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Dancing beyond boundaries

The unshakable spirit of Golden Girl

Merwin Mathias



Faith framed in golden light

Jayanth

When the final note faded after seven sleepless days, the auditorium at St Aloysius (Deemed to be University), Mangaluru, erupted in applause. On that very stage, now named 'The Golden Girl Remona Vedike', stood Remona Evette Pereira, drained yet radiant with quiet triumph.

The 22-year-old had just completed 170 hours of continuous Bharatanatyam, securing her place in the Golden Book of World Records. What began as a test of endurance became a moment of transcendence. "In that silence after the music stopped," she recalls, "I realised I hadn't just danced. I had prayed, cried, and survived."

From a small stage to world's spotlight

Remona's record marks the peak of a journey built on talent,

discipline, and faith. She began learning Bharatanatyam at the tender age of three under Guru Shrividya and performed her Rangapravesha in 2019, marking her formal debut as a solo artist. In 2022, she received the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar for excellence in art and culture.

Her artistry extends beyond the classical. She is trained in semi-classical, western, and contemporary styles, skillfully blending tradition and innovation. Yet, at the heart of her craft lies a belief that dance is not performance alone, but a form of prayer.

Born and raised in Mangaluru, Remona comes from a modest family rooted in education and faith. But as a Christian pursuing Bharatanatyam, she faced skepticism from those who questioned her choice of art. "People asked how a Christian girl could perform or break a record in this traditional dance form," she recalls. "Some comments, especially online, were painful. Even my mother was criticised for supporting me. But instead of breaking me, it made me stronger. I wanted to show that art is universal. It belongs to anyone who loves it sincerely."

Her perseverance in the midst of prejudices from naysayers shaped her identity, not as a Christian dancer, but as an artist who believes that art transcends religion, language, and boundaries.

"I realised I hadn't just danced. I had prayed, cried, and survived."

Faith, endurance, and the longest dance

Her world record performance, held from July 21 to 28, tested the limits of her body, mind, and faith. At first, excitement carried her. By the fourth day, exhaustion blurred her focus. "I started seeing things that weren't there," she remembers. "Sometimes I cried or screamed without knowing why."

Old injuries returned, turning each step into pain. "There were moments when I told my

mother and brother that I wanted to stop. But they never pressured me. They just said, 'Do what your heart says.' That gave me strength."

As the days went on, her dance began to evolve. By day, surrounded by cheering audiences, her energy soared. At night, when the hall fell silent, her movements softened and her emotions deepened. "Those hours felt personal," she says. "I wasn't performing anymore. I was praying through dance."

Inside the auditorium, time lost its meaning. Dancing in cycles of three-hour sessions with short breaks, she no longer knew whether it was day or night. "Sometimes I asked what time it was and was shocked to hear it was midnight. The hours felt endless, yet sacred."



170 hours of love for Ramona Vedike at SAU

Jayanth

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Kerala's wildlife amendment bill sparks conservation debate

Krishnapriya M

Amid backlash from environmentalists and wildlife conservationists, the Kerala Assembly passed the Wild Life Protection (Kerala) Amendment Bill, 2025 on October 8, becoming the first state in India to introduce an amendment to the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. One of the provisions of the bill allows the state to

authorise the killing, capture, or translocation of wild animals found in residential areas, overriding the Central Government's authority to make such decisions. The bill states that the Chief Wildlife Warden 'may, upon a report from the District Collector or a Chief Conservator of Forests, without delay, by order in writing and stating

the reasons therefore, permit any person to kill, tranquilise, capture or translocate such animal'. Kerala's Forest Minister A. K. Saseendran stated that the amendment aims to ensure the state government's freedom to intervene during necessary situations of human-wildlife conflicts by eliminating time-consuming procedures in the existing Central Act.



Wild elephants crossing into mainland at Wayanad, Kerala

The Hindu

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Kerala wildlife bill questioned

In the Indian context, the primary law concerning wildlife is the Wild Life (Protection) Act (WLA) of 1972. Since the 'Protection of wild animals and birds' falls on the concurrent list of the Constitution, both the central and state governments have the authority to legislate on this matter. However, in cases of conflict between the central and state laws, the union law prevails. Some key differences between the WLA, 2025 and the WLA 1972 concern emergency response and vermin declaration. According to the 1972 Act, the killing of a dangerous animal requires a permit from the Chief Wildlife Warden (CWW) only under specific circumstances and procedures. However, the Kerala amendment empowers the CWW to immediately order the killing of wild animals causing harm in human habitats. Declaring an animal in the Schedule II as vermin under section 62 removes its protection from hunting. The 1972 Act grants this authority only to the Central government, whereas the Kerala Amendment allows the state to temporarily declare a Schedule II animal as vermin for up to six months in specific areas, based on expert reports and studies.

The effect on wildlife conservation

Several environmentalists have slammed the move, calling it unscientific and a dangerous precedent that legalises reckless killings. Coexistence Collective Kerala, a group of environmentalists, has begun a campaign titled 'Forests need guardians not hunters' to call for the rejection of the Amendment Act. E. Kunhikrishnan, an environmentalist, said that while addressing human-wildlife conflict, rather than suggesting

"This is not just a concern for animal rights activists. This is an issue concerning the future of human beings as well... We should start viewing this from a humanist perspective rather than an animal rights perspective." — Prakriti Srivastava, former Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Kerala



A wild elephant entering mainland at Wayanad, Kerala

The Hindu

killing, the first thing to consider was consolidating boundaries to ensure that humans do not interfere in wildlife areas. "There should be adequate eco-sensitive zones and buffer zones so that the wildlife will find a way to move about freely, rather than always coming into conflict with humans," he opined. He emphasised the need for sustainable alternatives that safeguard both human and animal welfare.

'Humanist lens'

Prakriti Srivastava, former Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Kerala, and a former deputy inspector general for wildlife in the union environment ministry, stressed the need for viewing this through a humanist lens. "This is not just a concern for animal rights activists. That is just a small part of it. This is an issue concerning the future of human beings as well. It is important to protect our natural world for the existence of future generations. We should start viewing this from a humanist perspective rather than an animal rights perspective," she said. According to Srivastava, when culling of wildlife is proposed as a solution to human-wildlife conflict instead of

coexistence, "we are actually destroying the entire culture of our society. The message we should be sending to people is that it is our duty to protect our forests and our wildlife. These are our treasures and it is our duty to preserve them."

She further explained the need to explore the actual causes of such conflicts, mainly the encroachment into forest areas that has shrunk wildlife habitat and led to fragmentation. She recalled how Kerala was once a society deeply concerned about its forests and committed to conservation during her service. "I hope that these sentiments are still upheld," she added.

The need for coexistence

Environmentalists and wildlife conservationists advocate identifying and restoring wildlife corridors to ensure that wildlife has a way to move. Protection of wildlife is integral to sustaining the ecosystem as a whole. The discourse around the WLA, 2025 raises larger concerns about sustainable coexistence between wildlife and humans, especially in a world facing severe climate and environmental crises caused by encroachment into forest areas.

Still spicy: Hoskote Donne Biryani serves on against odds

Shaik Mohammad Saheel



Food enthusiasts having Hoskote Biryani from Mani Dum Biryani, Hoskote

Shaik Mohammad Saheel

India is home to many types of biryanis, which have their roots here. Others were brought to India, which have been wonderfully mastered. While various kinds of biryanis stand out for their different reasons, one such biryani, native to Karnataka, is so unique that people wake up at 3 a.m. to grab a bite of spicy, meaty, and a distinctive green colour - the iconic Hoskote Dum Biryani.

The beginning

The name Hoskote Dum Biryani comes from the town Hoskote, located near Bangalore, Karnataka, just 25 km away from the city. Mornings in Hoskote start very early. The Biryani preparations begin as early as 1 or 2 a.m. so that it is ready by 4 a.m., when people start lining up in the dark for their first plate of the day. Known for its meaty and spicy texture and the unique green colour that emanates from its coriander mint masala, Hoskote Dum Biryani has become a phenomenon of its own. The story behind this famous biryani goes back to 1992, when a small restaurant called Mani Dum Biryani started the tradition of serving Biryani at 4 a.m.

TV host Kripal Amanna, in one of his videos, explains that the tradition began because of truck drivers who travelled frequently along the highway. The Lorry drivers hardly need a heavy meal before continuing their journey, and Mani's Dum Biryani became their stop. What began as a quick bite for tired drivers soon turned into a ritual for locals—and eventually a pilgrimage for food lovers from Bengaluru and beyond. Word spread quickly, and other eateries joined in. Soon, several outlets began serving their versions of the famous 4 a.m. biryani. For many, it became less about hunger and more about being part of something unique.

The art: Hoskote biryani

Hoskote Dum Biryani, a variation of Donne Biryani, is now offered by only a few who have mastered its craft. For years, Mani Dum Biryani remained the undisputed favourite. But in recent times, new outlets have gained fame by offering both chicken and mutton versions. Among them is Raj Dum Biryani, which started about eight years ago. Known for its chicken and mutton biryani, it also serves local staples like

ragi mudde, drawing visitors from across Bengaluru. "We begin cooking around 1:30 a.m.," said Puneeth, son of the owner of Raj Dum Biryani. "By 4 a.m., people are already waiting. It's become a weekend plan for many families and groups of friends." But the beloved 4 a.m. ritual recently faced a major hurdle. The local Hoskote Police issued a notice stating that no outlet is authorised to open before 6 a.m. The rule was followed by a series of drunk-driving accidents on the Hoskote highway. While the intention was public safety, it was a huge blow to outlets like Raj and Mani that depend entirely on early-morning customers.

Problems with popularity

Bharath Kumar (name changed), a desk officer at the Hoskote Police Station, said the move followed months of observation. "We've been monitoring this road for a while, and the decision didn't come out of nowhere," he said. "There were drunk-driving cases, and this straight road leads to those hotels. That means drunk drivers on the same stretch as families with kids — very risky." Kumar admitted he's also a fan of Hoskote Dum Biryani but feels safety comes first. "People love the food, but we must think about everyone's safety. These measures are meant to protect the public while also respecting business owners," he added.

A positive outlook

Restaurant owners accept that the restriction has hurt their business. "Obviously, it has affected us, but we have to think about the people who come early", noted Puneeth. "Many of them are drunk, and this leads to fights. Our losses are there, but small outlets have suffered even more." Food enthusiasts, however, feel differently. Tejas, a regular at Raj Dum Biryani, said, "I'm not much bothered about the timings; it could also be due to internal politics. But it's disappointing — 4 a.m. biryani will be a major miss."

Zubeen Garg: The voice that united Assam, the farewell that stunned a nation

Prachi Pradhan

Once the most cherished voice in Assam and a beloved name in Bollywood, Zubeen Garg passed away recently in Singapore leaving the entire state in grief. His sudden demise not only broke millions of hearts but also marked a historic farewell. The massive procession at his funeral has now been officially recognised by the Limca Book of Records as one of the largest public funerals in India, alongside global names like Michael Jackson and Pope Francis.

The man behind music

Away from the spotlight, Zubeen Garg was very different from the image fans saw on stage. His cousin, Prakriti (name changed) described him as a warm, playful and deeply grounded person. "At home, he was like a child who was loud, funny and full of life. He would sing while cooking, walking or even when he could not sleep. Music was how he expressed his love,"

she said.

Coming from a family with strong artistic roots, Zubeen grew up surrounded by songs and instruments. "He could compose for hours without stopping. Sometimes he would even compose more than thirty songs. For him, music was not just a career, it was a way of living. Despite achieving fame with Bollywood hits like Ya Ali, he came back to Assam often calling Bollywood a place of arrogance and Assam, his state of acceptance" she added.

The soundtracks

Zubeen's journey in music stretched across varied languages and generations. From soulful Assamese songs like *Mayabini* and *Tumi Mur Matho Mur* to his Bollywood songs such as *Ya Ali* from the movie *Gangster*, his songs carried surreal emotions that connected to most of his fans. Artist Rahul Gautam Sharma, who worked with him closely, said that Zubeen's creative process was always sponta-



Tribute organised for late singer Zubeen Garg

Special Arrangement

aneous and full of energy. "He believed music should be free and fearless. For him, music was about people, not perfection," Sharma added.

A star

Despite his success, Zubeen Garg never received the kind of national recognition he truly deserved. Outside the Northeast, his name was often limited to his song *Ya Ali*, while his decades of contribution to Assamese music went unnoticed. Biraj (name changed), a fan who attended his funeral said, "He could have been a global icon if he wanted to. But he chose to stay close to his

people in Assam. He once said that a king should never leave his kingdom." His family believes that recognition came too late. "We wish he had received this love and respect while he was alive. But knowing that his music touched many hearts is the biggest reward for us," expressed his cousin, Prakriti.

Assam stood still

The news of Zubeen's death swept through Assam like a storm. Within hours, thousands filled the streets, some walked miles, others left work and school to bid him farewell. For three days, the state stood still

as voices rose together in grief. "He once said, 'If I die, play *Mayabini*,' and that day, that's all we heard people crying and singing *Mayabini* together," recalled his fan Biraj. Ministers, artists, and ordinary citizens mourned side by side, united by love for the man who gave Assam its voice. As Rahul Sharma said, "For Zubeen, love mattered more than numbers."

People's voice in Assam

Zubeen's connection with people was beyond that of a celebrity and a fan. To many, he was a friend,

a helper and a voice for justice. He spoke against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and other policies he believed, were unfair to Assam. "He was fearless and never cared about political pressure. His only politics was love and equality for everyone," added Sharma.

The legacy

Zubeen's home in Assam has become a place of remembrance where people leave flowers, letters and instruments as tributes. Prakriti, his cousin said, "It feels like a temple now, as people come there to find peace and the doors are never closed." His family plans to honour him by promoting music education and planting Nahor trees across Assam. He revived Assamese cinema, folk traditions and inspired artists to embrace their roots. His songs still echo everywhere, keeping his legacy alive. "Zubeen showed art is for people and his work of art lives on," opined Sharma.

Reduce policy–practice divide, urge experts on RPwD Act, 2016

Tejaswini S

Hundreds of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) gathered at Bengaluru's Freedom Park to fight for a dignified livelihood, revolving around the state's responsibility to provide economic stability in Karnataka, with a protest held on October 8. Speaking on behalf of the protesters, President of the Karnataka State Disabled and Caregivers Federation, G. N. Nagaraj, asserted that the government must provide a monthly maintenance allowance of Rs 10,000 as a rightful allowance owed, because the state has failed to fulfil its legal mandate to provide jobs and livelihood opportunities, under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016.

of Inclusion International in Sharjah, a global gathering focused on advancing the human rights of people with intellectual disabilities, international disability rights leaders lauded India's progress. Executive Director of Inclusion International UK, Jamie Cook, highlighted the "fantastic" legislative steps taken by India, particularly concerning employability and access to good-quality

However, activists and experts on the ground point to significant gaps in implementation. While laws on paper are strong and people are increasingly voicing their rights, the situation still demands systemic change - what many describe not merely as a "shortfall" but as "a near vacuum of action".

commissioner for persons with disabilities, ensuring their rights are being accessed and exercised," said Dr Reuban Daniel, Founding Trustee and Head of Programmes and Operations, Prakhyata Abhinand Charitable Trust (PACT) India.

Lack of political will

Despite the strength of the RPwD Act, 2016, implementation remains only "nominal". The core challenge is a lack of "political will," opined Nagaraj. Administrative failure often translates to ignorance: key implementing authorities, including personnel in the Police Department and the office of the Director General of Police, do not know the existence of this Act, lamented Nagaraj.

This lack of will is evident in education and employment. Reservation benefits lose meaning when persons with disabilities cannot access basic schooling. Many reserved seats in schools and colleges remain empty because there are no eligible candidates. The government has failed to ensure that persons with disabilities complete Class 10 — a minimum qualification for most jobs, he remarked.

Funds meant for disability welfare schemes are increasingly diverted towards promotional campaigns instead of reaching intended beneficiaries. This, he criticised, reflects a government priority focused on image over implementation.

Collaboration with private sector

Dr Daniel highlighted the need to move away from concentrating disability services in urban centres and extend them to the peripheries, so rural populations -who make up the majority of persons with disabilities— can access support without long travel.



PWDs from 20 districts rally at Freedom Park

Special Arrangement

Disconnect between global praise and local reality

The agitation underscores a disconnect between the disability rights and their implementation in India. In late September 2025, at the 18th World Congress

From silence to legislative strength

Until the 1980s, people with disabilities had little visibility or voice in public policy or governance. "One positive outcome of the passage of the RPwD Act 2016 is that most states now have a dedicated

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RPwD Act: Call to bridge policy, practice gap

Funding, he added, should be based on need rather than distributed uniformly. “If an area has more persons with disabilities, allocate more funds, resources, and facilities there, instead of following a one-size-fits-all model,” he noted.

Satish Kumar, a disability rights activist, noted the absence of a private-sector policy to employ persons with disabilities and urged a strong government framework for inclusion. While large firms can afford accessibility, smaller ones struggle financially. Kumar suggested CSR-linked incentives or tax relaxations to encourage private employers to hire persons with disabilities.

While large firms can afford accessibility, smaller ones struggle financially. Kumar suggested CSR-linked incentives or tax relaxations to encourage private employers to hire persons with disabilities.

Holistic and life cycle support

Finally, Dr Daniel emphasised the need to view disability as part of the human life cycle, calling for integrated systems that support individuals from infancy to old age. The current focus must move beyond fragmented, person-to-person support. Instead, policymakers need to ensure that common systems prevail to support everyone experiencing disability consistently across their lifespan.

India’s PWD community demands action beyond legislation. They are asking for systems that

“If an area has more persons with disabilities, allocate more funds, resources, and facilities there, instead of following a one-size-fits-all model.”

work. Experts call for decentralised implementation and administrative will, driving a future defined by community-based, inclusive development where accessibility, awareness and accountability become everyday norms and not exceptions. Real inclusion, they stress, begins when rights translate into lived realities.

Awareness without access: India’s cervical cancer paradox

Diya Daniel

Eighty-six percent. That is the share of Indian women who have never been screened for cervical cancer, according to a September 2025 study in the *Cureus Journal of Medical Science* titled, “*The Sociocultural Determinants of Cervical Cancer Outcomes in India.*”

Cervical cancer kills more than 77,000 Indian women each year, even though early detection can save many a life. In some states, screening reaches less than two percent of women. Behind those numbers are barriers beyond medicine: clinics too far from home, tests too costly and information that seldom reaches the people who need it the most. The statistics outline a national crisis, but the reasons remain local - deciding who receives care and who is left behind.

Plans and practice: The distance

In 2018, India pledged to meet the World Health Organization’s (WHO) goal of eliminating cervical cancer by 2030 through the 90-70-90 strategy: vaccinate 90 percent of girls under 15, screen 70 percent of women by age 35, and ensure 90 percent of those diagnosed receive timely treatment.

On paper, the plan is ambitious. On the ground, though, it often feels distant. Dr Basalingappa Rudrappa Mukkuppi, Vice President of the Karnataka Association of Resident Doctors, says that national programmes often falter once they meet the “realities of India’s healthcare systems”.

India remains a low-to middle-income country with a large rural population, Dr Mukkuppi noted, and advanced screening tools such as human papillomavirus (HPV) DNA testing rely on laboratories and trained personnel that many districts still lack. “We need to build screening around what is practical, not just what is ideal,” he said.

Dr Mukkuppi also pointed to visual inspection with acetic acid (VIA) as a simple and effective option in resource-limited clinics. Citing local research, he added that consistent VIA screening can reduce cervical cancer deaths by nearly 35 percent. “The problem isn’t science,” he opined. “It’s the system. We don’t follow up, we don’t integrate and that’s where progress stops.”

Barriers built into everyday life

At the Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology in Bengaluru, Dr Shobha K, Head of Gynecologic Oncology, stated that even with improved access, many women still avoid screening for reasons beyond medical considerations. “Some women believe that if they are not sexually active, they don’t need to be tested,” she said.



Cervical cancer awareness training, JH Special Arrangement

In smaller towns, these fears are stronger. Screening facilities are limited, and doctors rarely suggest tests unless symptoms appear. The *Cureus* study found that rural women are 60% less likely to be screened than those in urban areas, and literacy plays a key role. States with higher female education consistently show better participation.

Price of prevention

While locally made vaccines have improved affordability, cost continues to define who can access care. A Pap smear can cost between Rs 200 and Rs 2,000, and the HPV vaccine from the Serum Institute of India ranges from Rs 200 to Rs 400 per dose. For many families living on daily wages, even that is beyond reach.

India’s Operational Framework for Common Cancers (2016) and National Health Policy (2017) both recommend early detection, but their rollout remains inconsistent. Public health spending still accounts for barely two percent of the GDP, a figure Dr Mukkuppi described

“The problem isn’t science, it’s the system. We don’t follow up, we don’t integrate and that’s where progress stops.”

as “insufficient for a country of this size,” adding that prevention cannot depend on personal expense.

The resources required to achieve the WHO’s goals, he says, are far beyond what most individuals can manage. “This has to be a government-led effort. Without stronger public funding, cervical cancer prevention will remain an urban advantage.”

Making prevention ordinary

Change, experts state, has already begun. Younger women now ask questions and accept vaccination with a confidence that was rare a generation ago. Dr Shobha notes that a wider access to education and information has loosened old taboos, though momentum remains fragile. “Older women still tend to view their wellbeing as secondary... we need to change that,” she adds.

Ms Gupta added that prevention must become a routine health care. “It should not feel like a special drive that ends when funding does,” she said. “Lasting change needs the same steady habits that maintain other health priorities.”

Eighty-six percent women untested is not a statistic; it is a judgement on systems and priorities. If screening and vaccination are to save lives, they must arrive with follow up that is reliable. Only then will the 2030 target become a measure of lives preserved, not a record of opportunities missed.



Representational image

AI generated

The friendship algorithm: How AI is rewriting connections

Mitrevi Venugopal

Loneliness often hides behind glowing screens, and within that quiet distance, a new kind of friendship is taking shape. These companions don't breathe or move, but they listen. From chatbots that comfort users to AI voices that respond with surprising empathy, artificial intelligence is no longer just helping people with tasks; it's keeping them company.

Apps like Replika and Character.AI have made emotional companionship part of the online experience, mixing human familiarity with automated responses. For many young people and working adults, these programmes now fill the role of a "friend" who is always available.

Comfort in code

AI companions promise something that human relationships often cannot: constant availability, patience, and a listening ear. They adapt to users' moods, remember past conversations, and even mirror emotional tones. In an age where social interactions often feel performative, the appeal of a "friend" who never judges is undeniable.

"I started talking to an



Representational Image

Darren Ideas

AI chatbot when I was feeling overwhelmed during exams," says Riya Sharma, a 21-year-old engineering student. "It sounds silly, but it actually helped me calm down. It just listens. No judgment, no interruptions." According to a September

2025 report by ABC News, an increasing number of teenagers are now turning to AI chatbots for emotional support and companionship. Experts, however, are raising red flags about the psychological impact of forming such one-sided bonds.

"When emotional needs go unmet, we seek alternatives. AI companions provide a sense of being heard, offering a comforting experience. The danger lies in mistaking that programmed empathy for genuine understanding."

'Programmed empathy'

Psychologists say the growing presence of AI companions reveals how the nature of human connection is changing in a digital world. As social circles shrink and everyday stress builds, the comfort of a "safe" digital listener has started to hold real appeal.

"Human beings are wired for connection," says Dr Nadira Saleem, a Dubai-based psychologist. "When emotional needs go unmet, we seek alternatives. AI companions provide a sense of being heard, offering a comforting experience. The danger lies in mistaking that programmed empathy for genuine understanding."

Dr Saleem adds that while AI can serve as a bridge for introverted or anxious users, over-reliance can make real-

world socialisation harder. "A chatbot that never disagrees or disappoints feels safe, but human relationships thrive on imperfection. We risk losing tolerance for that if AI becomes our primary emotional outlet."

Global scrutiny

The growing popularity of these "digital friends" has now caught the attention of global regulators. Governments are beginning to question whether these technologies are crossing emotional and ethical boundaries. In September 2025, the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) launched an inquiry into companies developing AI companions, particularly those marketed to children and teens.

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Kantara: A legend - Chapter 1 where faith finds its fury

Karen Hezron

Every frame of Kantara: A Legend - Chapter 1 has its grandeur: and just as much struggle to hold it all together. Rishab Shetty extends his universe of divine vengeance into an expansive origin myth, in which faith is both a weapon and weakness. The result is a movie of stunning visual power, but one which at times forgets to tick its own heartbeat. It is earnest, magnificent, and embedded deep in cultural memory, yet lopsided as well - between veneration and monotony.

Set centuries earlier than the first Kantara, this chapter journeys back to the woods of Banavasi, where the Daivas Panjurli and Guliga are protecting the sanctity of the land. The story is set in an era where kingdoms emerged around faith, just to exploit it. Shetty creates a story of what occurs when men confuse ownership with worship - and when gods choose to step in - through rituals, battles, and betrayals.

Faith and power

At the centre of this world is Berme, played by Rishab Shetty, a child discovered in a sacred well and nurtured to carry on the legacy of the Daivas. The kingdom of King Vijayendra (Jayaram) starts falling apart at the hands of greed; its leaders ridicule the very spirits that keep them alive. In quiescent stillness, Rukmini Vasanth as Princess Kanakavathi, is the one between might and righteousness. Gulshan Devaiah as Kulashakara is convincing as the arrogant son whose desire to have things his way triggers off the tragedy.

The first hour of the movie is a patience test - purposeful, ceremonious, and focused on establishing the authenticity. You sense its presence during its wordless periods of ritual. This detail is mesmerizing at times; and is suffocating at other times. But as the Daivas come back, Kantara: Chapter 1 regains its fire. The most striking scene in the film is the Chavundi Guliga sequence in which feminine

divine power substitutes vengeance with justice, and it is a reminder that balance is what accomplishes faith rather than rage.

A vision grand and flawed

Aesthetically, Kantara: Chapter 1 is impressive. The cinematography by Arvind Kashyap turns the forest into a living archive - a place where the mist is holding the memory and the light is ancient. The Bhuta Kola scenes are amazingly accurate and B. Ajaneesh Loknath score is a fusion of percussion and silence which has a spooky element. The movie is technically flawless with its texture being very earthly and celestial. Yet its belief becomes its flaw. The rhythm is unsteady; the narration is more than the plot can bear. The political sub plots, though well intended, do not have urgency and drag the film into expository loops. Sometimes, the movie confuses perseverance with insight. Its ambition cannot be denied, yet it seems that most of the time Shetty wants us to observe instead of to participate.



