in a vibrant color palette, Sabyasachi designs for people who prefer to walk a path less travelled. Sabyasachi is a frequent guest at The Park, Kolkata.

- 1 *For its ability to effortlessly mix modernism with traditional elements.*
- 2 *For giving us the coolest music on this planet at Someplace Else.*
- 3 *For conjuring up the most amazing cocktails at Roxy.*
- 4 *For introducing Tantra to Kolkata nightlife.*
- 5 *For the most amazing sushi at Zen.*



SABYASACHI MUKHERJEE

Left Preview image from Sabyasachi's Sanctuary Collection, first shown at the Lakme Fashion Week, Fall / Winter '08

T H E P A R K E X P L O R E R

Chennai

Dance Festivals in Chennai

There is perhaps no better place to appreciate the rich cultural legacy of India than Tamil Nadu – the cradle of Bharatanatyam and Carnatic Music. While you will find a performance somewhere in the city at any given day of the year, the sacred month of *Magazhi* (Dec – Jan) brings festivals where you can watch the very best.

30 days, 300 concerts and over 2000 artistes – the Chennai Dance and Music Festival has been delighting audiences since 1927. Also known as the *Magazhi* Festival of Dance and Music, this event marks the anniversary of the Madras Music Academy. Besides the usual auditoriums, heritage bungalows and temple courtyards make spectacular backdrops for the shows.

The harvest festival of *Pongal* brings with it a week-long cultural spectacle, the Chennai Sangamam. More than 4000 performances across the city's parks, beaches and streets featuring a mixed bag of classical and folk dance, drama, music and food, transform the metropolis into a colourful carnival.

Aptly named, *The Park's New Festival* is a celebration of the contemporary – in dance, drama and music. The first edition in 2007 featured a mélange of established and emerging artistes like Dr. Mallika Sarabhai, the Vayu Naidu Company (U.K), and Dance Routes (Bhubaneswar) amongst other interesting performers. We come back this December with another eclectic line up – don't miss it!

Chennai's Beaches

The East coast of India doesn't promise great swimming waters, but the light sand beaches looking out into the Bay of Bengal are a cooler and more peaceful alternative to the bustle of the city.

Amble along the world's second longest beach on breezy evenings. Marina Beach is the typical Indian family beach with well-populated street food stalls, beach cricket, laughter therapy groups and sand castles all happening together on an endless stretch of golden sand.

If you want to check out the hip scene in Chennai, go south from Marina to Besant Nagar Beach (formerly Elliot's Beach). A string of cafes, bargain shopping and restaurants make it the trendy place to hang out for the city's youngsters.

About 50 km down the coast is Mahabalipuram, a delightful duet of natural and architectural magnificence. The 7th Century Shore Temple that stands astride the Bay is just one of the many relics of Hindu history and mythology that this seaside town is famous for. If you're not into sightseeing, you can still enjoy the faintly hippy air that hangs over this sleepy, if slightly tourist-ridden village.

Latitude 13 by The Park

If canvas tents remind you of sleeping bags and bare necessities, here's an experience that will wipe out uncomfortable camping memories. A bite of the *facaccia* sandwiches and a whiff of freshly brewed coffee at this calm café laid out under an almost circus-like marquee are only some of the delectable surprises that The Park pulls out of its hat. A part of the gorgeous Good Earth store and with the same appreciation for beauty and the good life, it's a magical place to catch up with friends or just have some alone time with your cappuccino.

Rutland Gate, Nungambakkam +91 44 28330989

Rasvihar

This peaceful 6,500 sqft jewellery store set in a stately colonial villa is just right for a rendezvous with beautiful handcrafted jewellery. Dancer and designer Ahalya's creativity and grace translates into signature pieces in pearls, diamonds, gold, platinum and a kaleidoscope of gems, rooted in traditional aesthetics with a contemporary spirit. She calls it jewellery with soul. Check out her various collections or take home a piece that is uniquely you with bespoke designs. You can't leave Chennai without some baubles! 17A, Sterling Avenue, Nungambakkam +91 44 28269912 / 28269922; Monday through Saturday 11 am to 8 pm; Sundays 1 pm to 6 pm

Murugan Idli Kadai

Crisp dosas, fluffy idlis, piquant chutneys and a generous helping of Southern spice served on a fresh green banana leaf – enjoy authentic South Indian fare without the frills at Murugan's. This is a perfectly balanced meal served in the gritty, noisy ambience of the best street restaurants. Popular with locals, it is a must on the itineraries of travellers who like a real taste of the city. Of the many branches it has across Chennai, we recommend the one on G. N. Chetty Road. 77-1/A, G. N. Chetty Road, T Nagar +91 44 42025076 / 28155462

Apparao Art Gallery

At a time when contemporary Indian art was just a gleam in a collector's eye, a young *aficionado* started putting together art shows composed of works she personally loved, showing at any available venues in Chennai – sometimes even in her own living room. 23 years on, Sharan Apparao can boast that she showcased many artists before they were recognized, and that the big names who helped her kickstart the contemporary art scene in the South like Souza, Sabavala, Husain, Raza, Anjolie Ela Menon and Laxma Goud, along with the best emerging talent, continue to show at her galleries across India. 7, Wallace Gardens, 3rd Street +91 44 28332226

Oxford Bookstore and Cha Bar

Just can't wait to get home to read the latest bestseller you bought? You won't want to at Oxford Bookstore, because here you can enjoy it with a perfectly brewed cup of *chai* at the in-house Cha Bar. Serving up a refreshing combination of over a 100,000 books (organized into 45 categories) and 75 varieties of tea (including the not-so-orthodox Bollywood Mix) with a gallery space for art and literary events, this 7000 sqft store is certainly every reader's cup of tea! Part of a chain that dates back to the 1920s, it is one of the oldest, and yet most modern bookstores in the country. Haddows Road +91 44 28227711

Dakshina Chitra

Masterminded by the legendary Laurie Baker and executed by Deborah Thiagarajan and the Madras Craft Foundation, this complex of transplanted homes from the four South Indian states creates a unique space to showcase the architecture and rich culture of the area. Watch skilled artists at work, catch vibrant folk performances and art exhibitions, and take home distinctive handicrafts. International workshops, documentation and archiving exercises and children's activities are part of the agenda. Guest rooms are available for those who'd like to linger longer in this art village for a true *dakshina chitra*, or 'picture of the South'. East Coast Road, Muttukadu, Chinglepet District +91 44 27472603 / 27472783

Khader Nawaz Khan Road

Khadar Nawaz Khan Road is Chennai's Rodeo Drive. Take a peek at what's hot (besides the weather) this season at designer boutiques like Satya Paul & Linarika at Silkworm Boutique, Tina Vincent, Chaitanya Rao et al. Evoluzione showcases an ensemble of India's best designers and also has a store retailing high-end, contemporary furniture. Stop by at Naturally Auroville for handmade products and organic goodies from neighbouring Pondicherry. Pit-stop at Mocha, Barista or Movenpick, for there's a lot more in store down the road.

Grand Sweets and Snacks

Much more than a sweetsshop, Grand Sweets and Snacks is something of an institution. Its *thattai* (a crisp flour-based snack without which an average Chennai-ite's tea time is incomplete) and *poli* (a sweet made from coconut) are legendary. Treat yourself to the complementary *dhonnai* and *akkaravadasal* (a sweet rice mixture) and meander patiently with the serpentine queue, before you get to the *murukkus*, *halwas* and other savoury snacks this place is famous for. 24, 2nd Main Road, Gandhi Nagar, Adyar +91 44 24915662 / 24914213

Nalli Silks

Drape yourself in six yards of tradition at Nalli. How can you not check out Chennai's favourite export? Synonymous with exquisite hand-woven Kanjeevaram silks, Nalli's was started by Nalli Chinnasami Chetty in 1928, and is now a household name in South India, surviving the wars, and priding itself on never offering a discount. Choose from a staggering variety of sarees (and now fabric) in every colour imaginable; woven, embroidered and embellished with deft craftsmanship. Stick with conventional silks or experiment with new-age georgettes from the sub-brand Nalli Next. Nalli Chinnasami Chetty, 9, Nageswaran Road, opp Panagal Park, T Nagar +91 44 24344115 / 42604567

Amethyst

Tucked away in a 100 year old bungalow, Amethyst is a boutique, gallery, coffee shop – and a quiet oasis in the busy city. Great for gifting options or just browsing, the boutique has an exclusive selection of apparel, jewellery, trinkets, furniture and more. You will find interesting art exhibitions, poetry readings and plays just a flight of stairs away. The *al-fresco* café has tables set amidst a verdant garden and serves up delicious pasta, iced teas and salads. 14, Padmavathi Road, Gopalapuram +91 44 28351917 / 28353582

Mylapore

Even if shopping isn't really your thing, try to fit in Mylapore and T Nagar for the real street flavour of this complex and intriguing city. From expensive stores to bargains on the pavement and jewellery to pots and pans – there's nothing you won't get here. Must-visits include Sukra for pretty silver jewellery and Kumarans and Sundari for exquisite silks. Mylapore is also the cultural nucleus of the city and is home to The Madras Music Academy, Bharatya Vidya Bhavan Auditorium and Nageshwara Rao Garden. While there, stop by at the beautiful Kapaleshwar Temple and the 350 year old Srinivasa Temple.





This page & Right The Kapaleswar Temple in Mylapore is the oldest living shrine in Chennai with Shiva as its resident deity. Its architecture is of the classical Pallava Dravidian style. Thousands of devotees visit the temple and its classical dance and music festivals

Photos
Aaron Rabideau (This page)
www.verymystery.com

Philip Ideson (Right)
www.flickr.com/photos/bethphil
pideson@aol.com

The Science of Deliciousness

Molecular Gastronomy

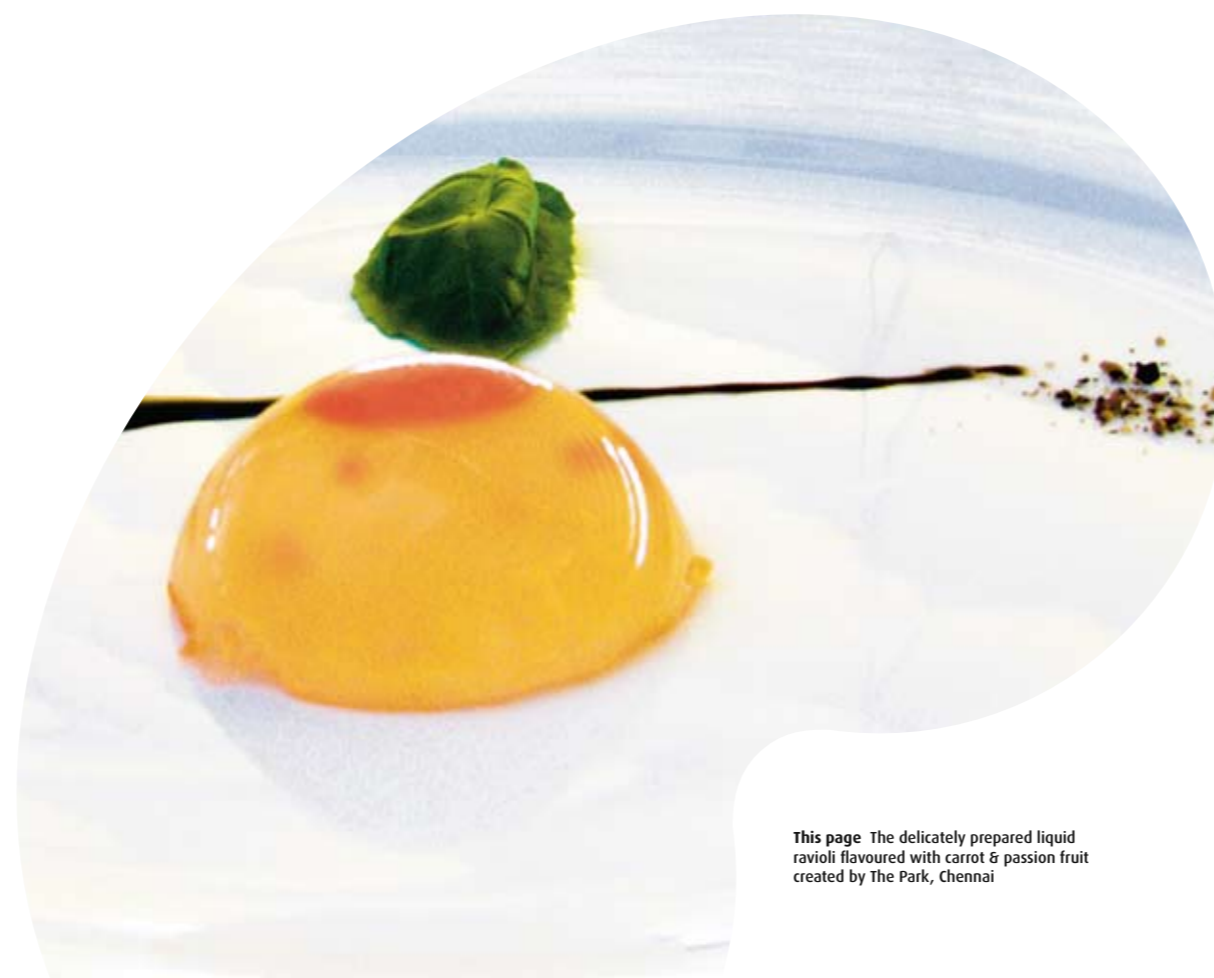
With inputs from Chef Rajesh Radhakrishnan, The Park, Chennai; Chef Bakshish Dean, The Park, New Delhi; Chef Sharad Dewan, The Park, Kolkata; and Chef Srinath Sambandan, The Park, Vizag

For centuries, the way we've cooked and eaten has remained unchanged. Pots and pans have improved a little and coal stoves have given way to electric ones. But ingredients and processes are those carried down from our grandparents' grandparents. So we still argue about the amount of time it takes to make the perfect soft boiled egg, how bouncy dough should be to make the lightest bread and the best way to know when rice or pasta is cooked. But, a few years ago, in some kitchens around the world, curious minds started to uncover the secrets behind culinary processes, debunk some and validate other traditional methods, and also attempt to understand human reactions to food. This is the science known as Molecular Gastronomy.

The study of the physics and chemistry behind cooking might not sound too appetising a subject. But imagine savouring a delicious ball that looks and tastes like an olive but is liquid inside, exploding on your tongue in a surprising revelation. Experiencing chocolate that is neither sweet nor bitter but somewhere in between, or droplets of caviar made from juicy watermelon that melt in your mouth. Or tender, moist duck that's been slow cooked for 24 hours to give your senses unique pleasure. By understanding how food ingredients meld at a molecular level, and how temperature and pressure affect cooking, Chefs all over the world are reformulating textures and tastes to arrive at excitingly different dishes for the adventurous gastronome.

And now, Chefs are looking beyond even the behaviour of atoms and molecules and recognizing that if this science is combined with good, old fashioned love, cooking becomes a real art. So Molecular Gastronomy is really the art and science of selecting, preparing, serving and enjoying food. It's now being called The Science of Deliciousness by some, which suggests that perception and emotion are on an equal footing in cooking with physics and chemistry.

In 2006, the British magazine Restaurant chose the top three Chefs out of the 50 best Chefs worldwide. The winners were Ferran Adria from El Bulli in Rosas, Spain; Heston Blumenthal from The Fat Duck in the UK; and Pierre Gagnaire from his restaurant in Paris, France. All three of these Chefs are spearheading Molecular Gastronomy. They have studied mechanisms of aroma release, and the perception of taste and flavour on the senses and the brain (did you know ice cream tastes creamier if you stroke a piece of velvet while you're eating it?).



This page The delicately prepared liquid ravioli flavoured with carrot & passion fruit created by The Park, Chennai

Imagine savouring a delicious ball that looks and tastes like an olive but is liquid inside, exploding on your tongue in a surprising revelation.

They've gone into how cooking methods affect the eventual flavour and texture of food ingredients (why tandoori fish and fried fish taste so different). They've extracted naturally occurring substances from foods that do wonderful things to normal dishes, like turn soup into delicate foam or fruit into fizzy spheres.

By cooking meat in a vacuum at low temperatures (the technique of *sous vide*) they've been able to give us a healthy, superior version of a traditional dish. By juxtaposing different flavours, some stronger than others, they have intensified the taste of combinations like strawberry and coriander, or pineapple and blue cheese. Or by combining two dominant flavours, such as chocolate and orange, they've reinforced the taste of both. By taking food apart to its smallest level they've been able to give birth to a wonderful new version of the art of food.

At The Park Hotels, inspired by the global movement towards culinary experimentation, Chefs have created remarkable dishes that have caused a flutter among guests both at an intellectual and sensory level. At The Park, Chennai, liquid raviolis and fruit caviars have been very successful with guests. The South Indian filter coffee *espuma* (coffee foam) is a delicious take on a local favourite. A technique similar to *sous vide* was used in the kitchen to make deliciously tender Double Cooked Maple Glazed Pork Chops. The Park, New Delhi has created appetizers like Parmesan Jelly with Yolk Chips and Bacon Dust, (based on the classic Carbonara) and Tequila Porridge with Lemon Air. The Park, Vizag has experimented with twin shots of Cardamom and Pepper Tomato *Shorba* Foams followed by the slow cooked Wasabi Tenderloin Medallions and Sesame Garlic Salmon Strips with an *Agar* (seaweed flavoured) gelled Basil Chutney. More new dishes on the menu include the Green Tea Caviar for *Khanom Buang* and the El Bulli styled Mango Ravioli. The Park, Kolkata works with Molecular Mixology, the application of the science to mixing drinks. Some of the drinks on trial are the Candy Floss Mojito and the Bloody Mary Foam. Bloody Mary Caviars and Nitrogen Frozen Margaritas are also on the cards.

As Herve This, the founder of Molecular Gastronomy says, "The pleasure of eating involves all our senses and it is obviously important for our wellbeing – why else did our ancestors start to cook their meat and vegetables even before they invented civilization? If we are able to use the knowledge gained on food preparation, we might find new ways to make healthy food more attractive, and we might persuade more people to cook better food..." Molecular Gastronomy adds layers and complexities to what is invented in a kitchen. It allows Chefs to increase their domain of knowledge and explore the fundamental and exciting processes involved in making the eater's taste buds quiver with delight. It allows for creativity with form, combinations and texture which will open up wonderful new worlds of taste for the gourmet.



Miniature as Style – A Small Revolution?

Dr. Annapurna Garimella

Dr. Annapurna Garimella is a Bangalore-based designer and an art historian who focuses on the art and architecture of India. She heads Jackfruit, a research and design organization which works in the arts and is the managing trustee of Art, Resources and Teaching Trust, a not-for-profit organization that gathers resources and promotes research and teaching in art and architectural history, archaeology, crafts, design, and other related disciplines in academic and non-academic fora. Her publications include work on the medieval city of Vijayanagara, modernism in India, contemporary religiosities and art, and the politics of tourism and heritage.



Many contemporary artists of South Asian and other origin are using the format, media and conventions of miniature painting as a thematic, stylistic and rhetorical resource. Their engagements involve continuities in technique, such as fine brush strokes and sheer washes of colour; and composition, such as the layering of spaces and the use of frames even as they fragment and rework the miniature tradition.

Such experimentation is of course endemic to the history of miniature painting. From Humayun's time, when he brought back Persian painting to his court after his return in 1555, there has been a remarkable desire to frame the new as part of the old. From bringing artists to Lahore and Delhi from Safavid courts and nearer locations, to incorporating naturalism from Western art during the last years of Akbar's rule, to the grandiose political polemic of the lush paintings produced in Jahangir's atelier, to sensuous renderings of flowers and animals based on European botanicals, to the gorgeous continuities between painting and other media – including textiles and architecture – in Shah Jahan's palaces, the miniature's large impact belies the size of its canvas. Today it may appear to be just the size of an individual painted page but for its producers, patrons and viewers it was much more. Scale never directly determined depth of meaning, engagement or sense of purpose.

Even more recent experiments by the Bengal School or A.R. Chughtai in Lahore have sought to address large issues through the small format of the miniature. Abanindranath Tagore and his colleagues in Bengal combined Mughal pictorial principles with Japanese watercolour techniques and Art Nouveau linearity to make a dramatic claim for both a nationalist art form and a pan-Asian civilizational aesthetic. Chughtai in Lahore produced remarkably similar works though he distanced himself from the Bengal School's agenda. Illustrating the *ghazals* of the nineteenth century poet Ghalib, Chughtai sought to affiliate himself with the pan-Islamicism advocated by Iqbal. The difference between the Bengal and Lahore groups, is that the former saw painting the miniature as a revival while the later saw it as a continuation of Mughal painting. Of course, both were always interested in the cosmopolitanism that the world of miniature constructed and implied; for artists in both locales, the miniature was not a limited space or narrow mark of ethnicity but a sign of a world which promised infinite sophistication, creativity and the possibility of affiliation based on shared ideals.

Miniature painting in the Rajput courts, especially those in the Pahari hills and in the modern state of Rajasthan, too experienced huge changes. Rulers in these courts patronized painting in emulation of the culture they witnessed at the Mughal court. They, like the Mughals, did not think they were making miniatures; instead, they viewed these works as part of albums or manuscripts, which were viewed by a limited audience, often just one person, but which could circulate across the region as gifts and tributes. Over time, the Rajput miniature stood in an intimate relationship, both divergent and compatible, with the mural. Murals were for amplified communication with larger figures and louder messages. Court and other artists created manuscripts of imagery that were portable and could thus acquire political and artistic weight as well as personal significance through peregrination. Sometimes they were directly embedded in walls, becoming another layer on the narrative and ornament of murals. Sometimes their scale bled into the murals, allowing artists to negotiate the bigness of the big with smallness of the small.

And as one major exhibition on a newly researched area of eighteenth and nineteenth century Jodhpur painting has shown, monumental manuscript painting itself emerged as new texts and viewing practices developed. Such scholarly discoveries should remind us that the miniature never was or is art historical destiny; it has been from its introduction, a position from which to contemplate or engage the world.

With the entry of oil painting and photography in British India, miniatures lost elite patronage and were produced as tourist souvenirs or personal curiosities, a practice which continues today. Sometimes artists did more public commissions for colonial authorities but more often, the painted image became the object of private fascination, circulated no doubt, but nowhere holding the kind of rhetorical force that it wielded in the Mughal-Rajput world. Indeed, the market for copying well-known works for the antique buyer began during this period and coincided with reduction of miniature's everyday meaning in the world, the paradoxical result of an unprecedented rise in global trade, military and cultural contact.

If this quick art historical review signals anything, it is that the smallness of a painted image on paper, today termed "the miniature", is part of a very large, splendid history. Always, its potential has been realized in direct proportion to the scale of the space accorded to it to perform its work. Perhaps this is what contemporary artists are remembering when they deploy the format, scale and techniques of the miniature in their work. It is the miniature's fascinating bigness, its long, long history, its complicated liturgy of preparation and study, the diversity of its makers and its endless potential to celebrate the detail – so beautifully captured in Orhan Pamuk's grand narrative *My Name is Red* – that lures artists today at a time when jumbo-sized works – almost akin to real estate – drive market values, abating temporarily as the world recession has lulled collectors' enthusiasm.

The miniature has the potential to challenge the visual codes and market valuations of canvas-based, BIG art.

So while it cannot be said that the rise in the contemporary miniature is a return to the idea that "small is big", especially as this has been happening for well over twenty years, it can be said that miniature has the potential to challenge the visual codes and market valuations of canvas-based, BIG art. In fact, practitioners of miniature painting display a commitment to retaining the specificity of its history and practice, its potential to voice the vernacular, even when they are responding to contexts far in distance from South Asia. The miniature, in this sense, is the living, art historical interlocutor of contemporary art and is diasporic, as pointed out recently by critic Ifthikar Dadi, without necessarily celebrating the global qua global.



This page Nothing Lost in Translation, Mithu Sen, 2008; Installation in 6 sqm room with 5 large Japanese kozo papers (each 3.5 m x 2.5 m) hanging from the ceiling, two boxes of written paper handkerchiefs, lights from back. Conceived, produced and exhibited in Japan, July – August, 2008

So it is fitting to end this very brief meditation on the idea that "small is the new big" by turning to the works of three artists who work with the format, technique or meanings of the miniature. Saira Wasim, a US-based artist of Pakistani origin, uses Renaissance and Mughal visual techniques to make pungent comments on disparate but connected realities. In a work titled *Blood Brothers*, the artist asks us to recall that incredible Jahangir painting now in the collections of the Freer and Sackler Galleries of Art in Washington D.C, in which the large and splendid Mughal emperor Jahangir hugs the smaller, frailer and slightly poorer looking Safavid ruler Shah Abbas. Jahangir's solar halo eclipses the moon in an allegory of political power that gives the Shah little option but to accept the overbearing and patronizing presence of the Hindustani emperor. Wasim extends that image into our time, in which a Saudi royal family member cosies up with an arrogant and wily American president. They hug, each getting what they want – continued feudal power and unlimited petroleum – even as the ordinary Muslim is elevated in the painting to the position usually allocated to the Mughal emperor but with none of the confidence or authority. The praying commoner asks for Allah's mercy, while the border seeps with shadowy, marbled paint affects much like an oil spill. At the very bottom stand barrels with shadowy Arab businessmen, ready to make the next petro-dollar even as they assert their nationalist piety.



The miniature's large impact belies the size of its canvas.

In another work which again engages the Jahangir-Shah Abbas hugging painting, Wasim represents the violence that masks the nationalist politics of a seemingly benign cultural encounter through cricket. Sport here is an opportunity to lob weapons of other kinds. The artist uses the affective power of miniatures and the sentimentality of Norman Rockwell Americana to highlight the passion India and Pakistan invest in appearing to be the initiators of peace dialogues, as well as the magnitude of self-deception, all the while struggling with the shadows of duplicitous lions who promise(d) to lay down with lambs. Wasim's miniature foregrounds the intimacy between the enemies, who play their drama on a pitch that traverses the globe.

Another artist who uses the memory of the miniature is the New Delhi-based Mithu Sen. Sen's work at first glance appears to be tingling with an energy that is far removed, even divorced, from the composure that one associates with the art historical miniature. Yet in a work from a recent London show titled I dig - I look down, the connections are writ large on the paper's surface. A large work, as Sen is apt to produce recently, it still deploys strategies first developed in the miniature. Her use of *gouache*, a favourite at Santiniketan where Bengal School techniques are not

just art history but contemporary art pedagogy, recalls the twentieth century engagement with court painting. Her placement of the main figure in the centre of a double folio recalls the similar use of double sheets in imperial albums and the importance endowed to a single odd creature, say a zebra from Africa, when rendered on an album page. The composite figure reminds the viewer of all those composite figures, like elephant figures made of dancing girls, which miniaturists loved to produce for the delight of the patron and the odd, floating bits of imagery are reminiscent of the marginalia in Mughal painting. All of these references add up to produce a uniquely contemporary sensibility no doubt; but her uncanny images gain coherence in part through adherence to the codes of scale and subject that first emerged in the art historic miniature. Sen allows her works to be haunted, but erases any overt art historical reference, choosing to keep the connections small, indeed improbably seamless, perhaps because she feels that her works broadcast or mean more by doing so. They seem to visually negotiate an argument between the minutiae of the miniature, the largeness of its art history and the emptiness of the recent demand for size.

How much can an artist give in one work before it is not enough? It is easy, if we cross and close our eyes, to look at her work and contemplate those massive, empty marble spaces of Agra Fort or Fatehpur Sikri, now suddenly inhabited by a floating world of exotic things not in resplendent period costume but wearing the nakedness of our contemporary, sometimes false, vulnerability. Perhaps the artist who most consciously foregrounds the contemporary politics of miniature painting and the identities and markets it is connected with in Rajasthan and India is Waswo X. Waswo, an American-born artist who for several years now has been based in Udaipur.

Working with Rakesh Vijay, a trained miniaturist and Shankar Kumawat, an artist who is prized by cognoscenti for his rendering of borders, Waswo pushes the boundaries of what a conventional miniature painting can do by adhering closely to convention. In a work titled *The Five-Star Experience*, the artist has created a setting on paper for us to reflect with him, in a placid manner, on the weird pleasures and ironies of recreating today a miniaturized, often cartoon version of a feudal past, as is often done in even in the most five star version of the Rajasthan heritage experience.

In *You Break My Heart*, a Bhagat Singhy, Subash Chandra Bose-ish, early twentieth Paul Bowles type character dressed in the linen suit mandatory for every traveller who refuses to be identified as a tourist, kneels in a grassy bower. The scene recalls those *nayaka-nayika* images where the *rasa* of *viraha* is implied by the tremendous beauty that surrounds the lover which only serves to heighten inner longing and sorrow. The figure recalls popular images of Hanuman, a bachelor who lovingly suffers physical pain as he cleaves his chest to reveal Rama as the life inside. Aah, the pain of homosociality and yet this composite man, this "Waswo in the sub-continent" so to speak, does not have Ram, but a valentine heart. His loosened tie lies snake-like, inert but slightly dangerous, indexing all those psychoanalytic clichés that wind through cross-cultural encounters of the romantic and the artistic sort. So many references are pulled together so smoothly that we must stand back and admire how much the miniature can bind together.

Italian Antipasti Platter at The Park, Kolkata – *Antipasti* means ‘before the meal’ and is the traditional first course in an Italian repast. The meats used in our Hotels are all imported and the preparation authentic. Vegetarian options are a big attraction too – deliciously light. **The Antipasti Vegetarian** offers *Palline Di Spinaci Con Pesto Rosso* which is healthy and flavourful spinach dumplings in an unusual red pesto, along with a refreshing minted runner beans salad.

The Mediterranean Platter at The Park, New Delhi – This platter is an exotic assembling of a combination of 4 cold and 2 hot mezze dishes, and is extremely popular with our guests. The **Common Mezze** has a collection of piquant dips including *hummus bin tahina*, *babaganoush*, *tzatziki* as well as leaf-wrapped dolmas with rice and bell peppers. For those inclined towards meats, the **Non-Vegetarian Hot Mezze** has juicy grilled pesto-marinated prawns and the all-time favourite chicken wings with garlic and *sumac*.

Japanese Bento Boxes at Zen, The Park, Kolkata – *Bento* Box is Japanese for tiffin box, usually a compartmentalized box with a lid. It has 5-6 sections where a variety of food is served in small portions. A combination of seafood cooked in various Japanese styles is available to tempt taste buds – a crisp prawn *tempura* and tender Salmon *teriyaki*, served with a selection of sushi and prawn roe, with sides of tuna salad *maki*, and *ebi chahan* (prawn fried rice).

Seafood Platters at The Park, Vishakhapatnam – Offering fresh, deliciously prepared seafood platters in different Indian cuisines, the quality of the dishes at the Vizag Hotel is unsurpassed. Starters, soups and main courses in Chettinad, Tandoori or Coastal Andhra styles allow for every yearning to be fulfilled. Specialities include a fulsome Chettinad soup, *Yera Kothamalli Saar*, which has prawns in an elixir of tamarind & spices, scented with fresh coriander stalks, the succulent *Mahi Hariyali Tikka* from the tandoor as a starter, and the Andhra dish, *Komata Sanchulu Kothmiri Talimpu*, made of tender, stuffed squid tossed with a tempering of Andhra spices & fresh herbs.

The Bengali Small Plate at The Park, Kolkata – The Park Hotels believe in presenting local delicacies in a contemporary way. The Bengali Platter offers a number of items with flavours carefully selected and served so that individual identities are maintained and the plate offers a balanced culinary experience. The melt-in-your-mouth Bengali breakfast of *luchi* with *gughni* (curried chickpeas), *singhara* (a crispy vegetable samosa) and *bonde* is an option, and for the traditionalists, the authentic meat dish *Kosha mangsho*, with its typical accompaniments of home-style *parantha* and yellow *daal* are a delectable choice.

Good Things come in Small Plates

Gastronomically enlightened folk enjoy a little drama in their meals, a little variety and adventure to enhance the sensuous experience of eating. And, adding to the anticipation of surprising tastes or exciting new courses, are the theatrically striking presentations.

That’s why The Park Hotels have created Small Plates – small servings of a selection of dishes to be eaten at one sitting. Not populated with just starters, these plates contain well designed, smaller portions of main courses and sometimes desserts. The Park Hotels are also pioneers in India of Degustation or Tasting menus where several tiny portions of every course are offered to the guest for a more diverse repast.

Small Plates and Tasting Menus are ways to fulfill your desire for variety in one go, without leaving you over-stuffed. They are designed to give you more taste, more flavour and a more eclectic dining experience.

Degustation/Tasting Menus at The Park, Chennai

Our Chefs love displaying their diversity, and one of the ways in which they can best do this is by offering a degustation menu, literally, a ‘tasting menu’ in which a meal can consist of as many as seven to twelve different courses.

Sample Degustation menu from 601, for all day dining at The Park, Chennai

Goat cheese & asparagus salad – mixed greens, orange segments, cherry tomatoes, roasted garlic vinaigrette

Broccoli soup – *ricotta* dumplings, carrot wafers

Risotto sampler – tomato basil, *bianco* with pesto crumbs, saffron

Tortelloni – chicken, pine nuts, asparagus

Phyllo parcels of *jalfrezi* vegetables – saffron *couscous*, spiced mushrooms

Baked New York cheesecake, blueberry *compote*

Belgian sugar-free chocolate mousse, vanilla bean *panacotta*

Chef Rajesh, Executive Chef, The Park, Chennai gives us some tips

1. The sequence of courses in a degustation menu should be such that earlier dishes do not overpower those that follow them. The courses must complement each other.
2. Every course should be generous enough in size that diners do not feel frustrated, but no course should be so heavy or filling that it does not leave an appetite for those to follow.
3. Heavier, more filling dishes should always be served in smaller quantities than those that are light and refreshing.
4. No dish should be so dominated by its herbs or spices that it will impose upon the flavours of whatever dishes are to follow it.
5. Despite the number of courses served, at the end of the meal, no guest should feel they have eaten too much.
6. The sequence of wines, the selection of which should be guided either by the Chef or the *Sommelier*, should be selected with as much care as the courses themselves.

A SLICE OF THE PARK

From The Park Hotels ' creators of cuisine



This page Full bodied and succulent olives make the concept of *mezze* (or little bites) a favourite at The Park Hotels



THE PARK SPOTLIGHT

A birds-eye view of the monarchs of style

AUDIO ASHRAM ←

Started by New Delhi-based Nikhel Kumar Mahajan aka Sattayananda and top fashion model Joey Matthew, Audio Ashram is a spiritual journey across soundscapes of the world. The in-house label has already produced two albums, *The Middle Path* by Saatvik Sequencers and *We Are Not Alone* by Shiva Central. The company hopes to give emerging alternative/world/electronic music talent the platform it deserves with a widespread distribution network of conventional and unconventional outlets. With events like Electro Funk at Tabula Rasa, Sunrise Festival (Goa) and Atmos India Tour (Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata), to name a few, Audio Ashram has opened up a new dimension of experiential music for the Indian audience. Performing at Europe's biggest electronic music festivals, Sattayananda's rich ambient tunes have put India on the electronica map of the world. Audio Ashram has also recorded with several acclaimed artistes including Shubha Mudgal, Amaan & Ayaan Ali Khan, and Pandit Ajay Prasanna.

www.audioashram.com



audioashram



YOUNG ZUBAAN

Young Zubaan speaks the simple and startlingly imaginative tongue children love and respond to. Beautifully illustrated and thoughtfully spun for young and fertile minds by adult authors, the intrinsically Indian stories appeal to readers beyond borders. Meet *The Glum Peacock* who loses his colours, the baby crocodile whose jaws refuse to go *Pchak-Pchak* and many such delightful characters in these vibrant pages. Besides titles by renowned writers and artists like Tabish Khair and Anitha Balachandran, Young Zubaan nurtures a new crop of talent too, from *desi* versions of fantasy by Payal Dhar, to offbeat characters in Vandana Singh's Chotechacha series (also translated into Hindi). Then there's non-fiction like *Flying High - Amazing Women and their Success Stories* by Zubaan editor Anita Roy, and the helpful *A-Z Problem Solver* by Reena Daruwalla. The idea grew out of a partnership between Zubaan, India's leading feminist publisher, and Apeejay Press, which believes in promoting the best of Indian visual and literary arts.

www.zubaanbooks.com



PLAY CLAN

Fed up of client briefs and mission and vision statements, the creative bunch at ILLUM, a graphic design studio, decided one day they wanted to play. They let loose a flurry of doodles that soon found their way onto t-shirts, sneakers, bags, lamps and the homes of India's design elite. That was the genesis of Play Clan, the curious and mad new face of urban art in India. A small design team with big creative ideas that they offer to the world now from their shop in Select Citywalk Mall, Delhi, the Clan describes itself as 'designers, artists, illustrators, dreamers, writers and beer drinkers, who... dream about cushions, paint on shoes, transform art into shirts and discover ideas while walking on the streets.' Winner of Elle Décor's EDIDA Award, Play Clan was invited to participate in the Ambiente Fair, Frankfurt. Play Clan aims to become a creative community encouraging ideas with spunk and, of course, originality. Everyone's welcome at the Play Clan - to make their art your own or your art theirs.

www.theplayclan.com

VED GUPTA

Remember the 'punch-me' dolls you played with as a child? Now imagine fibre glass versions of them, dwarves dressed as *babus* and corporate manipulators, representing one artist's comments on class exploitation. That's how Ved Gupta's mind works - his first collection juxtaposes these squat figures with beautiful, life-sized ones of oppressed workers. Originally from a small town in Bihar, Ved worked as a labourer, and then with a master sculptor in Pilani, Rajasthan. He then studied Fine Art from the M.S. University, Vadodara. After graduating, he's been part of various exhibitions, including Ltd. Edn, Gallery Threshold, New Delhi (2007-08); Urgent:10 ml of Contemporary Needed by FICA at Vadhera Art Gallery, New Delhi (2008); and Peep-Show, Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai (2006), among others. He was one among the five artists from India to showcase under the Best of Discovery section at the Shanghai Contemporary Art Fair this year. He's also won several awards including the H.K. Kejriwal Award (2007) and the Kashi Award for Visual Art (2007).

http://www.gallerythreshold.com/ved-gupta_delhi_08.html



SITA SINGS THE BLUES - NINA PALEY

Nina Paley ('America's best-loved unknown cartoonist') read her first copy of the Ramayana while living with her husband in Trivandrum. When she was dumped by him via email, she sat at her computer and turned her tragedy into possibly the wittiest and most unapologetically feminist telling of the mythological tale of Sita - 'the greatest break-up story ever told'. Watch it for the terrific fusion of Indian, Western and anime art, Sita crooning the blues (sung by 1920s jazz singer Annette Henshaw) and clever humour among the NRI narrators who are quirkily represented by Indonesian shadow puppets. Besides her experimental comic strips and comic books, Nina makes short films for children and adults. She now teaches at Parson's School of Design in New York. It took her five years to release *Sita Sings the Blues* without the support of big banners. True to her belief in the free culture movement, the film is free to watch, download and share at www.sitasingstheblues.com



THE BANYAN

It was a small encounter with a homeless and mentally ill woman disoriented in the dizzying traffic of Haddows Road, Chennai, that sowed the seeds of The Banyan. Vandana Gopikumar, then a Masters student of Medical and Psychiatric Social Work, didn't avert her eyes from the unclad soul like the crowds around her, and held out her hand. She and her friend Vaishnavi Jaykumar (an MBA student) knocked on the doors of several NGOs but no one wanted the responsibility. The two 22 year old visionaries transformed their disillusionment into a movement, abandoning promising corporate careers. They started the first Banyan *adaikalam* (home) in a tiny rented three-bedroom house. After rehabilitating and reaching out to almost two thousand women in 15 years, The Banyan today has grown into a huge state-of-the-art rehabilitation center and transit home. Walking in, you see happy faces and healthy bodies, healed by the shelter, therapy and care this restful place provides. A truly inspiring story of small beginnings that make a big difference!

