

## #SCIENCE

### Racing Fire: The Parker Solar Probe's Daring Mission to Touch the Sun

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The Sun, a blazing ball of fire, the center of our solar system, and the reason life exists on Earth. For centuries, humans have gazed at it in awe, wondering about its secrets. But how do you study something so powerful, so 'untouchable'?

#### A Mission Like No Other

Imagine sending a spacecraft into a furnace hotter than a million ovens combined, sounds impossible, right? Well, the Parker Solar Probe is built just for that. Launched in 2018, this fearless explorer is diving closer to the Sun than any spacecraft

#### Unlocking the Sun's Biggest Secrets

Here's the burning question (literally): Why is the Sun's corona, the outermost layer, hotter than its surface? Logic suggests that temperatures should decrease as you move away from the Sun's core, yet the corona blazes at millions of degrees while the surface is just around 5,500°C. The Parker Solar Probe is flying straight into this mystery, gathering real-time data to help scientists understand this puzzling solar paradox. And then, there's the solar

#### Magnetic Fields: The Sun's Invisible Puppeteers

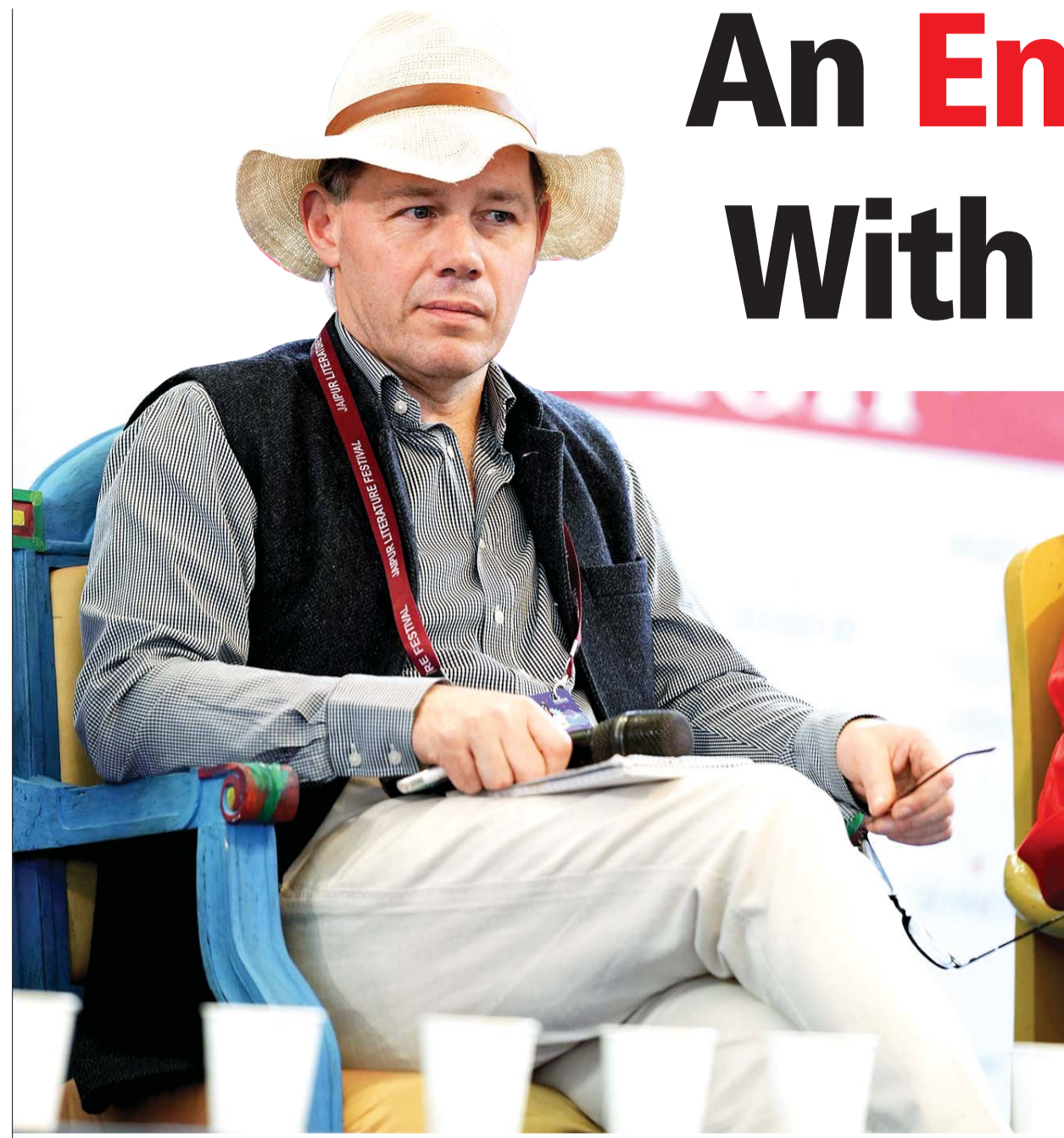
If the Sun were a magician, its magnetic fields would be the invisible strings pulling off spectacular tricks, solar flares, coronal mass ejections (CMEs), and gigantic explosions of plasma. These outbursts have the power to

#### Shaping the Future of Space Exploration

Why stop at protecting Earth? The Sun's influence stretches far beyond our planet, shaping the atmospheres of other celestial bodies. Take Mars, for example. Its one-thick atmosphere was stripped away by relentless solar winds. Understanding this process could help us unlock planetary evolution

#### A Historic Leap for Humanity

This mission isn't just about science, it's about pushing boundaries, about humanity's relentless curiosity. Named after Dr. Eugene Parker, the astrophysicist who first theorized solar wind, this probe is a testament to human ingenuity and our unstoppable desire to explore the unknown. With each daring dive towards the Sun, it's



# An Engagement With The World

From the streets of Kolkata to the war zones of Afghanistan, Christopher de Bellaigue has spent decades chronicling the stories that shape our world. With a keen eye for detail and an unquenchable thirst for truth, he has traversed continents, immersing himself in cultures, conflicts, and revolutions. When we caught up with him at the Jaipur Literature Festival 2025, it sparked a candid conversation which took us through his journey, one of adventure, discovery, and relentless pursuit of understanding.



Shailaza Singh  
Published Author,  
Poet and a YouTuber

#### What made you want to become a journalist?

Christopher de Bellaigue is a journalist and author, best known for his works, 'The Islamic Enlightenment' and 'The Lion House'. Having covered significant events in the Middle East and South Asia, his career has been marked by a deep engagement with history, culture, and conflict. A former correspondent for *India Today* and *The Economist*, de Bellaigue has spent years immersing himself in the regions he writes about, learning languages and experiencing firsthand the tensions and transformations shaping these societies. In this interview at the Jaipur Literature Festival 2025, he shares his journey, motivations, and insights from decades of reporting.

#### What was your first real assignment like?

Christopher de Bellaigue: My first major story was an investigation into the illegal trade of historical artifacts in India. I had to pretend to be the son of an antique dealer. At the time, there was a craze in England for turning doors and window frames from Indian havelis into glass tables. While

#### How did you navigate and understand these countries so well?

Christopher de Bellaigue: When you arrive in a new country, especially on a difficult assignment, the first experience is often an airport or a border crossing. It's rarely pleasant. In Iran, for example, people had a certain perception of it from the outside. When I lived in Turkey in the late 1980s, my Turkish friends, who were very secular, would ask, "Why do

#### What makes India special to you?

Christopher de Bellaigue: India shaped me. When I was 18, I worked in an orphanage in West Bengal, taking care of six children who had been badly treated. That experience left a deep mark on me. I saw love, kindness, and trust. India has a sense of humour I greatly enjoy and, of course, I love the food. Eating with my hands always felt natural.



started even before that. I had spent almost 18 months between school and university, travelling as a backpacker. I was on a shoestring budget of \$10 a day, and I spent a lot of time in India, along with other countries. But India particularly marked me.

I went back to Cambridge University, and I changed my course when I got home. Instead of doing History of Art, I switched to Indian and Persian studies. I knew I didn't want to stay in Cambridge for too long. It felt restrictive, a small town where I couldn't fully engage with the world I had just discovered. I was waiting to get out. In my last term at Cambridge, I wrote a letter to Arun Puri, the editor and owner of *India Today*, asking for a job. It was a long shot. Three months later, in 1993, I received a reply. He offered me a staff writer's salary, not a huge amount, and asked if I could survive. I said, "Well, I'll have to." So, I found a little flat and started working at *India Today*.

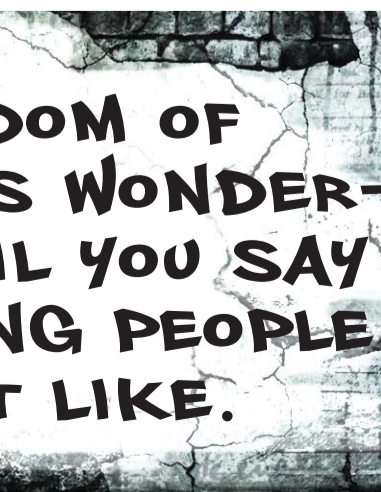
#### How did you navigate and understand these countries so well?

Christopher de Bellaigue: I was there for about a year before I got an offer from *The Economist* to be their correspondent in Turkey. I stayed in Turkey for five years, and then I moved to Iran, where I lived for seven years. During that time, I covered the war on terror and witnessed firsthand the transformations happening in the Middle East.

Some people become journalists because they love the truth. Others do it because they love the story. I became a journalist because I wanted to get away. I wanted to travel, and I wanted to write. Over time, I learned what a story was, and eventually, I understood what the truth was. But initially, my main goal was just to be a foreign correspondent and see the

#### What do you think drives the Taliban's ideology?

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## #CHASING TRUTH



temples were being dismantled and transported illegally to America. I visited warehouses and godowns, speaking to dealers and seeing firsthand the extent of the destruction. It was shocking. I broke the story, and it turned into a five-page cover piece. I was proud of it. People at *India Today* said that I did a great job, and that was when I really felt like a journalist.

#### How was your first experience in Iran and Turkey?

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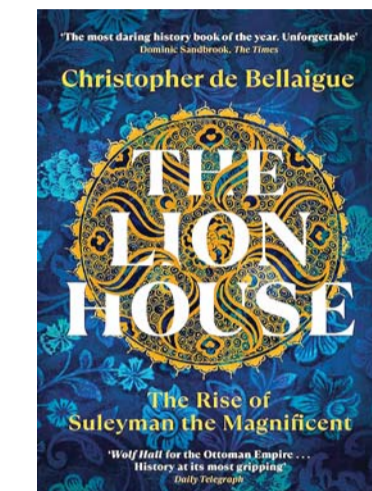
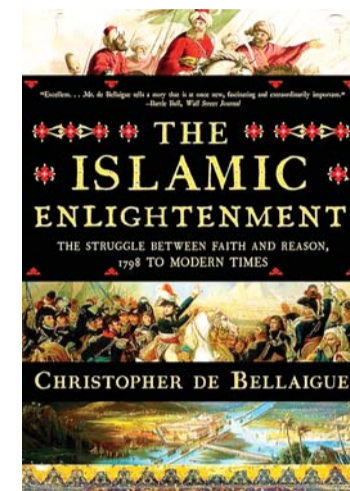
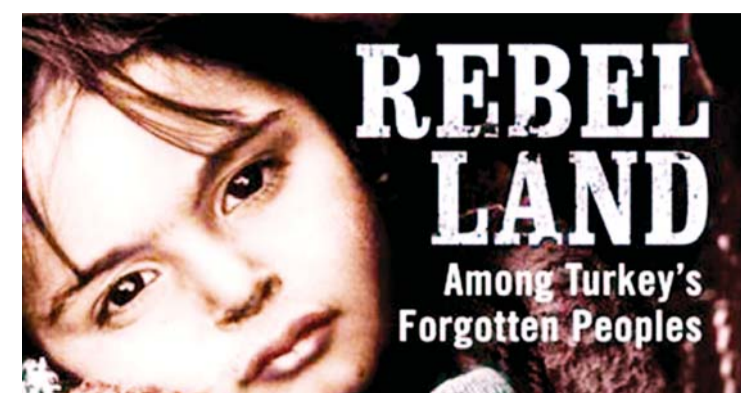
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## International Scribble Day

Everyone can scribble, from the youngest children to the oldest adults! And the best part? Scribbling is a delightful way to relieve stress. It's a fantastic emotional outlet and a great way to create art. So, why not join the fun of International Scribble Day, where we celebrate this amazingly simple activity? All you need is a piece of paper and a writing utensil, and you're all set to join in the fun! With the stroke of a pen, ideas come to life through scribbling. So, let your creativity flow and unleash the power of the doodle!



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#### Can you share an experience where you blended in and learned something unforgettable?

Christopher de Bellaigue: One of my most memorable experiences was in Herat, Afghanistan, in November 2001, just two days after the Taliban had left. The city was transforming overnight. The men were all at barber shops, shaving off their beards, music was being played in the streets, and people were dancing for the first time in years. But the scars of the Taliban remained. A local man befriended me and took me to a cemetery. He pointed to a burial site and said, "Two weeks ago, the Taliban killed three of my friends because they were in a opposition. Their families have come to retrieve their bodies for proper burial." I watched as they unearthed the remains, identified distinguishing marks, and mourned their loved ones. The grief, pride, and resilience were overwhelming. It was a moment of raw humanity, and it stayed with me.



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## #CULTURE

# India's Stage: A Theatrical Legacy on World Theatre Day

As the final bow is taken and the curtains fall, one truth remains, Indian theatre is timeless. It is not merely an art, it is an emotion, a revolution, a legacy.



The spotlight rises, the curtains part, and the stage breathes life into stories waiting to be told. Theatre is more than just an art form, it is a mirror reflecting society, a voice challenging norms, and a canvas upon which human emotions are painted in their rawest form. As the world unites to celebrate World Theatre Day today, India stands as a testament to the undying spirit of the theatrical expression, a legacy that has evolved over millennia.



#### A Journey Through Time: India's Theatrical Heritage

The story of Indian theatre is as old as civilization itself, a journey that began with the *Natya Shastra*, penned by Bharata over two thousand years ago. The grand epics, 'Mahabharata' and 'Ramayana', first found their voice in dramatic retellings, performed in royal courts and temple courtyards. Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* and Bhasa's plays set the gold standard for classical theatre, where poetic dialogues and elaborate expressions formed the essence of storytelling. But theatre in India is not confined to the grandeur of classical Sanskrit drama. It thrives in the vibrant folk traditions of 'Jatra'

#### From Stage to Screen: Theatrical Roots of India's Iconic Performers

Some of India's most revered actors began their journey under the stage lights before conquering television and cinema. The late Irrfan Khan, before mesmerizing the world with his subtle brilliance, sharpened his skills on stage. Naseeruddin Shah and Ratna Pathak Shah, both theatre veterans, continue to oscillate between stage and screen, proving that theatre is where true artistry is forged.



#### A Standing Ovation for India's Theatre

World Theatre Day is not just a celebration, it is an ode to the storytellers, the dreamers, and the visionaries who step onto the stage night after night, breathing life into characters that make us laugh, cry, and reflect. It is a tribute to an art form that has shaped India's cultural identity, one performance at a time.

#### Theatre as a Voice of Change

In the bylans of bustling cities and quiet corners of small towns, street theatre, *nukkad natak*, remains an unfiltered voice of the people. Groups like Jana Natya Manch use theatre to challenge societal injustices, turning sidewalks into stages and passersby into audiences. At a time when digital media dominates, these performances serve as a reminder that live theatre holds an unparalleled power, it is immediate, it is raw, and it is deeply personal.

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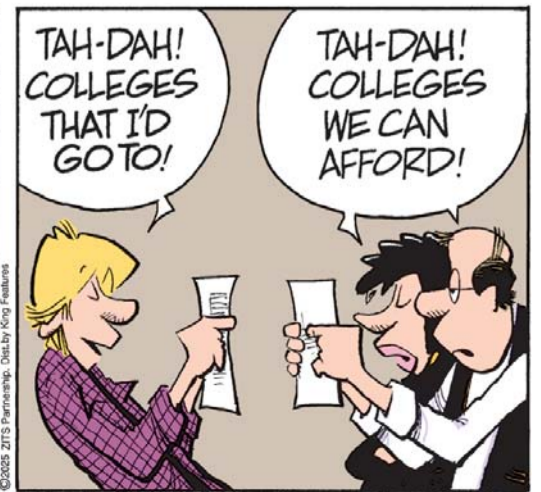


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By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman