



The world wears India

By **AJAY SINGH**

There was a time when Indian embroidery was admired from a distance – commissioned for royal courts, preserved in museums or reserved for weddings and festivals. Today, it has earned a new identity. It is no longer simply heritage; it is haute couture. From the red carpets of Cannes and the Met Gala to the runways of Paris, Milan and New York, garments painstakingly embroidered by Indian artisans have become symbols of luxury, elegance and exclusivity.

The global fashion conversation has changed dramatically over the past decade. Luxury is no longer defined only by expensive fabrics or iconic labels. Increasingly, it is measured by craftsmanship, authenticity and the human touch. Hand embroidery – once considered slow in the age of automation – is now the ultimate mark of exclusivity. Every stitch tells a story, every motif reflects centuries of artistic evolution, and every handcrafted garment carries the legacy of artisans whose skills have been passed down through generations.

At the heart of this revival lies India. Whether it is shimmering zari, regal zardozi, delicate chikankari, intricate aari embroidery, mirror work from Gujarat, Kantha from Bengal or Kashmiri sozni, Indian craftsmanship has quietly become one of fashion's greatest strengths. Behind many of the world's most celebrated couture collections are Indian *kari-gars* working in workshops across Mumbai, Delhi, Lucknow, Jaipur, Kolkata and countless smaller towns.

A Global Love Affair

International fashion has long drawn inspiration from India, but today the spotlight has

shifted to the artisans themselves. Luxury fashion houses increasingly collaborate with Indian embroidery ateliers for intricate handwork that machines simply cannot replicate. Couture garments embellished with thousands of beads, metallic threads, crystals and sequins often owe their brilliance to Indian craftsmanship.

Celebrities across the world are making conscious fashion choices that celebrate Indian artistry. Whether it is an embroidered sari, a couture gown adorned with zardozi or a sharply tailored jacket featuring aari work, Indian craftsmanship is now associated with timeless elegance rather than exoticism. Fashion experts see this as a significant cultural shift, with designers increasingly acknowledging the contribution of Indian artisans instead of merely borrowing Indian aesthetics.

Why Handmade Matters Again

Ironically, in an era dominated by artificial intelligence and machine precision, consumers are paying premium prices for garments made entirely by hand. Luxury buyers today seek uniqueness over uniformity. No two handcrafted garments are exactly alike, and those subtle variations have become proof of authenticity rather than imperfections.

The growing slow-fashion movement has accelerated this change. Consumers are questioning the environmental cost of fast fashion and investing in

India's centuries-old embroidery traditions are no longer confined to heirlooms and bridal wear - they are shaping global luxury. From shimmering zari and regal zardozi to delicate chikankari, handcrafted Indian artistry is captivating international runways, red carpets and couture houses, proving that true fashion begins with skilled hands and timeless craftsmanship

richness of India's textile heritage.

Designers Taking India Global

Indian designers have played a transformative role in bringing indigenous craftsmanship to international audiences.

Sabyasachi Mukherjee has built a global luxury brand rooted in Indian hand embroidery. His creations seamlessly blend historical inspiration with contemporary sophistication. "Our crafts are our greatest luxury," he has often remarked, reminding the fashion industry that true luxury lies in skilled hands rather than industrial perfection.

Rahul Mishra, the first Indian designer to showcase at Paris Haute Couture Week, has elevated embroidery into wearable art inspired by nature. He believes craftsmanship is storytelling, saying that luxury should celebrate 'human value rather than machine value.'

Tarun Tahiliani has similarly championed Indian textile traditions by combining intricate craftsmanship with modern silhouettes, proving that Indian embroidery belongs on the world's biggest fashion platforms.

More Than Decoration

Indian embroidery has evolved far beyond ornamentation. Designers now use traditional techniques to depict landscapes, architecture, mythology, wildlife and abstract art. Three-dimensional flowers bloom across gowns, metallic vines flow over jackets, and elaborate thread-work transforms garments into wearable masterpieces.

Yet behind every spectacular creation stands an artisan whose name often remains unknown. Thousands of embroidery workers spend weeks – sometimes months – bringing designers' visions to life.

Encouragingly, many designers are now highlighting their *kari-gars* through exhibitions, documentaries and campaigns that celebrate the extraordinary craftsmanship hidden behind couture.

The Future Is Handmade

Handcrafted fashion also represents sustainability.

Unlike factory-made garments designed for rapid consumption, handcrafted pieces are treasured, repaired and passed down through generations. They preserve not only culture but also conscious consumption.

Young Indians are rediscovering these traditions in fresh ways. Embroidered jackets, co-ord sets, denim, sneakers and fusion wear are making traditional crafts relevant beyond weddings and festivals. Social media has further fuelled this revival, encouraging people to value artistry over labels.

Challenges remain. Many artisans continue to struggle with irregular employment, limited social security and competition from machine-made imitations. Sustained investment, fair wages and greater recognition are essential if these living traditions are to thrive. As the world embraces craftsmanship over excess, India's embroidery heritage has found its rightful place at the centre of global luxury. Every shimmer of zari, flourish of zardozi, delicate chikankari flower and painstaking aari stitch reflects centuries of artistic excellence. In an increasingly digital world, India's greatest fashion export is not merely clothing – it is craftsmanship, stitched patiently by hands that continue to keep an extraordinary legacy alive. These timeless stitches are finding a place exactly where they belong: at the very centre of global style.

clothing that lasts longer, carries emotional value and supports traditional craftsmanship. Indian embroidery naturally aligns with this philosophy. A handcrafted bridal lehenga may require thousands of hours of painstaking labour, transforming it into a family heirloom rather than a seasonal purchase.

The Language Of Indian Embroidery

Every Indian embroidery tradition speaks a unique visual language.

Zari, woven with metallic gold and silver threads, evokes royal grandeur and ceremonial elegance. Zardozi, introduced during the Mughal era, transforms fabric into wearable art using metallic threads, beads, pearls and stones. Lucknow's chikankari is admired worldwide for its delicate floral motifs and understated sophistication, while aari embroidery, created with a specialised hooked needle, produces intricate chain stitches that lend contemporary couture exceptional texture and detail.

Mirror work from Gujarat and Rajasthan celebrates India's colourful folk traditions, while Kantha from West Bengal transforms simple running stitches into intricate storytelling, preserved for ages. Together, these crafts showcase the remarkable diversity and

Hands behind glamour

When a celebrity glides down the red carpet in a breathtaking couture creation, the applause is almost always reserved for the designer. Yet hidden behind every shimmering gown, regal sari or exquisitely embroidered jacket are hundreds of unnamed artisans whose extraordinary skills transform imagination into reality.

These are India's *kari-gars* – master craftsmen who have inherited techniques passed down through generations.

Working in workshops across Lucknow, Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Jaipur, Kutch and Kashmir, they spend days, weeks and sometimes months creating garments that the world admires for just a few fleeting moments.

A single couture outfit can require anywhere between 500 and 5,000 hours of handwork. Every bead is stitched individually. Every sequin is placed by hand. Metallic zari threads are woven into intricate floral patterns, while zardozi artisans painstakingly create raised motifs using gold and silver-coated threads, pearls, crystals and tiny metal coils. There are no shortcuts.

Every stitch demands patience, precision and years of experience. Many artisans begin learning their craft in childhood, watching parents and grandparents at work. What starts as curiosity gradually becomes instinct. Over time, their fingers develop remarkable speed and accuracy, allowing them to create embroidery so fine that machines still struggle to replicate it. Despite their immense contribution, these artisans have often remained invisible. Their names rarely appear on labels, and consumers seldom realise that a luxury garment admired in Paris or New York may have spent months being handcrafted in an Indian workshop before reaching the runway.

Thankfully, that narrative is beginning to change. Several leading designers now highlight their artisans in campaigns, documentaries and exhibitions, introducing customers to the people behind the craftsmanship. Fashion schools are inviting master embroiderers to demonstrate traditional techniques, while luxury buyers are increasingly asking about the origin of handcrafted garments. The rise of social media has also played an important role. Behind-the-scenes videos showing artisans at work have captivated audiences, revealing the incredible effort hidden behind every finished ensemble. Watching hundreds of tiny stitches come together has deepened appreciation for handmade fashion.



Luxury takes time...

When you admire a couture outfit on a red carpet, you're often looking at months of painstaking craftsmanship rather than a few hours of stitching. Unlike machine-made garments, hand embroidery demands extraordinary patience, precision and teamwork.

- Chikankari kurta: 40–100 hours
- Zardozi bridal lehenga: 800–2,500 hours
- Haute couture gown: 1,000–5,000 hours
- Mirror-work jacket: 150–300 hours
- Aari embroidered cape: 200–500 hours

A single couture garment may pass through the hands of dozens of artisans—designers, pattern makers, dyers, embroiderers, bead specialists and finishers – before reaching the runway. Luxury today isn't just about the finished garment; it's about the countless hours, skilled hands and generations of knowledge stitched into every motif. Every bead, metallic thread and tiny stitch represents a craft that has survived centuries, making handcrafted fashion as much an investment in heritage as in style. Fashion houses worldwide continue to rely on Indian artisans because these crafts cannot simply be copied by machines. Every stitch reflects generations of inherited knowledge.





Soham: Sacred Breath Sound

By **DR BHUSHAN KUMAR UPADHYAYA**

Ancient Yogis were great observers of the human body. They discovered the whole science of Yoga based upon the mechanics of the body, breath, emotions, and consciousness. Amongst all the forms of Yoga, the breath practices popularly known as Pranayama are the most potent tools to calm the mental chatter and connect to the inner self.

Right from the Upanishads to the other classical Yogic texts, we find that the breath work has got the prime position in the framework of the Yogic philosophy. Different types of Pranayamas are prescribed in different Yogic books. The Soham Pranayama occupies a

unique position in the spiritual traditions of India.

Ancient Yogis observed that our breath produces sounds and that is SO when we inhale and Ham when we exhale. Listening to this Soham sound in the natural flow of breath is considered a great Yogic Sadhana. It literally means - That I am. It symbolizes that the individual consciousness is interconnected with the cosmic consciousness. Our breath incessantly chants this Mantra of Soham. This discovery is rooted in the Upanishadic Mahavakyas: Tattvamasi - That Thou Art and Aham Brahmasmi- I am the Ultimate Reality.

The Chudamani Upanishad,

Shiva Swarodaya, and Hatha Yogic texts prominently describe this spiritual practice. It is the mystic experience of the practitioners that in the deep meditative state the Soham sound gets reversed to Hamsa meaning the swan, a symbol of purity and liberation.

The beauty of the Soham Japa is that the awareness is synchronised with inhalation and exhalation, leading to Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi. After the sustained and regular Soham meditation, breath becomes a bridge between the body, the mind, and consciousness. The ordinary breath transforms into the mindful breathing. Awareness turns towards internal stillness from the external

distractions.

Examined from the neuroscientific standpoint, it is found that slow and rhythmic breath stimulates the vagus nerve and the parasympathetic nervous system, responsible for the rest and digest state of our body. This type of breathing enhances heart rate variability and builds a great emotional resilience. It is proven that the reactivity of the amygdala is reduced and stress hormones come down. It is observed that the function of the prefrontal cortex improves and attention becomes sharp with great cognitive control.

Psychologically, mindfulness increases and anxiety decreases. The regular practice cultivates



emotional balance and responsive behavior. Self awareness takes the centre stage in the process and the decision making becomes calculat-

ed and measured.

It is the experience of the practitioners of the Soham Sadhana that the illusion of separateness disappears and one feels as the inseparable part of the infinite web of consciousness. Meditation turns from doing to being. Breath synchronicity activates the larger parts of the brain and the brain becomes neuroplastic ready to adapt and respond.

Thus, Soham Japa is more than a Mantra, it is a natural rhythm and pulse of life being expressed in the form of breath. It integrates our entire existence right from the body to the emotions and intellect. It is considered the great path to self realisation. The natural sound of the breath reminds us that we are the inseparable part of the Divine.

(The writer is Former DG Police & CG, Homeguards, Maharashtra)

By **DR RACHANAA DATEY**

As dawn breaks over Pandharpur on Ashadhi Ekadashi, the saffron tide of pilgrims finally reaches its destination. The air resonates with the *mrī-danga* and the timeless *abhangas* of Sant Dnyaneshwar and Sant Tukaram. Though their feet bear the marks of nearly three weeks on the road, the pilgrims move with renewed energy, drawn by the promise of *darshan*.

To most, the Wari ends here. In reality, its greatest achievement has already been realised.

Along the journey, strangers become companions, individuals become a community, and devotion evolves into a shared purpose. The pilgrimage quietly demonstrates a timeless truth: extraordinary organisations are built not merely by systems, but by people united through trust, discipline and a common mission.

Modern institutions measure success through profits, market share and growth. The Wari measures it differently. Its legacy lies in creating belonging, inspiring voluntary responsibility and transforming ordinary individuals into custodians of a collective vision. Without contracts, incentives or formal authority, hundreds

purpose. Artificial intelligence can improve efficiency, but it cannot replace integrity, empathy or human connection. The Wari's enduring principles remain strikingly relevant: purpose creates alignment, trust reduces friction, service strengthens leadership and shared values build resilient communities. Its greatest lesson is simple yet profound - people give their best not because they are managed well, but because they believe they belong. In an age of rapid technological change, that may be the most enduring competitive advantage of all.

The Last Lesson

As the first rays of sunlight illuminate the temple of Lord Vitthal, the journey appears to reach its destination. The pilgrims bow their heads in gratitude. The cymbals fall silent. The prayers are offered. The walk, at last, comes to an end. Yet the deeper journey has only begun. The true destination of the Wari has never been Pandharpur alone. It is the transformation that takes place within every pilgrim - and the timeless lessons that journey offers to anyone willing to observe.

For the corporate leader searching for authentic influence, the policymaker striving for collaborative governance, the entrepreneur

By **SHEENAM KHAN**

“Does anyone have a question?” The classroom falls silent. Thirty pairs of eyes avoid meeting the teacher's gaze. A few students lower their heads. Some pretend to write. Others hope someone else will break the silence. The lecture ends. As students begin leaving, one quietly walks up to the teacher and says, “Ma'am, I actually had three doubts.”

If this scene feels familiar, it is because it unfolds in classrooms across the country every single day. As educators, we often mistake this silence for a lack of preparation. It is not. More often than not, it is a lack of confidence. For years, I have watched bright, intelligent and capable students hesitate - not because they do not know the answer, but because they are afraid of saying the wrong thing. They worry about being laughed at, judged, corrected or simply ignored. Somewhere between childhood and adulthood, many students stop believing that their voice deserves to be heard.

This is one of the most overlooked challenges facing India's youth. Ironically, it is emerging at a time when young people have more access to knowledge than any previous generation. A student today can learn coding from Silicon Valley, attend lectures by professors across the globe, build a business from a hostel room and use Artificial Intelligence to solve problems within seconds.

Knowledge has never been more accessible. Confidence has never seemed more fragile. A few months ago, during a campus placement drive, I witnessed a moment that perfectly captured this reality. One student had an exceptional academic record. The other was an average performer. When the final list was announced, the average student had secured the offer while the topper had not.

Many students assumed the company had overlooked merit. I believe the company recognised a different kind of merit. The selected candidate did not necessarily know more.

But they connected better. They listened carefully, explained ideas with clarity, maintained eye contact, responded thoughtfully and carried themselves with quiet confidence. They did not sound rehearsed; they sounded real. The interview was never a test of memory.

It was a test of presence. That distinction is becoming increasingly important. For decades, we have prepared students to write the correct answers. The world now expects them to communicate those answers, defend them, simplify them and inspire confidence in the people



The confidence crisis

listening. The rules have changed.

Unfortunately, much of our advice has not.

"Stand in front of the mirror."

"Read the newspaper aloud."

"Improve your vocabulary."

These methods are useful, but they address only one part of the problem. Today's students are not struggling because they lack words.

They are struggling because they fear visibility. We live in a world where every opinion can be challenged within seconds and every mistake can be replayed endlessly. Social media has quietly changed the psychology of an entire generation. Before posting a thought, students wonder how many people will like it. Before asking a question, they worry whether it will sound foolish. Before raising their hand, they imagine being judged.

The fear is no longer about speaking. The fear is about being seen.

This is why confidence cannot be built merely by speaking to a mirror.

Confidence grows when students repeatedly place themselves in situations where they are visible. When they volunteer to anchor a college event.

When they ask the first question after a seminar.

When they lead a team project.

When they explain a difficult concept to a classmate.

When they record a one-minute video sharing an idea—not to go viral, but to become comfortable with their own voice.

Every such experience tells the brain something powerful:

"I spoke, and the world did not

end."

Confidence is nothing more than accumulated evidence that you can handle discomfort.

Artificial Intelligence makes this conversation even more relevant.

Today, AI can draft your email, sum-

marise your notes, prepare interview questions and even help write your assignment. As technology advances, technical knowledge alone will become easier to access.

Human presence will become more valuable.

No chatbot can replace the confidence with which you introduce yourself.

No algorithm can build trust across a table.

No machine can substitute the authenticity of a person who can think clearly, communicate honestly and connect meaningfully.

Perhaps that is why employers increasingly look beyond academic excellence. They are not rejecting intelligence; they are searching for individuals who can collaborate, communicate and lead.

The future will not belong to the loudest voices in the room.

Nor will it belong only to those with the highest grades.

It will belong to those who are willing to be visible despite uncertainty.

As educators, parents and institutions, we must ask ourselves a difficult question.

Are we preparing our students only to excel in examinations, or are we preparing them to be heard in boardrooms, interviews, research labs, classrooms and society? Because somewhere between chasing perfect marks and perfect resumes, we may have forgotten to nurture something far more important - the courage to speak before certainty arrives.

The next generation does not need more information.

It needs more belief in its own voice. Knowledge may earn a degree.

Confidence earns opportunities.

And in a world where almost everything can be automated, the courage to be seen may become the rarest and most valuable skill of all.

THE LAST MILE

Where
Leadership
Meets The
Divine...



of thousands of pilgrims move in remarkable harmony because they believe in something greater than themselves.

Management scholars increasingly recognise purpose as an organisation's greatest competitive advantage. People who understand why they work display deeper commitment, greater resilience and stronger innovation. The Wari has embodied this principle for over eight centuries, proving that purpose inspires where rules can only compel.

As organisations invest in artificial intelligence, automation and digital transformation, they face an enduring human challenge: how to build trust, nurture commitment and unite diverse teams. The road to Pandharpur offers enduring answers - purpose before profit, service before status, humility before authority and community before competition.

Perhaps that is why the Wari continues to flourish while many institutions fade with time. Its strength has never rested on sophisticated systems alone, but on an enduring human truth: people willingly achieve extraordinary things when they choose to walk together for a purpose larger than themselves.

India's Gift To Global Management

For decades, Management Education has drawn inspiration from the factories of Detroit, the innovation hubs of Silicon Valley and the lean systems of Japan. Yet one of the world's oldest and most successful management models has quietly evolved on the roads to Pandharpur for over eight centuries.

The Wari is far more than a pilgrimage. It is a living example of decentralised leadership, collaborative governance and purpose-driven management. Long before concepts such as agile organisations and distributed leadership became management buzzwords, the Wari demonstrated how independent Dindis could function autonomously while remaining united by a shared mission. Here, leadership is earned through service, and discipline flows from trust rather than hierarchy. As organisations confront growing complexity, the Wari reminds us that sustainable success depends not only on efficient systems but on understanding people.

The Future Belongs To Purpose-Driven Organisations

Tomorrow's most successful organisations will be distinguished not merely by technology, but by their ability to inspire trust, foster belonging and unite people around a common

building a resilient enterprise, the educator shaping future managers and the young professional seeking purpose, the Wari offers a quiet but compelling reminder.

The finest organisations are not built by authority alone.

They are built by trust.

They are sustained by shared values.

They flourish because leadership is expressed through service rather than status.

And they endure because people choose to walk together.

Centuries before the language of servant leadership, emotional intelligence, stakeholder capitalism and agile organisations entered management literature, the roads to Pandharpur were already teaching these lessons - not through theories, but through lived experience.

That may well be the Wari's greatest contribution to the modern world.

In every step lies discipline.

In every *abhang* lies culture.

In every act of *seva* lies leadership.

And in every journey to Pandharpur lies a timeless reminder that the greatest management lessons are not always found in board-

rooms, business schools or bestselling management books. Sometimes, they are written in footprints.

Takeaway

The Wari is far more than a pilgrimage - it is a living model of leadership, governance and human-centred management. In an era shaped by artificial intelligence and rapid technological change, it reminds us that an organisation's greatest strength lies not in technology or capital, but in its ability to inspire trust, purpose and compassion.

For over eight centuries, the Wari has shown that when humanity remains at the heart of leadership, organisations do more than achieve success - they build communities, shape character and leave enduring legacies. Perhaps that is India's timeless gift to the world: the strongest organisations are those that give people not just a destination, but a reason to walk together.

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By **RAAJWRITA DUTTA**

They called it wasteland, but every winter, it turned pink. Along the edge of Navi Mumbai, where the city fades into Thane Creek, a vast wetland was being prepared for disappearance. Mangroves were cut overnight. An 80-hectare stretch was booked for luxury housing, infrastructure, and a golf course. On paper, it was called development, but on the ground, it meant the slow unravelling of a living system.

Because this land was never empty.

Each year, thousands of flamingos arrive here, joined by pelicans and kingfishers, while fish breed safely among the mangrove roots. With their arrival, the water would turn a soft, shifting pink, a life that returned without fail, season after season.

Shruti and Sunil Agarwal first noticed the changes on their morning walks. Trees that stood one day were gone the next, and the mangroves began to thin out in a way that felt sudden and deliberate. “And we saw these people



The wetland warriors

What began as a couple's morning walk became a relentless battle to protect Mumbai's wetlands, helping save fragile mangroves and ensuring thousands of flamingos returned to paint the creek pink each winter.

cutting the mangroves there; they were just chopping them. So, by chance, we did a small interview, we actually took a video of the whole place,” Shruti recalls.

That small recording changed the course of their lives. What followed were years of showing up at hearings, in courtrooms, and before authorities, even as they were repeatedly told that the system and the builders would not be stopped. Still, they returned each time. The destruction did not pause easily, even as the case moved forward. Then, in 2018, the Bombay High Court ordered that the destruction of the mangroves and wetlands must stop. After that, the land began to breathe again. Mangroves slowly returned, and with them, the flamingos came back in great numbers, turning the creek pink each winter, as they always had. Today, Navi Mumbai is celebrated as Flamingo City. But behind that name is the reminder that places are often saved not by power, but by those who refuse to stop noticing what is being lost.

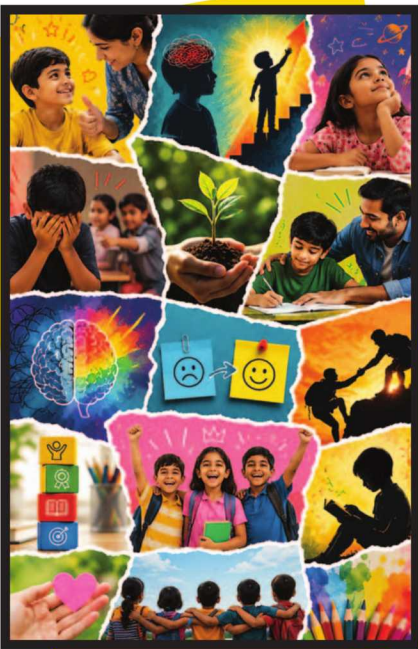
By MOHD ZIYAULLAH KHAN

When a child in primary or high school makes a mistake, what they need most is not punishment, they need guidance. They need words that build confidence, not words that destroy it. Modern psychology and neuroscience have repeatedly shown that the language adults use with children profoundly influences how children think, learn, and see themselves. The words spoken by parents, teachers, and coaches become part of a child's inner dialogue – the voice that either encourages them to persevere or convinces them to give up. Unfortunately, many parents and teachers still believe that harsh criticism, public humiliation, and repeated scolding are the quickest ways to improve behaviour or academic performance. Scientific research, however, suggests otherwise.

The Science Of Believing You Can Improve
Imagine two children.
Both struggle with mathematics.
The first child hears every day:
"You never understand anything."
"You always make mistakes."
"You'll never be able to do this."
Every mistake is highlighted in front of classmates.
The second child hears:
"You're making a good effort."
"I believe you can solve this problem."
"Let's find where you went wrong so you can improve."
"I'm confident you'll do better next time."
Both children receive the same lesson. The only difference is the words they hear.

This simple difference has been studied extensively. Psychologist Dr Carol Dweck of Stanford University spent decades researching what she calls the Growth Mindset. Her studies found that children who believe intelligence and ability can improve through effort consistently perform better than children who believe their abilities are fixed. More importantly, the language adults use plays a crucial role in shaping these beliefs.
In one landmark experiment, Dweck and Claudia Mueller found that children praised for their effort ("You worked hard") were far more likely to choose challenging tasks, persist after failure, and improve their performance than children praised merely for being "smart." (Mueller & Dweck, 1998, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology).

Encouragement Changes The Brain
Encouraging words do more than improve motivation. Research in educational neuroscience suggests that positive feedback activates the brain's reward system, increasing motivation and strengthening learning pathways. Studies using brain imaging have shown that supportive feedback stimulates areas associated with learning and cognitive control, while repeated humiliation and fear activate stress responses that interfere with memory and problem-solving.
Neuroscientist Dr Mary Helen Immordino-Yang has



shown that emotions are deeply connected to learning. Children learn more effectively when they feel emotionally safe, respected, and encouraged.
A Simple Example: Handwriting
Consider two children with equally poor handwriting. One child hears:
"Your handwriting is terrible. You'll never improve."
The other hears:
"You're improving. If you practise for ten minutes every day, your handwriting can become beautiful."
The handwriting is identical. The difference lies in the belief each child develops. One thinks:
"I'm bad at writing."
The other thinks:
"I can become better."
This reflects the psychological concept of self-efficacy, introduced by renowned psychologist Albert Bandura. Bandura demonstrated that people who believe they are capable of mastering a task are significantly more likely to persevere, practise consistently, recover from setbacks, and ultimately succeed. Confidence is not merely a result of success – it is often one of its causes.
Words Become A Child's Identity
Children hear thousands of comments from adults

The power of words

Words spoken today become a child's inner voice tomorrow. Choose encouragement that inspires growth, confidence and lifelong resilience...

every year.
Over time, these comments become the stories children tell themselves.
If a child repeatedly hears:
"You're useless."
"You'll never succeed."
"You're always careless."
Those statements gradually become part of their self-image.
Psychologists refer to this as the self-fulfilling prophecy. One of the most influential educational studies, conducted by Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson, demonstrated that teacher expectations alone can influence students' academic growth. Their famous study, Pygmalion in the Classroom (1968), found that students whom teachers believed had greater potential showed significantly greater academic improvement, even though the expectations had been created randomly.
In other words, what adults believe – and communicate – can influence what children become.
Public Humiliation Does Not Improve Learning
Many adults believe embarrassment teaches discipline. Research suggests the opposite. Studies on classroom climate consistently show that students who fear ridicule are less likely to ask questions, participate in discussions, or attempt difficult tasks.

Psychological safety – a concept widely researched by Dr Amy Edmondson – encourages people to take intellectual risks without fear of humiliation. While much of Edmondson's work focuses on workplaces, the same principle applies in classrooms: children learn more when they feel safe making mistakes.
Mistakes are not evidence of failure; they are evidence that learning is taking place.
The Lasting Effects Of Emotional Abuse
The impact of harsh words extends beyond school performance. The World Health Organization (WHO) recognises emotional abuse – including persistent belittling, humiliation, rejection, intimidation, and verbal attacks – as a form of child maltreatment that can have lifelong consequences for mental health, emotional development, and relationships.
Similarly, the American Academy of Pediatrics advises parents to avoid verbal humiliation and shaming because such practices increase stress, anxiety, aggression, and behavioural problems while failing to improve long-term behaviour.
This Principle Applies Everywhere
If a child is learning mathematics, sports, music, painting, public speaking, coding, or a new language,

improvement depends on persistence.
Persistence depends largely on confidence. Confidence grows when trusted adults communicate belief rather than contempt.
A coach who says,
"You can't do it. Sit down."
may unintentionally end a child's love for sport. A coach who says,
"Your speed is improving. Keep practising," helps build resilience.
The same principle applies to classrooms, homes, workplaces, and every stage of life.
Correct The Mistake, Not The Child
Children need correction. They need discipline. They need accountability. But none of these require humiliation. The goal of correction is to improve behaviour – not damage self-respect.
Research consistently shows that children respond best when adults provide constructive feedback that focuses on behaviour rather than personal worth.
Instead of saying,
"You're lazy," say,
"This assignment isn't finished yet. Let's plan how you'll complete it."
Instead of,
"You're hopeless at maths," say,
"You haven't mastered this chapter yet. Let's practise together."
One statement attacks identity. The other develops ability.
A Thought Worth Remembering
Children do not simply learn mathematics, science, languages, or history. They also learn who they believe they are. If adults repeatedly communicate,
"You can learn."
"You can improve."
"I believe in you."
Children are far more likely to develop resilience, confidence, and perseverance. If adults repeatedly communicate,
"You're a failure."
"You'll never succeed."
Many kids eventually stop trying – not because they lack ability, but because they lose belief in themselves. As educators and parents, our words become part of a child's future. The next time a child makes a mistake, look beyond the mistake. Look at the person they can become. A single sentence spoken with encouragement may influence the direction of an entire life.



The crisis of misinformation When public opinion becomes the judge...

By VEDIKA PATNI

There was a time when news travelled slowly. Facts were verified, multiple sources were consulted, and only then did a story reach the public. The process may have taken longer, but it was guided by one principle – that truth mattered more than speed. Today, that principle is under threat. In an age of smartphones, social media, and artificial intelligence, information reaches millions within seconds. Every breaking event becomes a trending hashtag, every eyewitness a reporter, and every smartphone owner a commentator. While this has made information more accessible than ever, it has also fuelled the rapid spread of misinformation. We now live in a world where rumours travel faster than facts, opinions are mistaken for evidence, and public perception often becomes more influential than the truth itself.
The recent Lohagar Fort case is a striking example. Soon after reports emerged of the tragic death of a young businessman and the arrest of his fiancée, social media platforms were flooded with opinions. Viral reels, posts, and forwards quickly transformed an ongoing investigation into what appeared to be a completed trial. The accused was labelled a 'killer' across countless posts, while people confidently discussed motives and punishment.
But how do we actually know?
Has a court examined every piece of evidence? Have all witnesses been questioned? Has the defence presented its case? This is not about defending the accused or questioning the investigation. It is about protecting one of the most fundamental principles of justice – the presumption of innocence until guilt is proven beyond reasonable doubt.
Police investigate, prosecutors present

evidence, defence lawyers challenge it, and judges evaluate every fact before arriving at a verdict. That process exists because history has repeatedly shown that first impressions are not always correct. Justice is deliberately slow because accuracy matters more than speed.
Social media, however, rewards the exact opposite. Algorithms promote content that is emotional, sensational, and engaging. A dramatic thirty-second video often influences public opinion more than a detailed investigation. In the race for attention, speculation frequently outruns facts. Artificial Intelligence has made this challenge even more serious. Deepfake technology can generate convincing

Truth takes time, but misinformation travels instantly. Responsible citizens verify first, think critically and refuse to become trial-by-social-media judges.

videos, clone voices, and manipulate images with remarkable realism. A fabricated speech, altered video, or fake interview can spread worldwide before journalists have the opportunity to verify it.
For generations, seeing was believing. Today, even seeing is no longer enough. Misinformation extends far beyond criminal cases. During elections, old videos are recirculated as current events. During natural disasters, unrelated images create panic. During health emergencies, fake medical advice spreads rapidly, often competing with guidance from doctors and public health authorities.
The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the real-world consequences of misinformation. False claims about miracle cures, vaccines, and fabricated government advisories circulated widely, leading many people to distrust scientific advice.

The result was not just confusion, but a genuine threat to public health.
Perhaps the greatest danger is that misinformation rarely disappears completely. Even after a false claim is disproved, the original rumour often reaches far more people than the correction. Reputations are damaged, public trust weakens, and misinformation continues to influence opinions long after the facts emerge.
This raises an important question: have we become impatient with the truth?
We live in a culture that demands instant conclusions. We expect every complex event to fit neatly into a simple story of heroes and villains. Real life, however, is rarely that straightforward. Investigations are complex, human behaviour is unpredictable, and the truth often takes time to emerge.
The responsibility for tackling misinformation does not rest solely with journalists, governments, or technology companies. It belongs to each one of us.
Before forwarding a message or sharing a post, we should ask a few simple questions. Who published this information? Has it been reported by credible news organisations? Does the headline present verified facts or merely allegations? Could the image or video have been manipulated or taken out of context?
A few seconds of verification can prevent enormous harm. Schools and universities must also recognise that digital literacy is no longer optional. Students need to learn not only how to use technology but also how to question it – to distinguish verified journalism from opinion, evidence from assumption, and facts from viral content.

Technology companies, too, have a responsibility to reduce the spread of misleading content by investing in stronger fact-checking, transparency, and responsible algorithms. Traditional journalism must continue to defend its greatest strength – credibility. In the race to be first, the media must never forget its duty to be right. The strength of a democracy depends on informed citizens. Courts rely on evidence. Journalism relies on verification. Society relies on trust.
If we allow misinformation to replace facts, outrage to replace reason, and assumptions to replace evidence, we weaken not only our institutions but also our own ability to think critically.
The next time a sensational story appears on your phone, resist the temptation to become an instant judge. Remember that every accused person deserves a fair trial, every viral video may not tell the complete story, and every headline has another side waiting to be heard.
In a world overflowing with information, the most powerful habit we can cultivate is not sharing more or reacting faster – it is thinking more. Every click shapes an opinion, and every opinion has the power to shape a life.

By C S KRISHNAMURTHY

A friend recently smiled and asked me, "Why do you write such long articles? By the time I finish one, I could have watched twenty reels!" It was a fair question. In an age where our thumbs move faster than our thoughts, anything that takes more than a minute to consume often feels like a burden. We skim, swipe and scroll. But have we ever paused to ask ourselves a few uncomfortable questions? Are we absorbing knowledge or merely collecting headlines? Are we becoming wiser, or merely becoming faster? Speed is a wonderful servant, but a poor teacher.
Quick consumption
Short videos, reels and bite-sized posts certainly have their place. They introduce ideas, summarise events and satisfy curiosity. Yet they rarely take us beneath the surface. Genuine understanding demands something slower and richer. Reading does exactly that.
Unlike skimming, deep reading compels the brain to pause, con-

nect ideas and build meaning. That is why many of us still remember the characters from novels we read decades ago, while yesterday's viral reel has already faded into oblivion.
There is a reason schools still rely heavily on books despite living in the age of unlimited video. If watching alone could replace learning, textbooks would have disappeared long ago.
Reading is a remarkable mental activity that engages several parts of the brain simultaneously. Vision recognises words, language interprets them, memory connects them with earlier experiences, reasoning analyses them, and emotion gives them life. It is rather like an orchestra where every instrument contributes to a single beautiful performance.
More importantly, reading allows us to discover meanings that are never explicitly written. We read between the lines. Every reader arrives at a slightly different understanding because each mind carries its own experiences, beliefs and memories. That is the quiet magic of the written word.
Living words
Have you noticed that a favourite novel often leaves a stronger emotional imprint than the

Beyond the scroll



and feel the breeze. Words do not merely describe a world. They invite us to build one.
Ironically, I have explained this through another long article. But I remain convinced that lasting knowledge is cultivated slowly. A wise old English proverb reminds us, "Still waters run deep." Depth has never depended on speed. I do not read because I write. I write because I read.
In truth, I spend far more time reading than writing. Every article I produce is simply the harvest of countless pages that others have written before me.
So, whenever you read a thoughtful article, approach it as you would a nourishing meal rather than a hurried snack. Some ideas deserve to simmer before they satisfy.
My heartfelt thanks to everyone who patiently reads, shares and encourages my writing. Your kindness keeps my curiosity alive.
After all, a field produces its finest crop not when it is scratched lightly across acres, but when a small patch is tilled with care. The mind is no different. It flourishes not by touching everything briefly, but by understanding a few things deeply.

THE GOLDEN STANDARD

An era doesn't end with silence; it lingers in every familiar tune. With the passing of Asha Bhosle, the last of Hindi cinema's legendary golden quintet has taken her final bow. Mukesh, Kishore Kumar, Mohammed Rafi, Lata Mangeshkar and Asha Bhosle may no longer be with us, but together they left behind a treasury of songs that continues to comfort, celebrate and connect generations of listeners.

Abhi Na Jao Chhod Kar, Yeh Chand Sa Roshan Chehra, Jeena Yahan Marna Yahan, Awara Hoon, Pyar Kiya To Darna Kya, Lag Ja Gale, In Aankhon Ki Masti, Chura Liya, Dil Cheez and Mera Kuchh Saaman... The many thousands of songs from the golden five will pass from one generation to another like heirlooms, but with no new additions.

"The era has come to an end with the passing of Asha ji. These artists never considered singing as their job. It was their passion and they gave it their all. The generation after them has not been able to create that same kind of great music because cinema has changed and OTT has arrived," lyricist Sameer told PTI.

In an interview to PTI on her 90th birthday, Bhosle called herself 'the Last Mughal'. And she was not off the mark. The Mangeshkar sisters did rule the industry like true queens. "It feels good when people love our songs, even out of India and within. It is because some of the old songs were very well written, well composed and well sung. All the singers would sing so well, be it Mohammed Rafi sahab, Kishore, Mukesh ji, and others. 'Abhi, sab khali ho gaya hai' (Today, it feels empty)," she recalled.

Mukesh, Mohammed Rafi, Kishore Kumar, Lata Mangeshkar and Asha Bhosle may be gone, but together they created a musical legacy that continues to comfort, inspire and unite generations, making them the eternal soundtrack of India's collective memory.

The singer said she once contemplated a concert with Lata Mangeshkar, titled "The Last Mughal".

"I just said like that because Didi (Mangeshkar) had said we both sisters will do a show and we will call it 'Last Mughal'. That thing was playing in my head; hence this came out. I didn't mean to say that 'I'm a maharani or I'm great', what I meant is I know the industry closely for many years," she said at the time.

Lata Mangeshkar died in February 2022. Many singers, lyricists, cinema and music critics are of the view that it is impossible to have a career like the five greats.

Singer Madhushree, known for hits such as *Tumhe Aaj Maine Jo Dekha and Kabhi Neem Neem*, agreed with Mughals analogue. "She, along with Lata ji, Rafi Sahab, Mukesh Sahab, and Kishore Da, truly represented the last of the 'Mughals' of that unmatched golden era of Indian music. "They were fortunate to work with extraordinary lyricists, visionary music directors, and passionate producers who together created magic that remains timeless. That combination of talent, poetry, melody, and soul is very rare to find today," she said.

According to music critic Rajiv Vijaykar, the five great singing stars had voices that could match with all actors. "They were in their own league. Youngsters today are still singing Rafi, Mukesh, Kishore, Udit (Narayan) and (Kumar) Sanu songs on reality shows. They are not singing beyond Sonu Nigam and Shreya. That spark is missing completely," he said.

Bhosle's career, which started when she was just 10 and went on for some eight decades, is testimony to how a great artist can ride the highest crests and

deepest troughs through dint of talent and discipline.

She held a Guinness World Records as the most recorded artist in music history with 11,000 plus songs in over 20 Indian languages since 1947, singing for Madhubala, Sadhna and Tanuja to Urmila Matondkar and Tanuja's daughter Kajol.

It's a remarkable career that came despite the overwhelming popularity of Lata, her elder sister and an already established star. The fact that Asha managed to stand out on her own is no small feat. "She was a powerful singer whose knowledge of both classical and Western music was incredible. I've been in the industry for 40 years, as have Alka (Yagnik) Ji and Kavita (Krishnamurthi) Ji, but the singers of today may not have a career as long as Asha and Lata ji, or even half of theirs," singer Kumar Sanu told PTI.

The singer, who collaborated with Asha on a number of hits in the 90s including *Tumhari Nazron Mein Humne Dekha, Chehra Kya Dekhte Ho, Mujhko To Kuchh Kuchh Hota Hai*, said he feels lucky to have worked with her.

"Asha Ji worked until the very end, collaborating with composers and singers across various generations. We are still here and willing to lend our voices, but there aren't enough exciting opportunities that do justice to the legacy we've created," he said.

According to film historian, author and archivist S M M Ausaja, Asha was the last of the legends to leave.

"There's no one half as good as her. Most of the singers today don't have any clue about raga and traditional way of singing, besides they don't have knowledge about Hindustani music, especially Urdu diction was impeccable in both the Mangeshkar sisters," Ausaja said.

Ausaja believes the connection that the listeners had with their favourite artists was deeper, as music was not just a medium of entertainment.

"These people were rooted to traditional music, the composers had a history of Indian classical music, besides there was poetry in those lyrics, the poetry enhances the music. Hence, the songs were masterpieces, which are long lasting and are being redone today. Today's music is a mixture, it has no soul, today there's no poetry left. There's a dearth of creativity," he said.

Madhushree disagreed.

"The new generation of lyricists, music directors, and singers are creating some beautiful work too in their own way and for their own time. The music industry is still capable of creating songs that could be remembered for 50+ years but it will look (and sound) very different.

"Everything today moves much faster.

Attention spans are shorter, consumption is instant via streaming, and songs often hook listeners in the first 10-15 seconds or they get skipped. That doesn't mean depth or longevity is impossible, it just means the path to enduring relevance has changed," she said.

The curtains may have fallen on Mukesh, Kishore Kumar, Mohammed Rafi, Lata Mangeshkar and Asha Bhosle, but legends do not fade with time. They continue to live in every road trip playlist, every wedding band, every radio request, every humming grandparent and every young singer chasing a dream. Their voices have outlived the films they sang for, the stars they lent themselves to and even the era they defined. Together, they were not merely playback singers—they were the soundtrack of a nation's memories. And long after the applause has ended, India will keep singing with them. ■



Actor Tillotama Shome says there was a time in her career when she would not know when she will get her next movie but it all changed with the success of projects like *Sir*, which introduced to her to a new set of audiences.

Shome is regarded as one of the most versatile performers in the industry, known for her wide-ranging work in projects such as *Qissa, Sir, Lust Stories 2, Delhi Crime 2, Pataal Lok 2, The Night Manager*, and the recently released film, *Ikka* co-starring Sunny Deol and Akshaye Khanna.

"I think more things can happen (career wise); I've the capacity to take more. But what is new is that earlier in my career, when one film was coming out, I didn't know what I was going to do next. That has changed. I've a lot more work," Shome told PTI in an interview.

The actor expressed gratitude to filmmakers for willing to cast her in diverse roles.

"There are many directors, who have bet on me and trusted me with something, even though I've not played a part like that before. So, these are the new things that perhaps didn't happen five-ten years ago in my career," she said.

Shome said her biggest hope is to continue earning the trust of both audiences and filmmakers through her work.

"I hope (to work with new) directors, they trust me and I don't betray their trust, I don't get lazy, get opportunities that challenge me. I don't give into inertia, boredom, I stay open and flexible."

Shome made her acting debut in 2001 with *Monsoon Wedding*, directed by Mira Nair, but said the film's success did not immediately translate into opportunities for her. She moved to New York for a master's program in educational theatre at New York University for four years.

"I didn't think I would come back to acting. But after I came back here, I realised, 'Oh, it's not so easy to act in a film. It's hard to get work'. But it's a very saturated industry, it's competitive, and all that things that you hear are also true," the actor recalled.

"The real challenge began when I became a full-time actor. There were many dark days, days where I couldn't believe in myself. But luckily, I had people who believed in me," Shome added.

She then featured in films like Dibakar Banerjee's *Shanghai*, *Qissa* with Irrfan Khan, Manoj Bajpayee-starrer, *Budhia Singh - Born to Run*, Konkana Sen Sharma-directed, *A Death in the Gunj*, *Hindi Medium*, and Rohena Gera's *Sir*, among others.

The 47-year-old actor said each project has shaped her as an actor. However, it was *Sir*, that marked a turning point in her career. She played the lead role of Ratna, a young determined widow, who works as a domestic worker. "It (film) reached a pan-India audience that had not experienced my work and that changed in terms of directors being able to push forward my name, who knew my work from *Monsoon Wedding*, etc," she said, adding that producers now saw her as a familiar pan-Indian face.

Several of her streaming projects, including *Delhi Crime 2*, *Paatal Lok 2*, and others came after the film's success.

Shome was last seen in *Ikka*, by director Siddharth Malhotra, alongside actors Sunny Deol and Akshaye Khanna. The actor said she initially thought it's a prank call when Malhotra called to offer her a role in the movie. "I had not done a film of this kind. The grammar was new to me, it had a certain taste, energy, which was all very exciting for me to try," she said.

The actor praised Deol, describing him as a "generous co-actor", who is shy and yet warm. Recounting her first interaction with Deol, Shome said she was struck by his silver shoes when he arrived on set. She was curious to know where they were from and, her first question to him was about them.

Shome said that during the shoot, Deol was going through a difficult time as his father, the late Dharmendra was unwell.

"There was that vulnerability and he was still showing up at work. It was quite a lesson watching him being so open about the fact that they are very emotional men, who don't shy away from crying and expressing their emotions while they play such larger-than-life action heroes," she said.

Shome is now looking forward to start a feature by the end of the month.

"It's horror genre and I haven't done that before so I'm excited," she said. ■



If you watched Christopher Nolan's *The Odyssey* and found yourself doing a double take when Lupita Nyong'o appeared as Helen of Troy — the woman whose face, as Homer famously had it, launched a thousand ships — you were not alone. Audiences around the world had the same moment of pause. Some shrugged and moved on. Many did not.

The casting of the Kenyan-Mexican Oscar winner as the legendary Greek beauty has become one of the most heated cultural arguments of 2026 — part genuine intellectual debate about mythology, representation and artistic licence, and part something considerably less elevated.

Let us try to separate the two.

What history and mythology actually say

Helen of Troy, it is worth remembering first, is not a historical figure. She is a mythological one — the daughter, according to Greek legend, of Zeus, who disguised himself as a swan to conceive her with a mortal woman, and she was born from an egg. Nyong'o herself has leaned on that detail when addressing crit-

ics, pointing out that Helen was never a documented historical figure to begin with.

Ancient texts do describe Helen in particular ways. Homer's epithets for her include references to fair skin and golden hair — physical descriptors that have, over centuries, calcified into a very specific Western visual template: the blonde, white, classically Mediterranean beauty. It is from this template that the casting of Nyong'o departs so visibly, and it is this departure that has driven the backlash.

In Greece itself, enthusiasm over Nolan's blockbuster — which was partially filmed at some of the country's most recognisable historical sites, including the Palace of Nestor in Pylos — quickly gave way to controversy, with far-right commentators arguing that Nyong'o's casting did not align with traditional depictions of Helen.

The debate then went global. Elon Musk, responding to a user's claim that the rumoured casting was "an insult to the author" because Homer described Helen as "fair-skinned" and "blonde," wrote simply: "Chris Nolan has lost his integrity." Conservative commentator Matt Walsh went further, writing that "not one person on the planet actually thinks that Lupita Nyong'o is the most beautiful woman in

never satisfactorily answered: is colour-blind casting a neutral artistic choice, or is it a political one? And if it is a political one — which it clearly is — does it serve the story, or does it serve a different agenda entirely?

Nyong'o herself has been direct about the intention. "This is a mythological story," she said, implying the character was open to reinterpretation. "Our cast is representative of the world," she told *Elle* magazine. "I'm not spending my time thinking of a defense. The criticism will exist whether I engage with it or not."

That is a dignified response. It is also, notably, not an artistic argument — it is a political one. "Representative of the world" is a diversity brief, not a creative brief. And when a director as meticulous as Christopher Nolan — whose production reportedly built a fully seaworthy ship to recreate Odysseus' voyage, and whose composer Ludwig Göransson avoided traditional musical instruments in the interest of historical authenticity — applies extraordinary rigour to every element of the film except the racial identity of its central characters, the inconsistency is at least worth noting. Nolan has not explained his casting choices publicly in any great detail.

Nyong'o is not even the first Black actress to play Helen of Troy — Eartha Kitt portrayed the character onstage in a 1950 adaptation — which suggests this is less a radical rupture than an extension of a long creative tradition of reinterpretation. Mythology, after all, has always been retold.

Where the line is

The honest answer is that there is no clean line, and anyone who claims there is — on either side of this argument — is probably motivated by something other than clarity. Casting a Black actress as Helen of Troy in a mythological epic is a different proposition to casting a Black actress as, say, Anne Boleyn or Marie Curie — real historical figures whose documented identities carry a different kind of claim on accuracy.

Mythology is, by definition, interpretive territory. Homer himself was almost certainly not a single person. The Trojan War may not have happened at all. Helen's appearance is a literary device, not a historical record.

What is worth scrutinising, however, is whether Hollywood's current approach to diversity casting is actually serving audiences of colour — or whether it is a form of institutional box-ticking that generates controversy, dominates the cultural conversation, and ultimately distracts from the more structural question of whether those same studios are commissioning original stories with Black, Asian and brown protagonists at their centre, rather than retrofitting them into existing white European myths. Lupita Nyong'o is a magnificent actress. She deserved a role written for her, not borrowed from Homer. Whether she got it, in *The Odyssey*, is for each audience member to decide. ■

The Colour Of Myth

You Watched *The Odyssey* And Wondered: Why Is Lupita Playing Helen Of Troy? You Are Not Alone...

the world" and calling Nolan a "coward."

Those comments, whatever their authors intended, crossed quickly from cultural critique into something uglier. Walsh's statement — that an Oscar-winning actress of Nyong'o's calibre cannot be considered beautiful — is not a historical argument. It is a racial one, dressed in the language of mythology.

Strip away the ugliest voices and a legitimate question remains, one that goes well beyond *The Odyssey* and well beyond Lupita Nyong'o. We have, in recent years, watched a systematic reimagining of established historical and mythological figures through the lens of present-day inclusion politics. Bridgerton reimagines Regency England as a racially integrated society it emphatically was not.

Netflix's *Cleopatra* cast a Black actress as the Ptolemaic queen — herself almost certainly of Macedonian Greek descent — and triggered an international furore. Disney has systematically diversified fairy tale princesses, Arthurian knights, and now Greek heroes.

The intention behind all of this is not difficult to understand. Generations of audiences who were systematically excluded from the heroic narratives of Western culture deserve to see themselves reflected in those stories. That is a real and legitimate aspiration.

But the execution raises a question that the industry has