File photo

Letterboxd

Verdict

Nevertheless, the final act of the film warrants its size. The film regains its pace and purpose when faith finally has its way. It is a feral and a composed ending, an act of mythological connection between morality and order.

Kantara: Chapter 1 is a show of honesty - flawed, hedonistic, yet impossible to overlook. It requests patience and gives it power. Shetty's world is built on belief, and his storytelling thrives on that conviction, even when it falters.

Will Bengaluru still breathe tomorrow? Lakes, trees, Lalbagh and the price of 'development'

Olivia Debroy

A city that was once called the 'Garden City of India', Bengaluru now stands at the edge of an ecological collapse. As the city races upward with flyovers and concrete towers, its lakes are shrinking fast, hundreds of trees are being torn down and even the city's most sacred green space, Lalbagh, faces the wrath of being dug out in the name of development. The recent government actions of the Karnataka Tank Conservation and Development Authority (KTCDA) Amendment Bill 2025 and the Tunnel Road Project together paint a troubling picture of how the city's ecological balance is shattered piece by piece.



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KTCDA and shrinking lake buffers

KTCDA Amendment Bill 2025 proposes to drastically reduce buffer zones around the state's lakes and wetlands, allowing construction dangerously within those limits. The earlier uniform 30-metre wide buffer could now shrink to as short as three metres. Environmental documents caution that this might affect over 40,000 lakes in Karnataka, threatening water

security, biodiversity and livelihoods that depend on them.

Activist Sandeep Anirudhan, convenor of Conscious Communities and Bangalore Town Hall, said the move goes against the country's main environmental law. He said that the state superseded the Karnataka Lake Conservation and Development Authority (KLCDA) Act, which was under the Ministry of Environment and Development, with a weaker version, which is now under the Department of Minor Irrigation and Ground Water

Development. "This department lacks the expertise of ecologists. They just have engineers dealing with lakes who don't understand anything about it," he stated.

Anirudhan pointed out that this decision would have devastating consequences beyond Bengaluru. "The amendment will affect almost 45,000 lakes in Karnataka. Of these, only 200 are in Bangalore. What is their primary function? Irrigation. It also provides recharge of groundwater throughout the state. Farmers will lose their livelihoods, and

food production will just be destroyed," he lamented. The threat extends beyond lakes to Bangalore's rajakaluves (stormwater drains) that interconnect its lake networks.

According to a recent Urban Development Department (UDD) notification, it proposes to cut off the existing National Green Tribunal (NGT) buffer standards from 50, 35, and 25 meters to just 15, 10 and 5 meters, respectively. With nearly 1000 kilometres of drains laid across the city, reducing these buffers could lead to severe flooding, large-scale encroachments and loss of nearly 85 lakh trees along the drainage corridors. Their disappearance would not only cripple the city's natural flood management system but also increase water contamination, which would push Bengaluru's wetland systems closer to complete collapse.

the Tunnel Road Project (TRP) jeopardises the very symbol of Bengaluru's green heritage - the Lalbagh Botanical Garden. "Bengaluru's Tunnel Road Project between Hebbal and Central Silk Board is a disaster in the making," said Rajkumar Dugar, founder of Citizen for Citizen (C4C). He stated, "Apart from taking away almost six acres of Lalbagh land, the project could cause irreversible harm. Trees will be cut and Lalbagh's soil, water, air, lake, and the Lalbagh Rock will all bear the brunt."

The 16.7 km tunnel is designed to run between 50-100 feet below ground with two massive tunnels, entry ramps, and a ventilation shaft within Lalbagh. The entry ramp from the Ashoka

"Bengaluru's Tunnel Road Project between Hebbal and Central Silk Board is a disaster in the making."

Tunnel Road Project and the threat to Lalbagh

But the disastrous story doesn't end there. If the KTCDA Bill weakens the state's ecological defences,

Pillar will pass less than 100 feet from the Lalbagh lake, endangering its hydrology and aquatic life.

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A new language of digital comfort

The investigation focuses on privacy risks, emotional manipulation, and the potential for harmful advice. "The FTC's move is a sign that governments are beginning to understand the emotional depth users form with these systems," says Nitin Sawhney, an AI ethics researcher at the Indian Institute of Science. "These aren't just productivity tools anymore. They're designed to be persuasive, comforting, and adaptive, traits that can easily cross into psychological influence." Mr Sawhney believes that the conversation around AI should now expand beyond data and algorithms. "We've spent years worrying about AI taking away jobs. Maybe it's time to ask whether it's taking over our relationships too," he said.

Real comfort or digital dependency?

For many young people, especially after the pandemic, most social interactions now happen online. Speaking to an AI often feels like an extension

of texting a friend. Experts, however, worry the habit could lead to emotional dependency that is difficult to reverse.

"If AI becomes your only source of comfort, that's a problem. But if it helps you express yourself and then you step back into real connections, it can be valuable."

Arina Varun, a 20-year-old design student, admits she uses Replika to vent when she doesn't feel like talking to friends.

"It's a weird feeling," she says. "You can say things you wouldn't say to real people. It never gets tired or judges you." Parents have also voiced similar concerns. "My daughter used to talk to her cousins and friends on calls," says Vijitha Vijayan, a Bengaluru-based parent. "Now she spends that time chatting with an AI on her phone. It worries me because it's not a real person, there's no

growth, no empathy being built." Vijitha's concern reflects

a quiet worry shared by many: that the ease of digital companionship may come at the cost of something more human.

The human connection

Despite the alarms, experts agree that AI companions are not inherently harmful. When used consciously, they can help users navigate emotions, practice conversation, or manage loneliness.

Dr Saleem emphasises balance. "It's like any coping tool," she says. "If AI becomes your only source of comfort, that's a problem. But if it



Replika.ai

Sugar Gamers

helps you express yourself and then you step back into real connections, it can be valuable."

Back in her hostel room, Riya reflects on her conversations with her digital friend. "I know it's not real," she says. "But sometimes, just typing things out to someone or something that listens without interrupting

feels enough for the moment."

As technology grows more personal and lifelike, AI companions may continue to find a place in people's emotional lives. The question is no longer whether they can simulate friendship, but whether we'll remember what real friendship feels like.

The Revival of Architecture

“Revival and sustainability go hand in hand.
Where context remains, consciousness follows.”

Karen Hezron

Silence is a rarity in fast-growing Indian cities. Yet, once in a while, you come across buildings that seem to pause - a courtyard that catches the wind, a staircase rubbed smooth by the passage of time, or a roof that lets the rain fall where it should. These moments remind us that architecture was never meant to rival the environment, but to blend with it.

Here is a silent revival taking place nationwide—a revival, but in reverse, not of nostalgia, but of necessity. The skyline of glass and concrete no longer seems to belong, and cities, with their insatiable appetite for space, are gradually returning to the wisdom of the old. The question now being posed by architects, planners, and students

Rethinking conservation

“Conservation is not a term that is easily understood,” says Dr Vidya Srikanth, architect, urban planner, and educator. “As architects, we know what it means. However much effort we take, it won’t work unless the community is involved.”

For her, conservation is not confined to monuments or old temples. “When we speak of heritage, it’s also the practices and traditions that surround it. A temple lives because of the rituals around it. If those fade, the structure becomes lifeless,” she explains.

Dr Srikanth believes that the future of conservation lies in adaptive reuse — the reuse of old buildings in new ways. “A fort that becomes a café or a library continues to speak. It stays part of people’s lives, not just their history,” she says.



A sketch exploring pause points with nature

Ginelle Lopes

Designing with sensitivity

The concept of preserving heritage with relevance is also reverberated in the works of Ginelle Lopes, architect (design & development), Bhartiya Hospitality, Bengaluru, who previously worked with Earthitects Private Residences, Bengaluru, on nature-integrated projects. To her, revival is a matter of rediscovering the artisanship and cultural setting that once described Indian architecture.

“The idea of revival became important when we recognised the value of our own roots,” she says. “It is about reviving lost craftsmanship, stone masonry, woodworking, textiles and incorporating them into current design sensibilities. Lopes believes that architecture should coexist with its environment. “Every building affects its environment. But sensitive design can also be reciprocal - by using local materials, creating employment for nearby communities, and allowing nature to remain part of the space.”

She points to Nrityagram, the dance village at Hesaraghatta near Bengaluru, as an example. Designed by Gerard da Cunha, the space utilises local granite and clay materials, featuring courtyards and gardens that allow the architecture to blend seamlessly with the surrounding land. “So, it is proof that good design can stay harmonious with its surroundings even decades later,” she adds.

“Architecture was never really about scale or spectacle. It was about belonging.”

A new generation of awareness

The mindset of design that respects both content and continuity is also shaping how young architects think. Monica G. S., an architecture student at CMR University, Bengaluru, explains that the feeling of connectedness is what she finds appealing about revivalist architecture. “It is about continuity between people, history, and the land. So, it isn’t about replacing what exists, but understanding it first,” she says.

During her internship, Monica observed how small decisions can significantly impact a project’s relationship with its site. “We wouldn’t cut down a tree if there was one — we’d design around it. There’s no limit of responsibility hindering creativity; on the contrary, it empowers it. Sometimes the best ideas come from working with what’s already there,” she explains.

She believes revival today is no longer a visual trend. Earlier, it was more about incorporating rustic textures or a vintage style. But today, there is a genuine shift. Revival is a rediscovery of what architecture once was - community, climate, craft, and skill. It is not regressive, it is progressive, but in a sensitive way.

A return to belonging

Dr Srikanth recalls documenting a small village called Bukkasagara, near Hampi, that once centred around a temple. When a state highway was built through the middle of it, the community was split. “That one decision changed everything. If the road had been rerouted, the town’s character could have stayed intact. It’s a reminder that design shouldn’t ignore context, instead react to it,” she says.

This consciousness is now growing across classrooms and studios. Educational institutions are encouraging the study of heritage and context, while firms are returning to local materials and traditional techniques. As Lopes notes, “Revival and sustainability go hand in hand. Where context remains, consciousness follows.”

Architectural revival is not merely a design style, but a form of recollection. It is patience in time of haste, and discretion in time of profusion. Architecture was never really about scale or spectacle. It was about belonging. And perhaps, in this quiet return to roots, lies the beginning of something lasting.

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Will Bengaluru still breathe tomorrow?

Former Bangalore Environment Trust (BET) chairman Dr Yellappa Reddy cautioned, “The Lalbagh rock rupture can even lead to water from Lalbagh lake entering the NIMHANS complex.” He urged that the National Institute of Rock Mechanics, situated near KGF, must be consulted before the project proceeds.

Dattatraya Devare, a trustee at BET, called it a “car-centric project” and added that even after the construction is over, the tunnel would serve only cars and no other modes of transportation, which means that the benefit would be restricted to a small section of the society who alone would be able to use the tunnel and pay hefty amount for its usage.

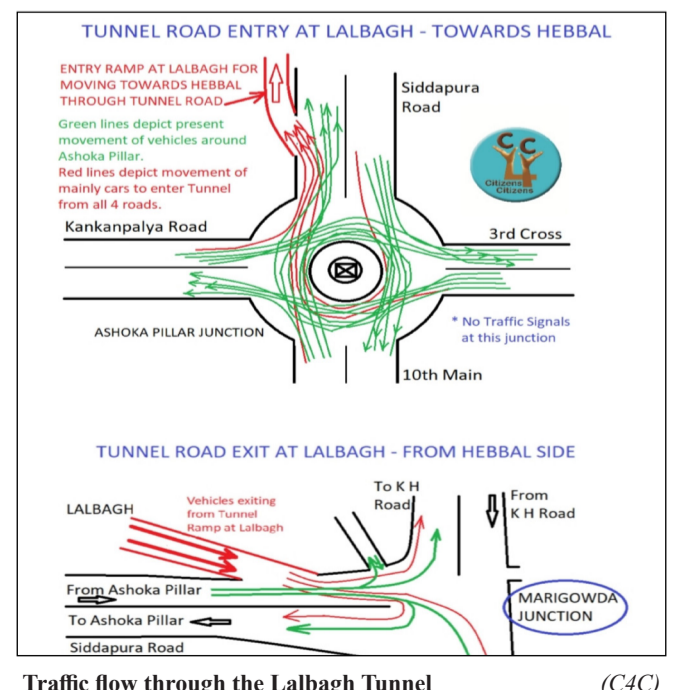
He also added that since the project is funded through loans, the burden of repaying these loans would fall on the next generation.

A city at crossroads

The KTCDA Bill and the TRP, together, reveal a troubling pattern - the steady dilution of environmental safeguards in favour of unchecked urban expansion.

Experts warn that Bengaluru’s greenery, which is barely surviving at three percent, could vanish totally if these disturbing trends continue. For now, Bengaluru’s citizens and environmentalists are left asking the same question:

Will the Garden City of India still breathe tomorrow?



Traffic flow through the Lalbagh Tunnel

(C4C)

More than miles – Inside Bengaluru’s running revolution

Sudheeksha Easwar



Stride run club celebrates with Neeraj Chopra!

Shruthi Sharma

Bengaluru, known as the Silicon Valley and the Garden City of India, has witnessed an increase in the number of social-run clubs transforming fitness from a solo activity to a community-driven one, with brands collaborating with these clubs to make events happen. These running clubs use the city’s demographic and environmental advantages to create a community that blends running, social media, and brand collaborations.

How the run clubs began

Running Roadies is a relatively old running club in Bengaluru. According to Mayur Natarajan, a core member of Running Roadies, the club was founded by Gurleen Singh, who wanted people to accompany him on runs after moving to the city.

Similarly, Stride Run Club was founded by Sidharth Yadav. He said that when he moved to Bengaluru, he wanted to create a community that ran together. “Running with a group is a lot more fun,” he added. He has been part of such communities in Mumbai and Chennai.

Evolution and growth

Over time, these social running clubs have experienced organisational growth. Yadav explained that Stride started as a one-person organisation and has now grown to include more members, with work being effectively managed. Members now specialise in creating content, securing sponsorships, and ensuring a seamless on-ground experience. This division helps them organise events on a large scale and conduct runs in multiple parts of the

city. Shruthi, a member of Stride, views the running culture in Bengaluru as “growing exponentially.”

She said that this growth was fuelled by club runners. This is reflected in their number of followers. The Stride Run Club garnered around 25,000 followers over a year. Their WhatsApp communities have 5,000 members in total, and around 2,500 people are with them on Strava (a fitness-tracking and social media app for athletes). Yadav said, “Getting their feet on the ground has become autopilot.” For the club, the Bengaluru Marathon on September 21 marked a defining milestone. Many runners who had started their journey with the club almost a year ago completed their first half-marathon that day. “Ninety of our members ran their debut half-marathon at the Bengaluru Marathon,” he recalled. “Regular runs are organised three times a week by the club — once on Wednesday or Thursday, and on both weekend days,” thus helping them improve performance.

Sponsorships and collaborations

Securing sponsorships and brand collaborations is central to the modern run club model. Instagram plays a key role for these clubs, with the quality and reach of their reels often determining the partnerships they land. Specific brands that have partnered with Stride Run Club include Zepto, McDonald’s, Reebok, and Social, among others.

Natarajan explained that Running Roadies avoids alcohol and cigarette brands, preferring sponsors aligned with their

health goals, such as nutrition supplements like Fasten Up gels, as well as Century Real Estate and Hyrox. Sponsorships often follow a barter model, with brands providing breakfast, refreshments, T-shirts, or covering registration fees and assisting with event logistics such as banners, hydration points, and flags.

Memorable events and unique experiences

Yadav said that Stride hosts special monthly events like “Run and Rave” or “Gym Rave,” similar to a dance party. One of the most anticipated events is a 5–10 k.m. “Bakery Hop Run” in Indiranagar, where five bakeries serve as pit stops along the route. Shruthi recalled a high-profile run with Neeraj Chopra, carefully coordinated with Under Armour, the main organiser of the run. Secrecy about Neeraj Chopra’s participation led to a seamless event, and later the reels and posts created positive publicity nationwide for the club.

“Neeraj Chopra ran with our run club. This made the reels go viral and thus putting our run club on the national map!”

Despite rapid growth, Stride faces challenges in securing public spaces in Bengaluru and managing traffic, requiring early starts for safety. Natarajan explained event logistics such as precise route planning, police permissions, traffic control, and level paths to prevent injuries — ensuring runners cover the exact distance safely during public-road runs.

Bengaluru’s run clubs have transformed fitness into a community movement blending health, social media and collaboration. Despite logistical hurdles, their growth reflects Bengaluru embracing a healthy lifestyle. By merging wellness, branding and belonging, these clubs show how Bengaluru’s runners are redefining urban culture. Looking ahead, run clubs see their future in expanding across cities into multiple fitness formats, not limited to running alone.

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Dancing beyond boundaries

What kept her going was not just stamina, but love. “My friends stayed with me through the nights. They clapped, prayed, and never left my side. Their support, along with the love of my teachers and family became my strength.”

Lessons, legacy, and the future of an ancient art

When asked what she values the most, Remona smiles. “The love I received that’s my real achievement,” she says. “Records fade, but affection, faith, and the shared moments will always stay.”

The experience taught her humility and discipline. “Physical pain fades, but the mental battle never ends. You have to keep dancing even when your body gives up.” Her advice to young dancers is simple: “Don’t exhaust yourself on the first day. Build your mind before you build your body.” Remona credits much of her courage to

“Records fade, but affection, faith, and the shared moments will always stay.”



The final step of her sacred journey

Jayanth

“They never dismissed my dreams as unrealistic. Even when I said I wanted to dance for 170 hours, they encouraged and guided me with kindness.”

In a world ruled by short attention spans and viral trends, she remains grounded. “Social media can spread dance widely,” she says, “but we must not lose its essence. Bharatanatyam takes patience, surrender, and years of learning. It cannot be mastered for a reel.”

Yet she remains hopeful. “Bharatanatyam isn’t fading. It’s evolving. I see children across the world learning it with love and respect. It is crossing borders and faiths while keeping its soul alive.”

Looking back at her seven-day journey, Remona’s voice softens. “This record has no ending. It’s a beginning,” she says. “I want to teach and share what I’ve learned - that art, when pursued with honesty, belongs to everyone.”

Hounded for kindness: The silent battle of Bengaluru's stray dog feeders

Sharon D

As the debate over the Supreme Court's August 11 order to relocate stray dogs from Delhi's streets to dedicated shelters turned into a national controversy, its ripple effects have reached the streets of Bangalore - impacting not just the animals, but also the people who care for them. Across the city, community feeders are now finding themselves targets of harassment, threats, and social alienation.

The Supreme Court's interim order dated August 22 modified the August 11 directive and allowed sterilised and vaccinated dogs to be released back to their original areas and instructed local authorities to regulate feeding of stray dogs through designated spots, as well as extending the *suo motu* case nationwide. However, the implementation of the order has been uneven, creating uncertainty for feeders in Bangalore. According to Sadhana Hegde, founder of Sahavarthin, an animal welfare organisation which supports feeders across Karnataka, "Citizens are being selective in implementing the Supreme Court order. When it suited them, they used it to get rid of dogs. But when it favoured feeders, they refused to follow it." Hegde emphasises that the practicalities of the order are challenging. "Assigning feeding spots is an impractical move. The government does not have enough systems to identify where dogs should be fed. Pushing all responsibility onto feeders and expecting miracles from them is very unrealistic," she explained.

Clinton, a community feeder from HBR Layout, has been feeding nearly 60 dogs in his area for the past three years. His compassion, however, has made him a target of hostility. "It has been really tough dealing with people who dislike dogs. People ask me to take the dogs home and feed them. But how can I take all 60 of them? No one has the right to relocate them - they're part of this community too," he said. According to Hegde, much of the hostility is rooted in ignorance rather than genuine concern. "People who harass feeders do not just have a problem with feeding - they lack compassion for animals," she opined.



Community dogs being fed by feeders

Sharon D

The problem is particularly acute in the outskirts and panchayat areas, where harassment is worse and local authorities are often unaware of animal protection laws. Hegde adds, "Many dogs are being secretly relocated at night in private vehicles, and the police rarely act even when evidence is given."

For families of feeders, the consequences extend beyond the animals. Ramnath, a community feeder from Bannerghatta Road, recounts years of hostility from his apartment residents, which took a significant toll on his family. "They even called me anti-human just because I cared for cats. Their behaviour towards us was nothing short of mental harassment," he said. The intimidation eventually affected Ramnath's wife, who experienced anxiety and palpitations. "She was scared to even go downstairs to feed the cats," he said. With support from Sahavarthin, the family filed a police complaint and a Non Cognizable Report. "Now the society shuns us, but at least we are left alone," he added.

Harassment is not limited to apartment complexes. Anjana Agrawal, a community feeder from Yelahanka, faced threats from both neighbours and BBMP staff. "I had five street dogs - two passed away naturally, and three are still in our parking lot. One lady called the BBMP officials to catch the puppies, and

another neighbour told me to take them to my bedroom - how perverted is that!" she said. For Agrawal, the solution lies in education and empathy. She opined, "We should teach children about coexistence in schools. And if every petrol pump across India could adopt just two dogs, it would make such a difference."

Animal welfare experts emphasise that a lack of awareness and misinformation exacerbate the situation. "Instead of simply making feeding legal, the government complicated things with procedures like assigning feeding spots," Hegde said. "Misinformation on social media and unverified WhatsApp forwards worsen public anger," she added. Ramnath concurs, stressing the need for legal support alongside awareness. "We need lawyers willing to offer pro bono help for feeders," he said. Despite the challenges, most feeders continue their quiet work, balancing compassion with fear. As the Supreme Court prepares to revisit the issue of feeding regulations, animal welfare advocates hope attention returns to humane management, public education, and safety for both people and animals. Hegde opined, "Feeding is not the problem. The problem is ignorance and the absence of empathy. If citizens learn to coexist, we won't need laws to enforce kindness."

Bengaluru's never-ending pothole problem

Hemanth Kumar



Tilak Nagar main road with unrepaired potholes

Hemanth Kumar O

As the monsoon rains hit Bengaluru once again, the roads in central neighbourhoods like Dairy Circle, Wilson Garden, and Shantinagar were cumbersome for motorists, pedestrians, and daily commuters to negotiate. Despite the Greater Bengaluru Authority's (GBA) efforts to utilise technology and implement new initiatives to tackle the pothole menace, residents say the situation remains bleak — and in some areas, it is worsening.

Bengaluru's pothole crisis stems from deeper issues — years of temporary fixes, poor drainage, stalled construction, and illegal parking. These problems are more than just a nuisance; they endanger everyone who uses these streets. Between July and September 2025, as per old BBMP records, over 6,000 potholes across the city were "addressed." Yet locals in central Bengaluru report potholes reappeared within days, and substandard repairs lead to quick deterioration.

Prashant R., a Shantinagar resident, noted, "They just dump some asphalt, pat it down, and leave. Once it rains, it's like nothing was done. These aren't real repairs — just cosmetic fixes to close cases." At Dairy Circle, ongoing Metro and utility work has left roads uneven and dug up, adding to

commuters' woes. Residents and riders especially dread night travel on these stretches. "I avoid Bannerghatta Road after 8 p.m. Potholes hide in shadows, and uneven patches make rides unpredictable. One wrong move can mean losing control," says Shafiq, a taxi driver working in south Bengaluru for six years.

The BBMP launched the 'Raste Gundi Gamana' app in mid-2024, promising faster and more transparent complaint redressal, where citizens upload geotagged photos and track repair progress online. Ward engineers are expected to act quickly once a report is filed. While BBMP officials hail the app as a success, users in central Bengaluru say the reality is just the opposite. "Sometimes they just upload photos of partial or poor repairs to close tickets", Shafiq added. A BBMP engineer admitted, "Our budget per ward is about Rs 15 lakhs, which isn't enough for full road reconstruction. Hence, fixes are temporary until larger projects are approved."

More than just potholes

Potholes are one part of the problem. Officials from Adugodi police station point out poor street lighting, waterlogging, and illegal parking in central Bengaluru. A senior Adugodi police officer noted, "Cars parked on both sides squeeze the motorable road, leaving little space to avoid potholes. At night, poor

visibility worsens things. One pothole can easily cause a crash." Residents say smaller lanes lack reflectors, warning signs, and proper drainage, making them especially risky for two-wheelers. Over the past decade, multiple BBMP administrations have pledged quick repairs. In 2017, officials promised pothole-free roads within two weeks. In 2022, the Karnataka High Court ordered the civic body to fix potholes within 15 days of receiving complaints. Yet, the issue persists, with Civic watchdog data revealing that since 2015, at least 72 road deaths have been linked to poor road conditions. The human cost continues to mount as a 22-year-old nursing student died in September 2025 after her scooter hit a pothole near Tavarekere — a spot residents say was repeatedly reported but never fully repaired.

Experts reveal contractor accountability and poor inter-departmental coordination as primary causes. Manohar Sagar, an Assistant Executive Engineer (AEE) in BBMP, noted, "We need better coordination between BBMP, utility agencies, and contractors. Stricter penalties for poor-quality work are essential. Without that, the cycle of damage will continue." Sagar further noted that in many areas, different departments, from water supply to electricity, operate with little communication. Once roads are dug up for maintenance, resurfacing is either delayed or done poorly. This leaves newly repaired roads crumbling again within weeks.

The road ahead

With the festival season approaching and rains expected to continue, few expect quick improvement. Residents are growing weary of apps, announcements, and patchwork repairs. "We don't need another app, we need roads that last — roads that don't fall apart every few weeks," says Shafiq. Bengaluru's pothole problem reflects a larger civic challenge — limited budgets, weak accountability, and a lack of long-term planning. For any real change, the BBMP must focus on durable road design, transparent monitoring, and strict enforcement against poor contractors before more lives are lost on its crumbling streets.



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Rehan Akhtar (Batch : 2009-201) Current Organization : British Telecom, Designation : Strategic Program & Portfolio Manager

My time at St. Joseph’s College of Business Administration (SJCBA now SJIM) was a transformative journey that shaped my professional growth. The MBA experience honed my business acumen, agility, and value-driven leadership—skills I now apply as a Strategic Program & Portfolio Manager at British Telecom, managing multi-million-dollar portfolios and driving operational excellence through strategic thinking, governance, and data-driven decision-making.

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