



Universal Music Day

Music history dates as far back as human history. In fact, historians tend to believe that music actually predated language in the development of human culture. Human infants even make noises that are very much like singing, and this happens far earlier than they are able to develop language skills. Founded as a global celebration that embodies the freedom and self-expression of music, Universal Music Day got its start in 2007 as the brain child of Susan Patricia Golden. Believing that music is the greatest gift that humans can give themselves

#MIND&BODY

## Brain Is Rewired During Pregnancy

Pregnancy can lead to long-term rewiring of the female brain



Researchers at the Francis Crick Institute have shown that pregnancy hormones 'rewire' the brain to prepare mice for motherhood.

Their findings, published on Oct 9 in Science, show that both oestrogen and progesterone act on a small population of neurons in the brain to switch on parental behaviour even before offspring arrive. These adaptations resulted in stronger and more selective responses to pups.

It is well known that while virgin female rodents do not show much interaction with pups, mothers spend most of their time looking after young. It was thought that hormones released when giving birth are most crucial for this onset of maternal behaviour.

But earlier research also showed that rats who have given birth by Caesarean section, and virgin mice exposed to pregnancy hormones, still display this maternal behaviour, suggesting that hormone changes already during pregnancy may be more important.

In the current study, the researchers found that female mice indeed showed increased parental behaviour during late pregnancy, and that exposure to pups wasn't necessary for this change in behaviour.

They found that a population of nerve cells (galanin-expressing neurons) in an area of the brain called the medial preoptic area (MPOA) in the hypothalamus, associated with parenting, was impacted by oestrogen and progesterone.

Brain recordings showed that oestrogen simultaneously reduced the baseline activity of these neurons and made them more excitable, whereas progesterone rewired their inputs, by recruiting more synapses (sites of communication between neurons).

Making these neurons insensitive to hormones completely removed the onset of

parental behaviour during pregnancy. Mice failed to show parental behaviour even after giving birth, suggesting there is a critical period during pregnancy when these hormones take effect.

While some of these changes lasted for at least a month after giving birth, others seem to be permanent, suggesting pregnancy can lead to long-term rewiring of the female brain.

Jonny Kohl, Group Leader of the State-Dependent Neural Processing Laboratory at the Crick, said: "We know that the female body changes during pregnancy to prepare for bringing up young. One example is the production of milk, which starts long before giving birth. Our research shows that such preparations are taking place in the brain, too."

"We think that these changes, often referred to as 'baby brain', cause a change in priority – virgin mice focus on mating, so don't need to respond to other females' pups, whereas mothers need to perform robust parental behaviour to ensure pup survival. What's fascinating is that this switch doesn't happen at birth – the brain is preparing much earlier for this big life change."

Rachida Ammari, postdoctoral fellow at the Crick, and first author along with PhD student Francesco Monaco, said: "We've demonstrated that there's a window of plasticity in the brain to prepare for future behavioural challenges. These neurons receive a large number of inputs from elsewhere in the brain, so now we're hoping to understand where this new information comes from."

The researchers believe the brain may also be rewired in a similar way during pregnancy in humans, as the same hormonal changes are expected to impact the same areas of the brain. This could influence parental behaviour alongside environmental and social cues.



# Covering Vishwanath Pratap Singh Was The Turning Point

Through her years as a journalist, Neerja Chowdhury focused on a wide array of subjects, ranging from social issues to political developments. Her reporting has often been commended for its research, balanced perspective, and a deep understanding of the complexities of Indian politics as well as society. Behind the scenes, her work often took her to various corners of the country. It brought her the assorted experience of sometimes getting to seek shelter at the homes of wealthy people and, at times, spending nights on the benches of colleges – as she shared during the Prabha Khaitan Foundation event.



Shreya Biswas  
Multimedia journalist and editor

To me, the name 'Neerja' always brings back memories of sweltering summer afternoons in Kolkata, reading Rabindranath Tagore's Malancha while swaying on a plastic hammock in our front yard. But

the 'Neerja' of Tagore's novella – who is largely remembered as the frail victim of a patriarchal society – sits in absolute contrast to her namesake about whom I am writing today.

With an illustrious career that spans over four decades, veteran journalist Neerja Chowdhury has built her presence as a resilient figure in the landscape of Indian journalism. Since the 1970s, Chowdhury has been navigating through the complex world of journalism in India with her incisive reporting and commentary, largely analysing the intricate tapestry of Indian politics, government policies, and international relations.

Her countless reportages document some of the most important and pivotal moments in the nation's history, captured in a score of momentous publications including The Times of India and The Indian Express.

Beginning her career with Himmat

Neerja Chowdhury candidly shared her introduction to a



Veteran journalist Neerja Chowdhury, be it in her book or her countless news articles, articulates her narrations in such a way that makes her subjects come alive in her readers' minds. (Image courtesy: Aleph Book Company/Twitter)



career in journalism in an interaction at a recent event hosted by the Prabha Khaitan Foundation. She said that she "strayed into journalism accidentally". Chowdhury had originally pursued a degree in architecture at the School of Architecture and Planning in New Delhi. However,

she left that path halfway after she met biographer, historian and former member of the Rajya Sabha Rajmohan Gandhi, who at that point was running Himmat, an English weekly based out of Mumbai (then Bombay). The

meeting encouraged her to realise her true passion.

Chowdhury then began her career as a journalist at Himmat in the midst of the Emergency in the 1970s. And it was "really an exciting period" for Chowdhury, as she told journalist Madhu Trehan in an interview with the latter's media outlet Newslandia a few years ago.

Recounting her experience of working for this publication, Chowdhury shared with a laugh how, after writing an article about a high-profile wedding, she was "given a rocket" for describing the groom's outfit as a "silk kurta" when it was actually a kurta made from khadi material. Such learning experiences, in my view, are what inculcate the importance of fact-checking in a journalist's mind.

Neerja Chowdhury, in this interview, also spoke about the difficulty that her team faced with the printing presses at the time, and how, toward the end of the Emergency, they would be forced

## #NEERJA CHOWDHURY



Speaking about his experience of reading Neerja Chowdhury's newly released book, How Prime Ministers Decide, Neerja Chowdhury noted that it reveals how the Indian government functions, and uncovers the mistakes of various political parties. (Image courtesy: Aleph Book Company/Twitter)

to go from one printing press to another to get the journal published each week. In a bid to change the situation, the publication began asking the readers to chip in whatever they could so that they could afford a printing press of their own. Unfortunately, though, the publication of the weekly magazine had to be shut down in 1980 due to lack of funds. This experience made her realise that one could "fight the censorship of the government, but it was more difficult to fight the market forces".

Lessons on writing with a human touch & getting your facts right

Through her years as a journalist, Neerja Chowdhury focused on a wide array of subjects, ranging from social issues to political developments. Her reporting has often been commended for its research, balanced perspective, and a deep understanding of the complexities of Indian politics as well as society. Behind the scenes, her work often took her to various corners of the country. It brought her the assorted experience of sometimes getting to seek shelter at the homes of wealthy people and, at times, spending nights on the benches of colleges – as she shared during the Prabha Khaitan Foundation event. But the path to

finding your footing in the jungle of journalism can be riddled with hurdles. Chowdhury shared that getting back on what she described as "the conveyor belt" was not easy. At one point in her career, she had to take up a job at The Press Institute that initially paid a salary of Rs 500 (before eventually raising it to Rs 750).

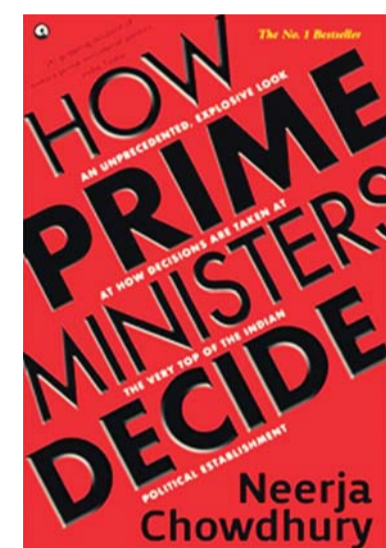
In 1982, Chowdhury joined The Statesman as the Civil Rights correspondent, a role that allowed her to cover issues like child labour, bonded labour, undertrials in jail, etc. While following up on one such story – as she shared during the above-mentioned discussion – Chowdhury found herself in a corner of rural Bihar where she had arrived to meet an undertrial who had been in Muzaffarpur jail for over 30 years. After she wrote the story, it gave way to a Public Interest Litigation (PLI) and, eventually, this became the "first case" where an undertrial was given compensation, Chowdhury shared.

Speaking about her experience



## PART-1

With an illustrious career that spans over four decades, veteran journalist Neerja Chowdhury has built her presence as a resilient figure in the landscape of Indian journalism. (Image source: Neerja Chowdhury/Twitter)



The cover of veteran journalist Neerja Chowdhury's newly released book, How Prime Ministers Decide.

At the Statesman during her interview with Newslandia, she described it as "the paper which gave a lot of importance to sub-editing". Subsequently, she moved on to The Indian Express, where, Chowdhury recalled, she "would spend hours trying to learn how somebody's name was spelled".

Legwork, credibility & making your mark

Neerja Chowdhury's work in journalism has been recognized multiple times over the years with several prestigious awards and accolades. Among her notable achievements were awards for investigative journalism, social impact reporting, and outstanding editorial contributions. Of these accolades, one that stands out is the Chameli Devi Jain Award for Outstanding Women Media Person, which is given to women in the field of journalism, is named after the first Jain woman who was sent to prison for fighting in India's struggle for independence. After the award was instituted in 1980 by The Media Foundation, Neerja Chowdhury became the first recipient of the inaugural award in 1981.

Neerja Chowdhury was working under Arun Shourie, who was the editor of the newspaper at that point. As



Former prime minister Indira Gandhi is one of the leaders whom veteran journalist Neerja Chowdhury covered in her newly released book, How Prime Ministers Decide. (Image source: Press Information Bureau)

## #ART EXHIBITION

# THREADS OF SURVIVAL

Embark on a journey through endangered realms with Anais Beaulieu's breath-taking art exhibition at Kishan Bagh. Stitching together communities and creativity, her work transforms waste into intricate masterpieces, embodying resilience against the looming climate crisis and threat of disappearance. Witness the power of art to inspire change, as every stitch tells a tale of hope, resilience, and environmental stewardship.



Tusharika Singh  
Freelancer writer and city blogger

In a harmonious blend of artistry and environmental consciousness, Jaipur is hosting a one-of-its-kind art exhibition, bridging communities and creativity. From October 7 to October 15, the Kishan Bagh in Vidyadhar Nagar, has become a canvas for the Threatened Species Threatened Spaces' (TSTS) project, an inspiring initiative orchestrated by Alliance Française Jaipur and supported by the French Institute Paris and The French Institute in India.

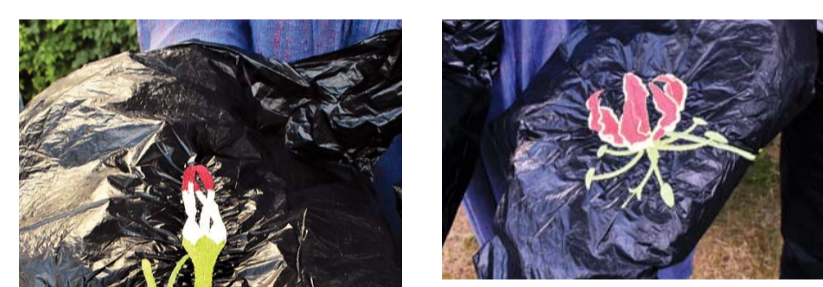
## Setting the Stage

Renowned French artist and environmentalist Anais Beaulieu takes the spotlight in this innovative exhibition. Having embarked on a remarkable journey across four Indian cities – Trivandrum, Delhi, Pune, and finally Jaipur, Anais collaborated closely with local communities. Together, they identified endangered flora and fauna native to each region, infusing life into plastic bags through intricate embroidery. This unique act of artistic resistance emerged as a response to the looming climate crisis – symbolizing resilience and hope.

## Art for a cause

At the heart of this immersive artist workshop lies a noble objective – to engage with local communities deeply impacted by various threats. Whether facing imminent endangerment or valiantly working to mitigate natural and man-made challenges, these communities have become the focal point of Anais's artistic endeavors. Collaboratively, they transformed collected waste into stunning works of art, embellishing the fabric of their cities with imprints of threatened species. Through this artistry, the exhibition delves into the profound implications of disappearance and change, weaving a powerful narrative of environmental consciousness.

In the weeks leading up to the exhibition, Anais collaborated with the People's Awareness Network Society (PANS) NGO, an organization dedicated to skill enhancement and income generation in the



But what this project envisages is to create slow, collective grassroots efforts that perhaps bring attention to what is the effect of our global actions on smaller communities, and in spite of the pretty bleak situation, there are groups and individuals making one last attempt to make things better. Anais and the communities across Trivandrum, Delhi, Pune and in Jaipur, are showcasing the power of dialogue, exchange and art."

