

3

THE STRUGGLE OF SEWER WORKERS DOWN UNDER

400+ deaths due to manual scavenging have been reported between 2017-2023

4

THE CITY'S PET CARE HAS COME A LONG WAY

Pets are receiving better, faster, and more precise care, ensuring longer, healthier lives

5

FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS DURING AMIPHORIA-2025

The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams

10

COLOUR YOUR HAIR, PAINT YOUR STORY

People choose to dye their hair is to express their personality



Pictures: **ASHKA JAIN**

PEDALLING FOR A LIVING

Rickshaws fall victim to battery

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Pedalling for a living: Rickshaws fall victim to battery

During COVID-19 lockdown, many rickshaw pullers in Lucknow, to sustain their livelihoods transitioned to selling vegetables and fruits.

A study conducted in 2019 on 75 rickshaw pullers in Lucknow revealed that over 90% were landless and engaged in menial work.

Most of the rickshaw pullers often reside in poor dwellings, lacking basic civic amenities.



ASHKA JAIN

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

Urban development fosters progress and creates new opportunities, yet it also marginalizes certain groups. Among the most brutal hit are the rickshaw pullers, men who once had a steady livelihood, now struggling to survive in cities like Lucknow. For over a decade, cycle rickshaws were lifelines for short-distance travel across India. These human-powered, cheap and non-polluting vehicles employed thousands of workers migrating from the rural areas.

A rickshaw puller's day starts before sunrise and ends late at night, pedalling through busy streets, carrying passengers and earning enough to get by. Most of them don't even own rickshaws. They rent them for a daily fee. On good days, they make around Rs. 200-300, but after paying rent and expenses, they are barely left with any money.

Shri Ram Lal Yadav, a 32-year-old rickshaw puller in old Lucknow, voiced his challenges to Expressions, stating: "Koi sawaari hi nahi milti hai jaldi, sab log wo E-Rickshaw mein chalte hain,

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Those who have carried the weight of the city on their backs for decades should not be forgotten in the rush towards modernization
 ”

humara to kya hai din ka 100- 200 kama lein to kaam chal jata hai.” Lucknow, like many other cities, is experiencing rapid transformation. Several roads in the city have restricted their entry to streamline traffic flow.

The rise of auto-rickshaws, e-rickshaws and app-based cab services such as Ola, Uber and Rapido has further hit them hard. While the government promotes e-rickshaws as a cleaner and better alternative, rickshaw pullers who cannot afford these battery-operated vehicles, are left struggling.

These rickshaw pullers are not only treated poorly by authorities but also by the common public. They face constant harassment from traffic police, who impose fines on them or at times confiscate their vehicles. Then there is hitting and verbal abuse too.

Passengers bargain hard, offering unreasonably low fares ignoring all the hard work put in by them. Many areas in Lucknow such as Hazratganj and Hussainganj, which were once hubs for rickshaw pullers are slowly disappearing. New malls, corporate offices, cafes and restaurants have now replaced the old markets, leaving no place for this old-fashioned mode of transport.

Rickshaw pullers in Lucknow and other cities are facing an existential crisis as modern transport takes over. Their struggle is not just about losing a job but about losing dignity, stability, and a means to feed their families. A truly developed city grows without leaving its poorest residents behind. Lucknow must find a balance between progress and compassion—ensuring that those who have carried the weight of the city on their backs for decades are not forgotten in the rush toward modernization. ■

BREATHING POISON

The struggle of sewer workers down under

AAROHI SEEM

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

In the labyrinth beneath our streets, an unseen workforce toils relentlessly. Sewer workers, despite playing a crucial role in maintaining public hygiene and sanitation, are largely overlooked, their struggles buried under layers of societal neglect.

Sewer workers, often referred to as manual scavengers, are responsible for cleaning, repairing, and maintaining underground drainage systems. Their work is physically demanding and often dangerous, exposing them to toxic gases, harmful bacteria, and hazardous waste.

Coming from marginalized communities, sewage workers perform one of the most dangerous jobs in urban sanitation. Constant exposure to methane, ammonia, and other toxic gases leads to respiratory issues, skin infections, and even long-term organ damage.

Meena Kumari, 42-year-old, one of the sewer workers cleaning the sewers of Krishna Nagar, expressing her grief, stated, "My husband died last year from a lung infection he got while working as a sewer worker in this locality. To arrange proper meals for my two children, now I clean drains. I struggle to pay rent as I get only 4500 per month. There are times when I skip meals so that my children can eat."

Many workers suffer from chronic respiratory diseases and skin infections due to toxic gases, exposure to harmful bacteria and the constant threat of suffocation.

Shyam Tiwari, another worker cleaning the sewers of Sringer Nagar, expressed his concern about the poor health conditions faced by him and many others from his job. He said, "My lungs have weakened due to the toxic gases I inhale daily, but due to financial struggles I can't afford a proper treatment."

Last week, one of my team members died due to a bacterial infection. The amount we earn is not enough to support our families, especially when the medical bills pile up." Despite the Prohibition of



Picture: AAROHI SEEM

Bandicoot Robots are introduced in cities like Chennai, Hyderabad, and Lucknow to reduce manual intervention in sewer cleaning.

According to research, 400+ deaths due to manual scavenging have been reported between 2017-2023.

70% of sewer workers in India belong to marginalized Dalit community, facing extreme social stigma.

Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act 2013, which banned hazardous cleaning without protective gear and proper equipment, cases of sewer workers dying from asphyxiation continue to surface.

Working in the same locality and struggling with similar issues. Manoj Mishra talked about his 26 years of experience in this dangerous job. He stated, "Been in this job for 26 years, now my eyesight is weak, and I get dizzy often due to the chemicals. Salaries are nev-

er on time and pension is a dream. My wife works as a domestic help to help us survive. I am more worried about the marriage of my two daughters because saving money is impossible for us with such meager earnings."

Lucknow has modernised, and it's important to acknowledge and support those who keep the city lifeline functional. Society must recognise sewer workers not just as labourers but as human beings who deserve dignity, protection, and opportunities for a better future. ■

Paws & Progress



The city's pet care has come a long way

SUPRIYA SRIVASTAVA

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

In recent years, Lucknow has seen a considerable shift in pet care trends. With evolving urban lifestyles and pets becoming integral family members, awareness of canine health and well-being is quite high now. From specialist therapies to grooming services and physiotherapy, pet care in the city has never been so extensive.

"For a long period, there were little technological advancements in this field, but now, we're seeing huge improvements, from powerful diagnostic devices to specialized physiotherapy procedures for pets," says Dr. Ananya Verma from MaxPetZ Veterinary Hospital.

While families and individuals are increasingly investing in the well-being of their pets, a growing number of compassionate citizens and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are devoting time and resources to caring for stray animals. Dr Anuruudh, a veterinarian at Dhriti Pet Clinic in Bangla Bazar, shares how attitudes toward stray animals have changed over time. "People now don't ignore stray dogs in pain; instead, they

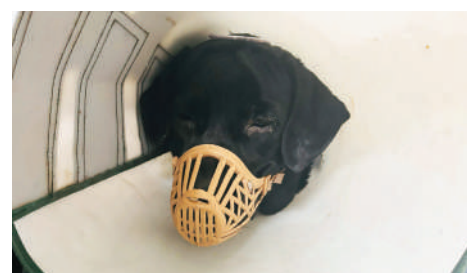
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As technology evolves and compassion grows, pets receive better, faster, and more precise care, ensuring longer, healthier lives

”

bring them to our clinic for treatment," he says. "We don't ask for money unless they willingly offer it. Many NGOs also reach out to me during emergency cases. There are no Sundays or holidays in this line of work, but I feel privileged to contribute to animal welfare." Residents of Gomti Nagar and Aliganj have organised informal groups to manage feeding drives and coordinate with veterinarians for medical care. People living in these areas have come together voluntarily, to help stray animals (most likely dogs) by ensuring they are fed regularly, along with ensuring their health and wellbeing.

Richie Saxena, a Labrador owner, told Expressions, "My dog was battling a cru-



Pictures: SUPRIYA SRIVASTAVA

ciate ligament injury, and despite our efforts, we couldn't find satisfactory treatment until I met a doctor in Gomti Nagar who informed me about the only clinic in Lucknow offering TPLO surgery, complete with hydrotherapy treadmills, laser therapy machines, and shockwave devices."

In essence, Lucknow's pet care sector is rapidly evolving, blending advanced veterinary technology with community-driven compassion. This progress ensures that both beloved pets and stray animals receive top-notch care, setting a new standard for animal welfare in the city. ■

She came, she saw, she conquered!

Female entrepreneurs during AMIPHORIA-2025

MARIA SIDDIQUI

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

We all witnessed the success and excitement of Amiphoria-2025. Over the years, this Amity University cultural event, with its electrifying performances and unforgettable experiences, has never failed to impress. The fest is a true reflection of creativity, talent and determination within our campus.

This year, amidst the wide array of stalls, two stalls stood out in particular—Hands In Art and Resinart by Fiza, both by budding women entrepreneurs. “The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.” This sentiment by Eleanor Roosevelt resonates deeply when we look at these stalls which were not just a showcase of unique products and creativity, but also a reflection of the ongoing journeys of two female entrepreneurs who not only dreamt but actively followed.

Rashi Singh, owner of Hands In Art, who is currently pursuing a B. Ed., was a creative head since childhood. She would watch her mother knit and that sparked a desire to follow in her footsteps. While

searching for knitting tutorials, Rashi stumbled upon crocheting and was instantly captivated. “Crocheting helps me with my anxiety. It keeps my hands engaged and calms me down,” she added. Her parents helped her in every way possible, with her mother often offering to help her crochet a few items.

Talking about her challenges, she finds growing her business on Instagram a real struggle. “I receive a decent number of orders through Instagram. However, if my account grows further, it will become easier to reach more customers”. This was her first time setting up a stall and the experience was incredibly rewarding. “The first day was a bit slow with only a few visitors stopping by,” she told Expressions. However, by the end of the fest, she had sold almost everything!

Entrepreneurship isn't just about starting a business. It's about creating something meaningful that reflects who you are. Fiza Khan who runs the business 'Resinart by Fiza', turned her hobby into a small business by investing a minimal amount of ₹700 only. Her first customer turned out to be her Maasi. Fiza is the sole force behind her business, from crafting each piece to packing and dispatching orders, she does it all! “In the beginning, managing orders and social

media proved to be quite challenging,” but over time, she found her rhythm. Instagram turned out to be a powerful platform, through which she has connected with countless people, turning her journey into a thriving community of supporters and customers. Looking ahead, she dreams of opening her studio and sharing her passion by teaching students the art of resin creation.

What does it take to juggle academia, extracurriculars and business, all at once? “Balancing everything can be difficult but the satisfaction of seeing happy customers makes it all worthwhile,” says Rashi Singh. “Since Hands In Art is in its growing phase, I cannot afford to reject or postpone orders, as every opportunity matters. I don't get much time to rest because I'm either working on orders or completing my assignments,” she added.

Both Rashi and Fiza, have not only set an example in women entrepreneurship but have also paved the way for others to follow their dreams. Their stories can potentially inspire others to take the leap and turn their passions into thriving businesses. With dreams of expanding their ventures, these young women entrepreneurs are just getting started and their journey is one many will be excited to follow. ■



Pictures: MARIA SIDDIQUI

Navratri: Celebrating nine nights of devotion

Navratri, with its myriad customs and rituals, embodies the essence of Indian culture. Whether through music, dance, or religious observances, the festival celebrates the divine feminine and the victory of good over evil. Each region's unique traditions contribute to a national mosaic of devotion, joy, and community, making Navratri a cherished and unifying festival across India.

Navratri, a vibrant and auspicious festival celebrated across India, spans nine nights dedicated to the worship of the goddess Durga in her various forms. Each region of the country has its unique customs and rituals, reflecting the rich tapestry of Indian culture. ■



Green or greed? Busting the myth of eco-friendly marketing tactics

MANU YADAV

Master of Advertising & Marketing Management

Step into any supermarket, and you'll see them everywhere—vibrant green labels boasting phrases like Eco-Friendly, Sustainable Choice, and 100% Natural. The packaging is adorned with lush forests, sparkling blue oceans, and cheerful animals. It feels good to grab these products off the shelf, believing you are making a responsible choice. But are you really?

Mohd. Faisal, a marketing professor, has been observing this trend for years. "Many companies seem to appear as if they care about the environment, but for a lot of them, it's merely a tactic to boost prices and profits." They slap on a green label, use some catchy phrases, and suddenly, people are ready to spend more without realizing that not much has really changed.

Consider this: businesses continue to produce toxic paints while proudly marketing lead-free paint as a safer alternative. Recycled tissue paper costs more than a regular tissue, even though both ultimately end up as waste. Organic cotton t-shirts are advertised as eco-friendly, yet a few aisles away, shelves are packed with plenty of synthetic, mass-produced garments. If businesses truly cared, wouldn't they completely revamp their systems instead of just adding a few "green" products here and there?

Zehra, a student of Advertising & Marketing Management knows first-hand what it's like to be misled. "I once bought biodegradable plastic bags, believing I was making a more environmentally friendly choice. Later, I discovered that they don't really break down, instead, they turn into microplastics, which end up polluting the environment even more. I even tried 'natural' skincare products because of their eco-friendly image, but when I checked the ingredients, I found they still had synthetic chemicals in them. It felt like I was tricked into paying more

for nothing. This is the core issue: Green marketing plays on our feelings of responsibility. It creates the illusion that we, as consumers, hold the key to saving the planet, while companies carry on with their unsustainable practices behind the scenes. People often hear about Reuse and recycling, but the key step—Reduction—is frequently overlooked in the discussion. What's the reason? Because businesses don't benefit when we purchase less. Abhishek, an environmental expert, thinks that companies should move beyond these marketing gimmicks. "For businesses to truly make an impact, they should support their promises with

genuine efforts—such as cutting down on waste, being open about their supply chains, and obtaining credible third-party environmental certifications." Sustainability should be more than just a marketing strategy; it needs to be at the heart of what they do, he added.

Until that happens, we need to be more thoughtful as consumers. The next time you come across a product that says it's "green," take a moment to think: Is this truly benefiting the planet, or is it just a clever tactic to get me to spend more? Right now, sustainability seems more about boosting profits than protecting the environment. ■

Green marketing often appears eco-friendly, but it can be misleading. Companies may use it to increase profits while simply painting their products with a 'green' label.

Deceptive

Green marketing often misleads consumers into believing they are making eco-conscious choices, while companies profit from these deceptive practices.

Schemes

Critics argue that green marketing is unnecessary; companies can promote genuine sustainability without resorting to misleading claims. However, the market is filled with such tactics.

Profit

The term 'greenwashing' refers to companies falsely claiming eco-friendliness. This practice has been prevalent for decades, yet it doesn't diminish the reality of genuine environmental efforts.



Green Marketing: A Customer Trap

Fact?

Many brands claim to be sustainable, but the reality often falls short. Consumers are left questioning what is truly eco-friendly versus what is merely a marketing ploy.

Manipulate

The trend of green marketing has faced criticism for its lack of authenticity. Many consumers are skeptical of brands that prioritize profit over genuine environmental responsibility.

False Claims

Despite the backlash against misleading green claims, the practice continues to thrive. The persistence of such tactics raises questions about consumer awareness and corporate ethics.

Eco?

Terms like 'eco-friendly' and 'sustainable' have become buzzwords, often used without substantial backing. This has led to a growing skepticism among consumers regarding their true meaning.

Infographic: MANU YADAV

From iftar feasts to sehri sips: night time is the right time

Studies show that during Ramadan, 60-70% of local eateries in prominent Lucknow areas experience a 40-50% increase in footfall, especially after Iftar.

According to a local survey, 85% of Lucknowites prefer concluding their Sehri or Iftar with a cup of chai, highlighting its cultural significance.



Pictures: RAMZI HASAN

RAMZI HASAN

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

As the holy month of Ramadan unfolds, Lucknow transforms into a city that never sleeps, especially the clock tower area near Hussainabad, Chowk. The streets, usually quiet by midnight, bustle with life till the wee hours.

The aroma of tea, biryani, shawarma, and mojitos, the sight of glowing lanterns, and the sound of heartfelt prayers fill the air. Restaurants and roadside stalls remain open till sehri, offering everything from kebabs, nihari, shahi tukda, to shikanji.

Sameer Abbas, Owner of Nihari Point near Chhota Imambara, said in an interview with expressions, "While the restaurant earns around ₹12000 per day on regular days, the profit nearly doubles to ₹25000 per day in Ramadan. The rush is incomparable. I barely get time to rest. I sleep after 6 AM and wake up around 12 noon." Just like Nihari, how can Lucknowites never let go of

the delicious Biryani? Wazeerbagh-based shopkeeper, Salim Khan, who runs Salim Madina hotel, reports an extraordinary surge in sales during this holy month. What began as a modest venture, producing just 20kg biryani daily, has now expanded to one and a half quintals, to meet the ever-growing demand!

"Managing both my business and fasting is challenging," shared Salim, while talking to Expressions. "I often break my fast at the shop itself, and there are days when the customer flow is so relentless that I even have to do sehri here." When

asked about the most popular dish, he revealed, "Awadhi Biryani, also known as Lucknow Biryani, remains a crowd favourite." His business has further extended its reach via Swiggy and Zomato, ensuring that his signature biryani is available at people's doorsteps.

While Nihari provides perfect pre-dawn sustenance, and Biryani, with

its fragrant rice and succulent flavours, reigns supreme at iftar, there is a humble yet irreplaceable element that completes the experience, tea.

As the night deepens and the heavy meals settle, a steaming cup of chai becomes a ritualistic indulgence for many. "Balancing academics and business isn't easy, especially during Ramadan," shared Aryan Mishra, a third-year LLB student at Lucknow University, who also runs a thriving tea stall named Tandoori Chai. With the surge in demand during Ramadan, Aryan extended his shop's operating hours to meet the customer flow.

"Our signature, Tandoori Chai, remains the best-selling item," he revealed. To manage the increasing demand, Aryan recently purchased 200 boxes of kulhad, each containing 150 pieces, to prevent shortages. "We need to maintain extra stock these days since demand is unpredictable, and running out of supplies is not an option," he added.

For Lucknowites, Ramadan is more than a month of fasting. It is a time of solidarity, love, and dedication. This city, recognized for its tehzeeb and culture, comes alive at night. The call for Fajr prayer signals the end of another sleepless night, and the city takes a little respite before resuming another magnificent evening of faith and togetherness. ■



Colour your hair, paint your story

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Dyeing your hair is a reminder that transformation is beautiful and always within your control

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YUVIKA SINGH

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

Hair colouring has long been a powerful form of self-expression, identity, and even rebellion. From natural hues to vibrant neon shades, the decision to dye one's hair is often deeply personal. It is more than just a physical trait. It is a powerful form of self-expression, a reflection of personality, and sometimes even a statement of individuality or cultural belonging. One of the most common reasons people choose to dye their hair is to express their personality.

Just as someone might choose a specific style of clothing, the colour of their hair can be a representation of who they are or how they feel. For instance, someone might opt for vibrant, unconventional colours like pink, blue, or green to stand out and signal creativity or rebellion.

"I went for pastel blue hair simply because I wanted to stand out. It's funny how a colour can change how you carry yourself, although my mother hated it but people suddenly started noticing me, and I felt bolder in social situations," says Ananya Goel, a College Student.

It also represents a desire for change. Hair dye provides an immediate transformation, allowing individuals to refresh their appearance and, in some cases, redefine their identity. Rohan Malhotra, a Professional Hairstylist said while talking to Expressions, "I once had a client going through a tough divorce who chose



Picture: TRILOCHAN S KALRA

Studies show that 68% of women feel more confident and attractive after dyeing their hair.

The first synthetic hair dye was created in 1863 by English chemist William Henry Perkin, who accidentally discovered mauveine (a purple dye) while attempting to create a malaria treatment.

According to a survey by Psychology Today, 60% of people admitted to dyeing their hair after a significant life event like a breakup, job change, or personal setback.

a bold copper-red shade. After the makeover, she said it felt like she was 'taking her power back.' It's moments like these that show how hair colour can be deeply empowering." Psychological studies suggest that hair colour can influence both self-perception and worldly interactions. For instance, blonde hair is often linked to a youthful approachable image while dark shades are perceived as mysterious and mature.

Fashion trends play an intense role in hair colour choices. Celebrities, influencers, and models often set hair colour trends that millions of people follow. In the last few years, pastel colours, bold blues, and vibrant reds have gained popularity, largely due to their presence in pop culture. Social media platforms like Instagram

and TikTok have also created spaces for people to showcase their coloured hair, making it a symbol of style, fun, and modernity.

Priya Saxena, a school teacher, said, "I loved experimenting with vibrant hair colours, but frequent dyeing left my hair dry and brittle. No one talks enough about the damage it can cause if you don't care for it properly. Now, I'm more mindful about balancing style with hair health."

This emphasizes a key feature of hair colouring. While it can be liberating and transforming, it also demands careful attention. From selecting the right products to preserving hair health, striking a balance between self-expression and adequate care is critical to achieving favourable outcomes. ■

Lights, Camera, Tradition!

Amiphoria 2025 showcases art in every form

BHAVNA SONI

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

Amiphoria 2025 was a resounding success, with Amity School of Communication (ASCO) making waves through two dynamic events, Reel-It and Move. While Move brought the stage to life with a fusion of monologue and movement, Reel-It tapped into the social media buzz, drawing 73 entries from budding content creators, on Amiphoria's theme: "Relive, Rejoice, and Recharge." "Coordinating Reel-it was an exhilarating experience that tested our management and creative skills. We learned how to manage an event efficiently, and handle multiple responsibilities which prepared us for any challenge that came our way," shared Khushi Gulati and Smriti Singh, Student Coordinators for Reel-It. Curated for engagement, originality and content, the final show on

Amiphoria's second day was judged by Mr Maroof Culmen, a renowned social media influencer known for his engaging and relatable content, alongside Mr Aftab Alam, Mr Naval Shukla, and Mr Arun Trivedi. After an intense evaluation of the top ten reels selected from Round 1, Ms Maria Siddiqui secured first place, winning a cash prize of ₹1500 and coupons from three stalls. Mohammad Adnan was declared the runner-up, receiving a cash prize of ₹500, followed by Amitesh Malhotra as the second runner-up, who also won ₹500 in cash and coupons from one stall.

ASCO's event went beyond entertainment and talent showcases. In a surprise entry, a special guest performer, Raju Behrupiya, was invited to perform. Behrupiya, a traditional art, was once a celebrated form of entertainment. However, it has been fading over the past few years. The art form of Behrupiya, which involves setting aside personal struggles, dressing in eccentric costumes, and bringing laughter to others for just a few

coins, is undoubtedly a challenging profession. Recognizing the challenges and gradual disappearance of this craft, the Amity School of Communication took the initiative to provide a platform to "Raju Behrupiya". With his comical attire and humorous dialogue delivery, Raju Behrupiya had the crowd roaring with laughter, proving that this centuries-old art form still has the power to engage and entertain. He concluded his performance by expressing his heartfelt gratitude to the organizing team, for giving him what he cherished the most—love and appreciation of the audience.

The second event, MOVE, was a unique fusion of dance and monologue, where participants had to portray a Bollywood character. Students first submitted audition videos, from which the top 10 finalists were selected to perform on the final day, March 6. The stage dazzled with diverse characters from the courageous monologue and energetic dance of Peshwa Bajirao, to the comedy of Meenaamma from Chennai Express.

The spotlight shone brightest on Bhavna Soni, who captivated the audience as Zohra Bai, claiming first place; a cash prize of ₹2500. Rainy Sinha, portraying Meenaamma, secured the second spot, followed by Rizwana Akhtar as Manjulika. The thunderous applause and enthusiastic audience engagement were clear indicators of the event's success. Student coordinators, Aarohi Seem and Sanskriti Sharma reflected on the meticulous planning behind Move.

Faculty coordinators, Dr Alisha Syedain and Mr Shivanshu Pathak, through their dedicated efforts, ensured the seamless planning and execution of both events, under the guidance and support of Director and Professor, Dr Sanjay Mohan Johri. The event wrapped up with a vote of thanks and the award ceremony. The two events, like most others, reinforced Amiphoria 2025 as a celebration of talent, resilience and artistic expression. ■



Pictures: ABHISHEK SINGH

REMINISCING THE LOST TRADITION

*Fagun aaya, par faag
kho gaya*

“

With changing patterns of celebration, we witness a gradual shift from embracing the warmth of faag geet to bouncing on the DJ beats

”



Picture: BHAVNA SONI

BHAVNA SONI

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

As Holi, the festival of colours approaches, the air across India fills with joy and music. However, before the grand celebration of Holi, there is a lesser-known yet deeply rooted tradition, known as Faag.

Once an integral part of rural India, this pre-Holi festival is now overshadowed by modernised Holi parties that focus more on revelry than cultural significance. Faag, traditionally observed in North India, particularly in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh, is more than just a festival; it is a poetic and musical expression of devotion and community bonding.

The term Faag originates from Phalgun, the Hindu calendar month in which Holi falls. Historically, this period was marked by Faag geet (folk songs) dedicated to Lord Krishna and Radha, celebrating divine love and the spirit of spring.

Accompanied by traditional instruments like dholak and manjira, these soulful songs were sung in village gatherings where both young and old participated. Men and women, dressed in vibrant attire, played with dry gulaal and expressed emotions through melodious folk tunes, creating an atmosphere of communal harmony.

Faag was also a time when social barriers blurred, as people from all walks of life came together to celebrate the arrival of spring. For agrarian communities, it held even greater significance, marking the end of winter and the arrival of a new harvesting season, bringing hopes of prosperity. The celebration served as a form of thanksgiving to nature and deities, for a good crop.

Fast forward to today, the essence of Faag has begun to fade. While rural areas still cherish the fragments of this tradition, urban celebrations have taken a different turn. Holi in cities is now synonymous with parties, often held in clubs and resorts, focused more on DJ music, water

balloons, and synthetic colours replacing the rustic charm of folk songs and cultural rituals. The sense of community bonding has been replaced by extravagant events featuring Bollywood tracks, rain dances, and commercialized entertainment.

Umesh Jaiswal, a business owner, shared his thoughts with Expressions, "While we have moved towards urbanisation, my heart still clings to the primitive way of celebrating Holi. That's why, for the past three years, I've been organising Faag gatherings at my home, inviting all my friends who miss the warmth of faag geet." He, along with his companions, urges the younger generations to not only enjoy their modern Holi festivities but also be rooted in their old traditions.

While Holi celebrations continue to evolve, it is crucial to remember that Faag is not just an old tradition but a celebration of life, love, and community. By blending the past with the present, we can ensure that the soul of Holi remains as vibrant as its colours. ■