www.thebanyan.org

THE PARK SCOOP

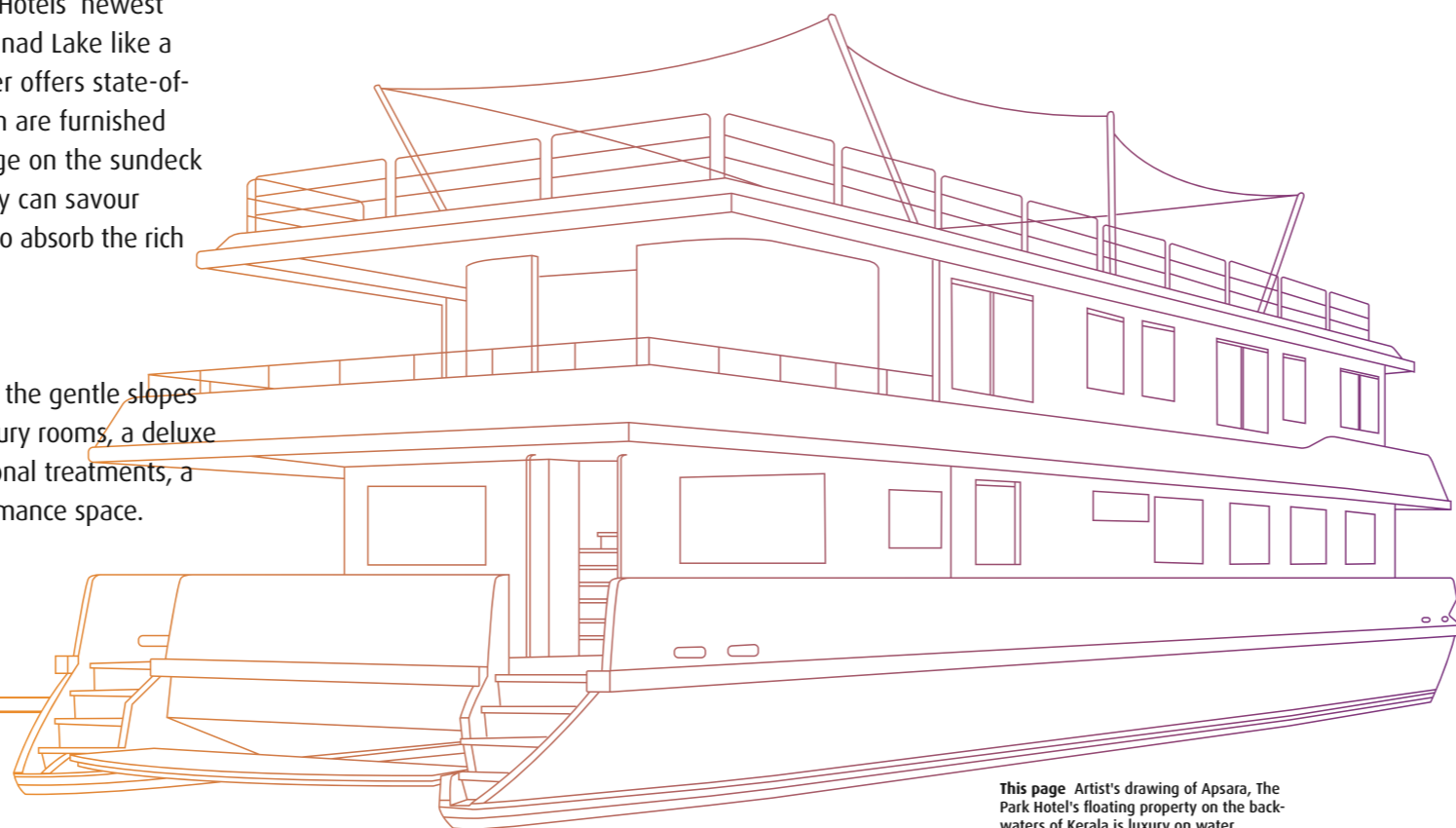
What's New • Accolades • Happenings

APSARA – Heaven on Water

The Park Hotels take their unique blend of contemporary style, luxury and constant product and service innovation to a new medium. Apsara, The Park Hotels' newest property, glides through the tranquil backwaters of Kerala's Vembanad Lake like a little slice of heaven on water. This 8-cabin, two-level luxury cruiser offers state-of-the-art facilities in the compact and beautifully styled cabins which are furnished with veneer, rich leather, silk and natural cottons. Guests can lounge on the sundeck of the 28 m boat, watching panoramic tropical views glide by. They can savour authentic local Kerala food, Ayurvedic massages and guided tours to absorb the rich culture, combined with the sophistication of the yachting lifestyle.

The Park on Vembanad Lake

The Apsara will dock at a remarkable station – The Park property on the gentle slopes of the shores of the lake. This well appointed Hotel will have 10 luxury rooms, a deluxe suite, a tented spa where guests can enjoy Ayurvedic and international treatments, a gym, a restaurant and bar, a pool with a deck and bar, and a performance space.



This page Artist's drawing of Apsara, The Park Hotel's floating property on the backwaters of Kerala is luxury on water

Top The famous fishing nets of Kochi at sunset

Photo
Ayan Ghosh
www.ayanghosh.com

PUBLISHED RACK RATE TARIFFS 2009/10

MV Apsara

Nov 15, 09 – Apr 30, 10

Check-in time: 1pm Check-out time: 12noon

Single Occupancy INR Rs 90,000 APAI Double Occupancy INR Rs 99,000 APAI

Third person/extra bed option is not available on board. The above rates are for 3 nights/4 days sailing, on APAI basis, inclusive of two-way airport transfers, luxury accommodation on board MV Apsara, all meals, happy hours (complimentary drinks & cocktails on select pouring brands) and all taxes. Compulsory supplement for Dec 24 & 31, 09: INR Rs 10,000 + 15% Luxury Tax per person extra, inclusive of special entertainment, complimentary premium drinks and gala buffet dinner.

The Park on Vembanad Lake

Nov 15, 09 – Apr 30, 10

Check-in time: 1pm Check-out time: 12noon

Period	Deluxe Lake View Rooms	Luxury Lake View Rooms
Nov 15, 09 – Nov 30, 09	INR Rs 15,000	INR Rs 17,500
Dec 1, 09 – Dec 22, 09	INR Rs 17,500	INR Rs 20,000
Dec 23, 09 – Jan 6, 10	INR Rs 25,000	INR Rs 27,500
Jan 7, 10 – Feb 28, 10	INR Rs 17,500	INR Rs 20,000
Mar 1, 10 – Apr 30, 10	INR Rs 15,000	INR Rs 17,500

Period	The Vembanad Room	The Vembanad Suite
Nov 15, 09 – Nov 30, 09	INR Rs 20,000	INR Rs 22,500
Dec 1, 09 – Dec 22, 09	INR Rs 22,500	INR Rs 25,000
Dec 23, 09 – Jan 6, 10	INR Rs 30,000	INR Rs 35,000
Jan 7, 10 – Feb 28, 10	INR Rs 22,500	INR Rs 25,000
Mar 1, 10 – Apr 30, 10	INR Rs 20,000	INR Rs 22,500

All rates are on a per night basis, for a minimum 2 nights stay, on EP [room-only] basis, on single/double occupancy. Third person in-room: INR Rs 2,500. Up to 2 children under 12 years complimentary in parents room. Compulsory supplement for Dec 24 & 31, 09: INR Rs 10,000 per person extra, inclusive of special entertainment, complimentary premium drinks and gala buffet dinner. 15% Luxury Tax extra on all the above rates.

Special Holiday and Spa Packages for 3 night stays & over are also available. The MV Apsara can also be hired on an exclusive basis for personalized sailing itineraries, company offsite meetings and other special occasions.

For more details and reservations, log on to www.theparkhotels.com or email resv.vl@theparkhotels.com



ItALIA, New Delhi

The celebrated, award winning restaurant ItALIA from The Park, Bangalore opens in New Delhi at DLF Place, Vasant Kunj. ItALIA offers traditional Italian cuisine in a sophisticated setting inspired by the collision of rustic simplicity and glamour.

The restaurant is divided into distinct spaces, each with a unique personality and design feel. The Café is an understated room which, with its white brick walls and timber beams, gives a sense of being in a barn. The terrace with its relaxed collection of sofas, terrace chairs and tables is great for an outdoor option. The fine dining restaurant and bar float in front of a curved screen of gold mosaic panels. A private dining room opens off the main restaurant and is characterized by large wine racks and magnificent mirror panelling.

Executive Chef Mandaar Suktankar who has worked with Chef Antonio Carluccio at the Neal Street Restaurant, London & The Park, Bangalore, has created a delicious and extensive menu that is an ode to authentic, flavourful Italian cooking. Guests can choose from a selection of pizzas, *paninis* and bar snacks. Imported *proscutti* and *parmesan*, pizzas baked in wood-fired ovens, exquisite fresh seafood, delicate home made pastas and a wide range of vegetarian items set off the gourmand's taste buds. Expect to see some interesting takes on the food, sharing *crostini* platters, Italian house wines, *grappa* and an invigorating selection of liqueurs.



This page The ItALIA in New Delhi offers authentic Italian cuisine in a space that is at once contemporary and rooted in tradition

X S AT THE PARK HOTELS

History + Geography + Art + Craft + Culture + People

This Page This striking pillar is created by artisans trained in the ancient wood carving art of the Hoysala Period with influences from the Khajuraho style. The intricately detailed black teak structure sets off the starkly contemporary lobby of The Park, Bangalore