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THE CHANGING TONGUE OF LUCKNOW

Tehzeeb was never weakness— it was strength without noise

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The forgotten cinemas of Lucknow

The forgotten cinemas of Lucknow...



Pictures: RAMZI HASAN

RAMZI HASAN

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

Lucknow, renowned for its rich heritage, culture, and food, was once also a beloved city for cinema lovers, with dozens of cinema halls spread across the city. These halls, once the pride of Lucknow, have gradually faded with time, leaving behind memories as their physical presence disappears and their exact locations become unknown to many.

Ashok Cinema, the first cinema hall in Uttar Pradesh, was opened by the British in 1935 under the name Rose Cinema. In 1964, it was renamed Ashok Cinema. The hall had a capacity of 250 people and covered over 5,000 square feet. Tickets were priced at just 25 paise, and instead of a ticket system, entry was marked by stamping people's hands. On September 10, 1989, Ashok Cinema bid farewell to its audience and has remained abandoned since then.

Similar to Ashok Cinema was the famous Gulab Cinema, located in the

streets of Golaganj. Tickets were priced at ₹2.25. With a seating capacity of 90-100 people and four daily shows, it wasn't huge. Today, Gulab Cinema exists only in memory, having been replaced by a wedding venue in 2024.

Anand Cinema, one of the oldest in Lucknow, was originally called Elphinston Cinema during British rule. Anand Cinema no longer functions as a theatre instead, it now houses multiple clothing stores.

Odean Chauraha, near Hussainganj, takes its name from Odean Cinema, formerly known as Minarwa Cinema, built between 1949 and 1950. The cinema went silent after 1992, with its legacy living on only through the chauraha's name. Close to Odean was the Basant Cinema, built between 1947 and 1948. The area now known as Naza Market, famous for electronics and laptop accessories, occupies its former location. Further ahead stood Mayfair Cinema, opposite the Cathedral Church. It never had an elevated balcony but had a rear section called the Dress Circle, accessed via wide stairs. Seating just under 500, the first

English film screened was a Laurel & Hardy comedy.

Mayfair was a hub for British entertainment, screening only English movies initially. Mayfair later showed a mix of English and Hindi films during a time when the city's cinema landscape was shifting from single halls to multiplexes. In 1996, the cinema closed abruptly with a notice that it was "closed for goods."

Near Hazratganj Chauraha was the Capital Cinema, built by the prominent Raja Rajkumar Bhargava family. During British rule, it primarily screened Hollywood films as Indians were barred from attending Hazratganj cinemas. After independence, Indian patrons were welcomed. Tickets cost ₹3. It closed around 2010 and was converted into a guest house by 2011.

The cinema halls that once held a special place in every Lucknowite's heart now survive only in memory. While IMAX, INOX, and PVR dominate the modern cinema scene, few remember the unique vibe and cultural significance of these old halls that were once the lifeblood of Lucknow's entertainment world. ■

Hazratganj- where chaat meets memory!

“

We turned off the main road and stopped at this quiet little stall, Bombay Bhel. He ordered Papdi Chaat and Sev Puri like he had a hundred times before. That was my first bite—but not the last.

”

YUVIKA SINGH

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

Tucked near Sahara Ganj Mall, away from Hazratganj's usual din—auto horns, shop calls, the scent of roasted corn—is a small food stall I keep returning to. No flashy signs, no branding—just a man, a cart, and a crowd that never seems to leave.

“Bhaiya, ek plate le lo—mooch meetha ho jayega!”

He says it warmly, scooping chutney onto a papdi, half-watching the next customer. It's not marketing. It's familiarity—like he's been expecting you.

I didn't stumble upon this place. My father brought me here once, saying, “I want to show you something.” We turned off the main road and stopped at this quiet little stall, Bombay Bhel. He ordered Papdi Chaat and Sev Puri like he had a hundred times before. That was my first bite—but not the last.

The Papdi Chaat was everything at once—crispy, soft, spicy, cool, and tangy. Each layer—papdi, potato, curd, chutneys, onion, masala—carefully assembled. You couldn't talk while eating—it demanded silence and focus. The Sev Puri followed; delicate puris stuffed with potatoes and topped with chutneys and a cloud of Sev. It was messy, loud, and unforgettable.

But what lingers isn't just the food.



Picture: YUVIKA SINGH

It's him—the vendor.

Kind eyes, calm hands, no rush. He remembers faces, and asks, “Teekha kam karoon?” without prompting. I've seen him toss a broken papdi and start over. No shortcuts. Just quiet pride in his craft, in making every plate matter.

There's never space to park. Bikes idle, people double-park, and circle the block. No one minds. School kids, college groups, couples, officegoers, and even

elderly regulars gather here. The stall doesn't advertise. It simply is. And once you eat here, it stays with you—not just the taste, but the feeling.

I still go back. Not always hungry, sometimes just to stand and watch. In a city that never stops, this stall does. And that's what makes it unforgettable. It becomes part of your personal map of the city, one of those rare places that feel like home—even if only for a few minutes. ■

Missiles and Mindsets

Lucknow's transformation with BrahMos



Picture: MANU YADAV

MANU YADAV

Master of Advertising & Marketing Management

For centuries, Lucknow represented elegance, celebrated for its royal legacy, literary charm, and enduring architectural beauty. However, a new wave of pride is rising in Uttar Pradesh, as the city gears up to unveil one of India's most cutting-edge defence installations: the BrahMos missile manufacturing unit.

BrahMos, born from the partnership between India and Russia, stands as the fastest supersonic cruise missile globally, able to hit targets more than 400 kilometres away at speeds approaching three times that of sound. With its precision guidance and innovative fire-and-forget technology, BrahMos stands as a pivotal element in India's strategic defence landscape. For the very first time, these missiles are set to be assembled and produced in Lucknow, placed within the Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor.

The expansive site covers almost 200 acres and is projected to produce 80-100 missiles annually. Yet, aside from the statistics, the effects are already resonating in the community.

"Lucknow has long been celebrated for its rich culture and history, but we are now embracing a new era. It fills me with pride, not only as a resident but also as a

Missiles and Mindsets: Lucknow's Transformation with BrahMos

Location Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh	
Inauguration Date May 11, 2025	
Annual Capacity 80-100 missiles (up to 150 NG variants)	
Investment ₹300 crore	
Range 290-400 km	
Speed Up to Mach 2.8	
Job Creation 500 direct, thousands indirect	

citizen of this great nation, to know that something as formidable as the BrahMos missile will be produced right here," shares Raghav Singh, a schoolteacher.

This project is set to revolutionise the local economic landscape. Numerous direct and indirect employment opportunities will emerge, particularly for engineers, skilled technicians, and suppliers. Institutions are rolling out tailored programmes, and learners are beginning to view defence technology as a viable career option, rather than an abstract idea.

"Upon learning about the BrahMos

Our city is evolving beyond its historical roots, we're contributing to a robust and strategic initiative for the nation's defence.

Tarun

unit arriving in Lucknow, an indescribable sense of pride washed over me." "Our city is evolving beyond its historical roots, we're contributing to a robust and strategic initiative for the nation's defence," shares Tarun, a 21-year-old engineering student from Gomti Nagar.

Local enterprises in the area are thriving, property values have surged, and there's a noticeable transformation in the city's self-perception. From kebabs to command centres, Lucknow has evolved beyond its Nawabi roots - it now plays a pivotal role in India's quest for self-reliance and security.

As the first BrahMos will leave this city, it will carry not only a potent weapon but also the hopes and pride of an entire region eager to lead India into the future. ■

Wings of wonder: Stories from the Nakhaas bird market



ANUSHKA AWASTHI

BA (HONS) English

It was early Sunday morning when I decided to visit the famous bird market at Nakhaas. The air buzzed with the sound of chirps, whistles, and the occasional loud squawk. As I approached the market, it felt like stepping into a living symphony of feathers and songs.

The market stretched through narrow lanes, lined with cages of every shape and size. Colourful parrots preened in the sunlight, pigeons cooed from their wooden homes, and small finches fluttered with restless energy. There were exotic species I had only seen in books — some with feathers so vibrant they looked almost unreal. Sellers sat beside their cages, passionately describing their birds to

curious onlookers, their hands moving animatedly, faces glowing with stories.

I stopped near an old man with a long white beard, seated quietly behind a modest setup of some cages. His birds weren't as flashy as the others, but something about them drew me in. In a small, dusty cage sat a pair of plain-looking sparrows. Curious, I asked him why he was selling such common birds when the market teemed with more glamorous ones.

He smiled warmly and said, "Beauty isn't only in colours. These sparrows are special. They were rescued after a storm last year. They survived together, cared for each other, and now they refuse to live apart." His voice carried a quiet emotion that went beyond trade. "People come here looking for bright feathers, but very few see the beauty in loyalty," he added.

I lingered, listening as he shared how the market wasn't just about selling birds — it was about sharing a connection between humans and creatures that didn't speak our language, yet conveyed so much through presence alone.

Further down the alley, a young boy of about ten was passionately bartering for a bright green budgie. Clutching a few crumpled notes, he pleaded with the seller, who finally relented. The boy's eyes lit up as he gently cradled the cage, whispering promises of care and companionship.

Walking away from Nakhaas that day, I realised the bird market was more than just a place of commerce. It was a mosaic of stories — of hope, survival, loyalty, and dreams. In every flutter of wings and every chirp, there was a tale waiting to be heard. ■

BADA MANGAL



Congratulations, you are hired! Or not?

ASHKA JAIN

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

Priya, a final-year engineering student, discovered an internship offer on LinkedIn a few months ago. The company offered flexible hours, remote employment, and a monthly stipend of ₹15,000, which made it sound too good to be true! The HR manager's profile appeared genuine, featuring a well-designed corporate page and hundreds of contacts. Priya was given an offer letter following a brief WhatsApp interview, and she was asked to pay a ₹500 'registration fee.' She transferred the amount since she trusted the process. To her shock, she was never contacted thereafter. The contact blocked her, and the company page vanished. This is not a single occurrence. Fake hiring has become increasingly common on platforms like LinkedIn, Internshala and other popular platforms. These scammers prey on the desperation and hope of students, freshers, and sometimes even experienced professionals, especially in competitive job markets.

As more and more people are turning to online platforms to find jobs, internships etc., they have found new ways to exploit this digital dependence. These platforms provide simple access to a large number of job searchers. Therefore, scammers who pretend to be recruiters, HR managers, or company representatives, create lucrative profiles. Nowadays, deceptive profiles on LinkedIn, a site recognised for professional networking, are frequently utilised to attract applicants. The number of reported instances of fraudulent organisations promoting alluring internships has also increased on Internshala, a network mostly used by students and recent graduates for internships. Usually, they follow a pattern where a job or internship with appealing benefits such as good pay, flexible working hours, and minimal qualifications is posted. Right after, they skip formal interviews. Instead, they conduct short chats over WhatsApp or Telegram and then immediately



Illustration: ABHISHEK SINGH

- Over 50% of job-seekers have at least once encountered a scam job post while searching for a job online.
- LinkedIn removed over 100,000 fake job lists globally in 2022.
- Internshala receives over 500 scam report Emails monthly.
- 85% of fake job scams target students and fresh graduates.

issue an offer letter so that their cover is not blown. Once the candidates start trusting the company, they are asked to pay a small fee for training, background verification, or account setup. Once the payment is made, the fraudsters either vanish or continue extracting more money until the victim realises that it was a scam. With many job-seekers and fewer opportunities, people are in a hurry to accept offers without verifying the source or the terms and conditions. Legitimate

companies never ask for any joining charges. Freshers though, believe it is normal to pay some fee. Job hunters must remain alert at all times. Even though websites like LinkedIn and Internshala check and eliminate fraudulent posts, some may slip through. The first line of defence is awareness. You can prevent both money loss and emotional misery by learning to recognise the warning signs and conducting your research before accepting an offer. ■

War on the border, battle in media stations!

Is it all about sensationalism and TRP, who should the general audience trust?

BHAVNA SONI

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

The town of Pahalgam on 22 April shook in terror when the bullets of the resistance front (TRF), a shadow group of banned Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terror group tore through the hearts of innocents who were just enjoying a peaceful vacation with their families, in their motherland. The innocent killings in Pahalgam were soon all over the television covered by news channels. Social media platforms were not far behind. India's response through Operation Sindoor was a befitting one, felt painfully by Pakistan, and seen and heard by the world. While our soldiers and forces were battling on the field, news agencies, television channels and social media platforms were busy disseminating information, truth, facts, misinformation and sensationalism. The fervour of nationalism (often translating into jingoism) and the desire to control the narrative during Operation Sindoor led to the widespread dissemination of misinformation by both Pakistani and Indian media outlets, as well as individual journalists. This phenomenon blurred the lines between fact and fiction, exacerbating an already tense situation.

The initial wave of false information largely emanated from Pakistani social media accounts, both verified and unverified, eager to portray Pakistan's response to India's actions as robust and effective. As the situation evolved, misinformation began emanating from Indian sources as well. Worryingly, several prominent Indian news outlets, including ABP, Zee News, and Aaj Tak, broadcast footage from the 2023 Israeli airstrikes in Gaza, misrepresenting those as footage from the ongoing operation.

The spread of misinformation during Operation Sindoor was significantly influenced by three interconnected factors: the media's urgency to break news, the rapid amplification of content via social media,



and inadequate verification processes within certain media organisations. Firstly, the intense competition among news outlets to deliver breaking news often led to the publication of unverified or misleading information. This haste compromised journalistic standards, resulting in the dissemination of inaccuracies that fueled public confusion and anxiety. Secondly, social media platforms such as X, Facebook, and Instagram played a pivotal role in rapidly disseminating content. The viral nature of these platforms allowed misinformation to spread widely before fact-checking could occur, exacerbating the challenge of controlling false narratives. Lastly, some media organisations lacked stringent verification processes, leading to the publication of misleading or false information. The absence of rigorous fact-checking protocols made these outlets susceptible to disseminating unverified claims, further complicating the information landscape during the operation. Amid the plethora of social media platforms actively disseminating information, a name, Prafful Garg, emerged at the top, in providing the most apt and fact-checked information. With over a million followers on Instagram, Garg has utilised his platform to provide curated, fact-checked updates on national

security, foreign policy, and the ongoing military operation. Recognising the dangers of unverified information, Garg shifted his approach, relying solely on credible sources such as official government statements, verified Press Information Bureau (PIB) releases, and reputable news outlets. He emphasised the importance of accuracy over speed. According to data from Social Blade, his follower count increased from approximately 1,217 on April 23, 2025, to over 1.15 million by May 10, 2025. This remarkable growth of nearly 1.15 million followers in just over two weeks underscores the impact of his efforts in providing accurate and timely information during the operation.

A country's internal situation is not only harmed by external war but also harmed if critical pillars such as news agencies, TV channels and social media do not work hand in hand in providing facts to the people. Being a tool of mass communication, it could easily influence people wrongly or rightly. Therefore, the media's role during wartime is pivotal in shaping public perception and influencing the course of events. By upholding standards of accuracy and responsibility, media outlets can contribute to informed decision-making and support efforts towards peace and resolution. ■



Metal Memory ehmaan

The PAANDAAN lives on

SHRUTI KAPOOR

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

In the winding gullies of old Lucknow, where time seems to pause between the fragrance of rosewater and the rustle of chikankari, a soft clink breaks the silence— metal meeting chisel in the hands of a man carving memory into brass. This is not noise. It is music. The last verse of a dying song. It is Naqqashi — the delicate, hand-engraved art once etched into the very rhythm of Awadhi life.

The paandaan— a metal box to store betel leaves and their aromatic companions — was once a fixture in every respectable household. More than a container, it was a symbol of grace, leisure,

and refined etiquette. To open a paandaan was to open a chapter on culture — paan folded with cardamom, clove, and lime; conversation sweetened with tradition. The paandaan stood on wedding daises, rested in bridal trousseaus, and was placed before guests like a signature of hospitality. And upon this humble object, artists poured their souls.

Naqqashi transformed each paandaan into a unique canvas — etched with paisleys, flora, curling vines, and sometimes poetry. No two were alike. Every line was carved by memory, not stencil; every design carried a whisper of its maker's hand. It was art passed from ustad to shagird, father to son, in a city where beauty was never rushed. But beauty has become inconvenient in a hurried world.

"In the narrow lanes of Lucknow,"

says Rajesh Kumar Verma, his eyes fixed on a brass sheet, "There still lives an art." His fingers move not just with skill, but with memory. "These days, most paandaans are factory-made," he says with a quiet sigh.

Rajesh is among the last of Lucknow's naqqashi artisans. Every day, he carves three or four paandaans, earning just ₹50 per piece. The intricacy remains; the appreciation, less so. "I'm doing what I can to keep this craft alive," he says, with quiet dignity.

Mohammad Rashid Jamaal, 80, sitting cross-legged near Akbari Gate, recalls, "Paan isn't something we just consume—it's something we cherish." His voice carries the warmth of evenings long gone. "It's a symbol of hospitality, of culture, of refined leisure." Someone



Pictures: SHRUTI KAPOOR

beside him adds, "For us, paan is a shauq — a hobby, an indulgence — never just a habit."

But such routines have been replaced. Today, shiny boxes churned out by machines have flooded the markets. Soulless, impersonal, and easy to buy. The hand-engraved paandaan — with its subtle curves and gentle weight — has

become a rarity, often found buried in trunks or locked in old cupboards, forgotten like a song in a lost language.

In Rajesh's workshop, the light is soft, filtering through old glass. He wipes the finished paandaan with a cloth, lifting it close to the light. The design gleams — not loudly, but surely. It holds no label, no signature. But anyone who knows can

tell: this is made by hand, by memory, by someone who remembers what it means to make something slowly, beautifully.

"This," Rajesh says, looking at his creation, "is Lucknow."

And perhaps that's what's truly at stake. Not just the paandaan. Not just the engraving. But a way of being — slow, intricate, gracious. ■

From tehzeeb to tirade

The changing tongue of Lucknow

HARSH SINGH

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

Once celebrated as the 'cradle of tehzeeb'—a city where even disagreement was draped in dignity—Lucknow today is grappling with a linguistic shift that mirrors a deeper cultural changes. In its bustling streets, college corridors, and even family living rooms, respectful dialogue is steadily giving way to casual abuse.

"Pehle log lafz chunte the, ab gaaliyan bhi style ban gayi hain," says Imran Khan, a retired Urdu professor from Aminabad.

(People once chose their words carefully—now even expletives have become fashionable.)

The city that once gifted India some of its finest poets and most courteous conversationalists, now finds itself

normalising coarse language, especially among its youth.

Cultural commentators and sociolinguists attribute this transformation to a cocktail of digital influence, aggressive pop culture, and mounting social frustration. A linguistic study by the Indian Institute of Language Studies a couple of years ago, reported a 37% surge in the use of expletives among urban youth in North India, placing Lucknow among the top three cities in this trend.

From meme culture and street rap to online influencers flaunting their "no-filter" speech, aggression in the language is being rebranded as boldness, humour, or authenticity. But as author and city chronicler, Rehana Naqvi points out:

"This is not rebellion. This is erosion. Tehzeeb was never weakness—it was strength without noise." What's concerning isn't just the

use of offensive language—it's our quiet acceptance of it. Once upon a time, even a beggar in Lucknow would say, "Janab, kuchh madad ho jaaye!". Today, everyday exchanges often sound combative! Rickshaw pullers hurl abuses without hesitation. Teenagers greet each other with slurs. Social media stars from the city proudly promote their 'raw' vocabulary.

What's lost isn't just linguistic elegance, it's a collective cultural consciousness. How did we get here? Perhaps a more urgent question is: When did we stop correcting it?

The tehzeeb of Lucknow was never just about polished Urdu—it was about mutual respect, empathy, and grace in communication. If we fail to recognise the damage, we risk becoming a city known not for its living culture, but for a language of nostalgia lost in the noise. ■



MARIA SIDDIQUI

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

The recent Pahalgam attack reminded the world that, for India, every step towards peace is hard-earned. The recent attempt to breach our sovereignty, India, responded with not just retaliation, but with utmost precision.

It's natural to consider the recent attack to be a replay of what happened in 2019, when a Pakistan-sponsored suicide bomber attacked a CRPF convoy in Pulwama, killing 40 personnel. Pakistan has a long-standing history of harbouring lethal terrorist groups, with its army even arranging state funerals for the slain militants, as seen after the Indian attack on terrorist hideouts!

On the other hand, India has consistently chosen diplomacy over war, striving to resolve conflicts through dialogue, even in the face of extreme provocation.

However, enough is enough. "We can't let these attacks go unanswered. It's time to teach them a lesson," said a retired High Court judge. "We want peace but not at the cost of silence," added a high school student. The

statements echo the frustrations of many. But this isn't just about Pakistan. It's about how India, despite being surrounded by aggressive neighbours, has matured and emerged as a global player.

Late Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee once said, "We can choose our friends but not our neighbours." While this quote is highly relevant, India has so far managed the neighbours strategically.

The collapse of Myanmar's government and the rising insurgency led to a rise in refugees seeking shelter in India. This influx strained resources and pointed out that instability in neighbouring countries can directly impact India's internal dynamics.

On the other hand, countries like Bangladesh and Nepal benefited from India's humanitarian aid, and disaster relief through initiatives like BIMSTEC cooperation, but still choose to criticise us at any opportunity. Referred to as 'Big Brother', India is falsely accused of trying to interfere in their internal affairs. Still, the country has consistently stepped up, from aiding disaster-hit areas in Nepal to sheltering refugees.

India today finds itself grappling with a two-front war; on one side with

Pakistan and the other with China. Both countries have been strategically attempting to corner India by deepening their influence in neighbouring countries such as Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Nepal.

Meanwhile, the fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban regime spilt water over years of India's developmental efforts in the region.

Yet, despite this turbulent environment, India stood its moral ground and established itself as the undisputed voice of the Global South. It remains one of the fastest-growing economies in the world.

Recognising India's rising stature, the United States increasingly relies on New Delhi to serve as a counterbalance to China's surge for supremacy. Whether through defence partnerships or technology collaboration, India has only expanded its global presence.

India continues to walk on a tight-rope, time and again having to assert its sovereignty, safeguard its borders, and still, champion the cause of the developing world.

While neighbours aren't a choice, coexistence is a strategy that can work and so, India continues to navigate with strength and statesmanship. ■