## A Call to Witness

Talking about this project, Anais Beaulieu said, "The project speaks of the need to rethink our connections with the 'living' and to include ourselves in it, not as a superior being but rather as part of a whole. Learn to live together. Because we no longer have the choice to continue to do what we have done for the past centuries. Respect the territories of the other as the one on which we walk without setting borders."

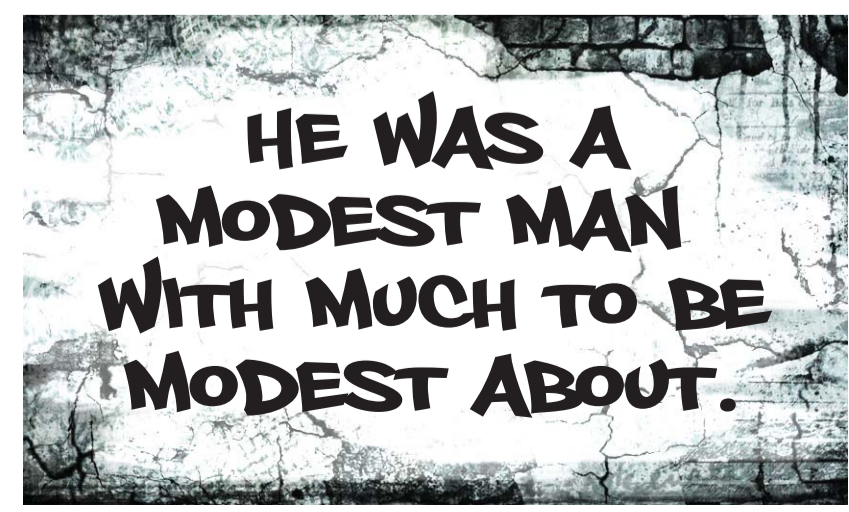
Jaipur, the final stop on this transformative artistry circuit, beckons art enthusiasts, environmentalists, and the curious-minded to witness this extraordinary exhibition. Beyond the aesthetic allure, it serves as a profound reminder of our shared responsibility toward a sustainable future. Every stitch tells a compelling narrative of art, resilience, and the enduring spirit of communities standing tall against the challenges of our time.

The project is supported by network of Alliance Française in India, along with French Institute in India and Indian Institute of Crafts and Design.

When: October 7 to October 15  
Where: Kishan Bagh, Naya Khera, Vidyadhar Nagar



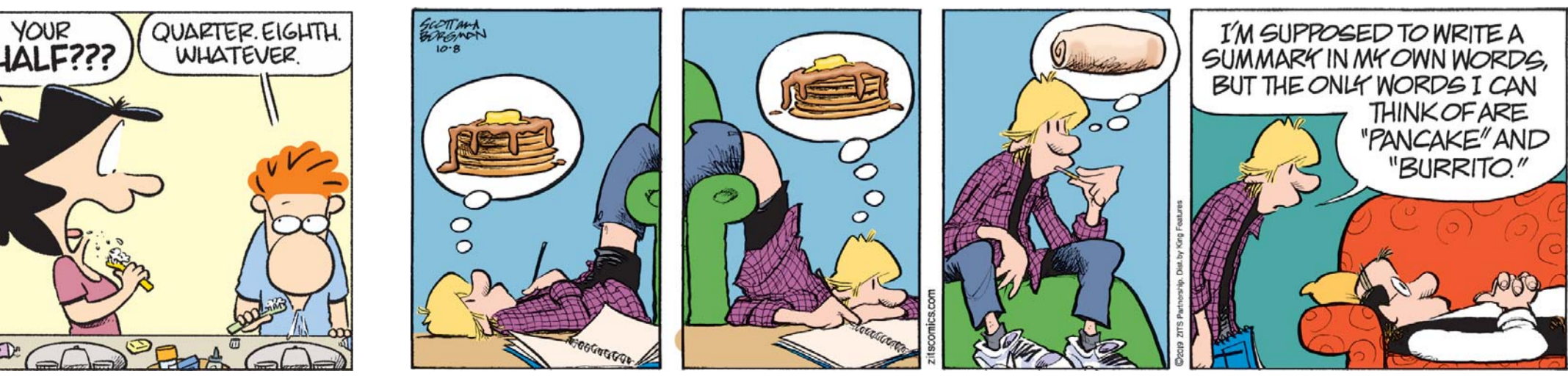
## THE WALL



## BABY BLUES



## ZITS



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman