

#INSIGHT

## Tracing the journey of Kasuri Methi

*Kasuri methi's* journey from a 'humble plant' to a 'culinary star' is steeped in history and tradition. So, where does this piquant *masala* come from and how do you map its evolution?



*Accha Kachori*, *paratha*, *sabzi*, *Butter Masala*, *Butter Chicken*. All these dishes have one thing in common, outside of our shared love for them, the sun-baked green leaves adorning their *chand sa mukhda*.

*Kasuri methi* is a staple ingredient in several Indian cuisines. Its journey from a 'humble plant' to a 'culinary star' is steeped in history and tradition. So, where does this piquant *masala* come from, and how do you map its evolution?

Originating from its namesake *Kasur*, a city in present-day Pakistan, lying south of Lahore, celebrity chef Harpal Singh Sokhi explains that *Kasuri methi* used to be dried during summer traditionally to preserve its flavour for year-round use. Iconic recipes like Butter Chicken and Paneer Butter Masala are incomplete without its distinctive, earthy flavour. Its leaves impart a unique bitterness and sweetness, elevating the complexity of these beloved dishes.

The unique soil and climate of *Kasur* were said to produce fenugreek leaves, with an exceptional aroma and flavour. After drying, these leaves were then crumbled and referred to as '*Kasuri methi*', literally translating to 'fenugreek from Kasur'.

Following the partition of India in 1947, the *Kasur* region became part of Pakistan. However, this didn't diminish the popularity of *Kasuri methi* in Indian food culture. According to chef and food historian Sadaf Hussain, *Kasuri methi* is cultivated in Rajasthan now, "due to its closeness to *Kasur* in terms of climate, and weather pattern."

Fenugreek cultivation is also thriving in other parts of Punjab, particularly Malerkotla and Rajasthan, ensuring a continued supply of this prized ingredient. For those of us, who have grown



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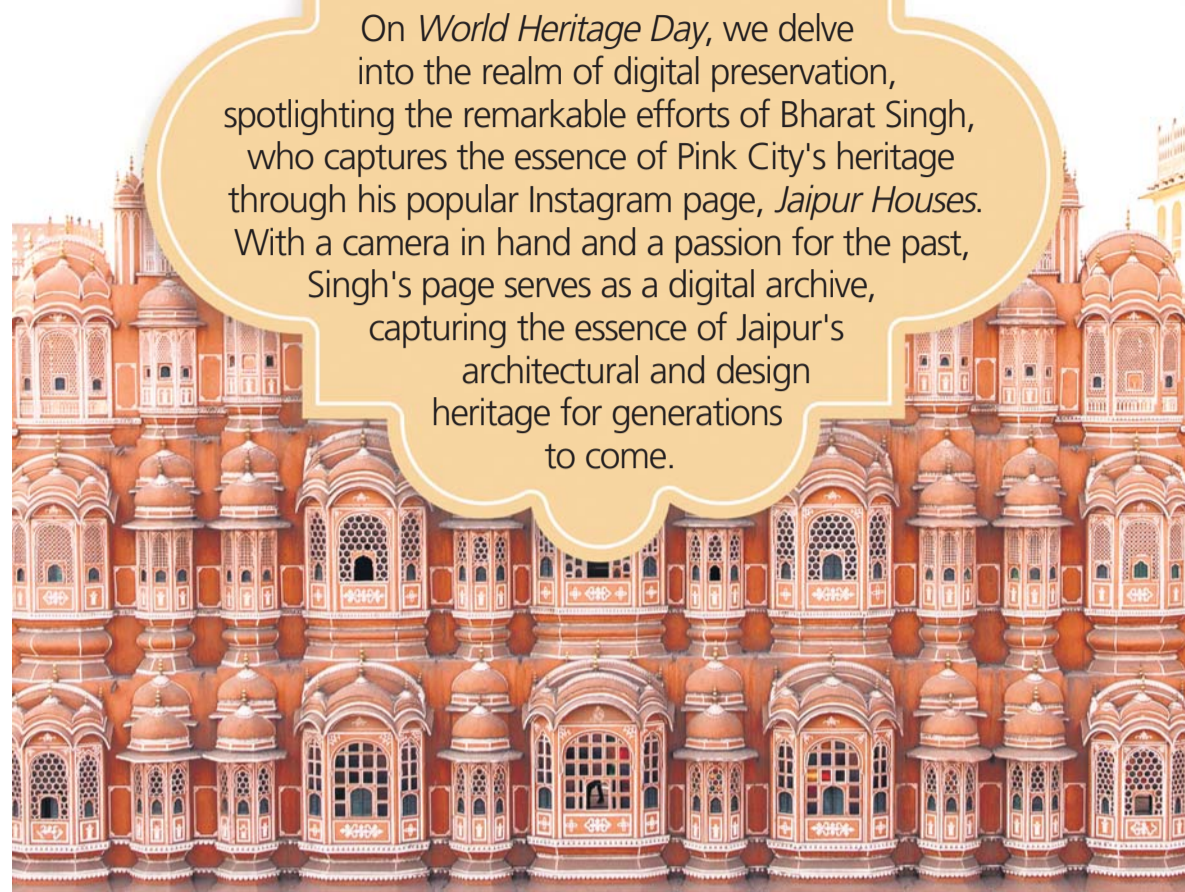
Conserving heritage is always a topic of discussion on *World Heritage Day*. To commemorate the occasion, a plethora of events unfolds, ranging from exhibitions, showcasing the unique cultural and natural heritage of diverse regions, to cultural events spotlighting the traditions and customs of local communities, and guided tours, offering insights into the history and significance of heritage sites. However, the fervor, surrounding these discussions, often diminishes soon after the day concludes. To sustain this discourse and foster a connection between heritage and the youth, 'social media' emerges as a powerful tool.

Meet Bharat Singh, the man behind '*Jaipur Houses*', a popular Instagram page, dedicated to appreciating the vanishing beauty of Jaipur's old houses and structures. Through captivating



imagery and insightful narratives, Singh ignites a renewed appreciation for Jaipur's heritage among a diverse audience. The allure of '*Jaipur Houses*' lies in its ability to transform passive scrolling into an immersive journey through time. Each post serves as a window into the past, inviting viewers to rediscover the stories embedded within the city's walls. More than just a collection of photographs, *Jaipur Houses* sparks dialogue and engagement. Followers share memories, anecdotes, and even personal connections to the featured landmarks, be it the houses, streets, the shops or even the motifs that one finds on the houses in the Pink City, breathing 'new life' into forgotten narratives.

"The idea was not to start an Instagram page," Singh recalls, "but just to document our family house where three generations have lived, so that the memories can be kept alive." Thus, Jaipur Houses was born in 2022, initially envisioned as a 'private archive' for the future generations of the family.



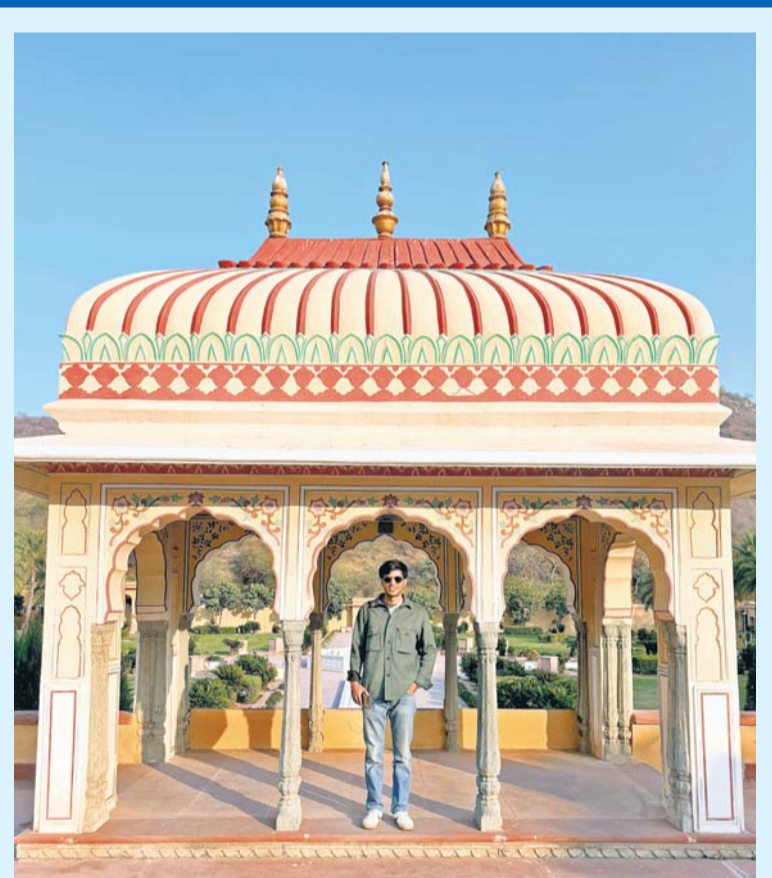
On *World Heritage Day*, we delve into the realm of digital preservation, spotlighting the remarkable efforts of Bharat Singh, who captures the essence of Pink City's heritage through his popular Instagram page, *Jaipur Houses*. With a camera in hand and a passion for the past, Singh's page serves as a digital archive, capturing the essence of Jaipur's architectural and design heritage for generations to come.

## Chronicles of Jaipur's Heritage

#WORLD HERITAGE DAY

### A Passion for Preservation

From an early age, Singh displayed a penchant for writing, coupled with a voracious appetite for reading. His fascination with Jaipur led him to devour every book available on the city, nurturing a deep understanding of its rich heritage. Singh's journey into documenting and preserving Jaipur's architectural heritage digitally began with a simple passion, capturing the essence of 'old things.' With a keen eye for detail and a fascination for the past, he found himself drawn to the weathered charm of ancient houses, each telling a story of bygone eras. Residing in an old house himself, Singh experienced firsthand "the magic of living within walls steeped in history." It was when his sister welcomed a newborn that the idea of creating an *archive* took root. Recognizing that future generations might not have the opportunity to experience their ancestral home, Singh embarked on a mission to preserve its memory for posterity.



(Pictures clicked by Bharat Singh)

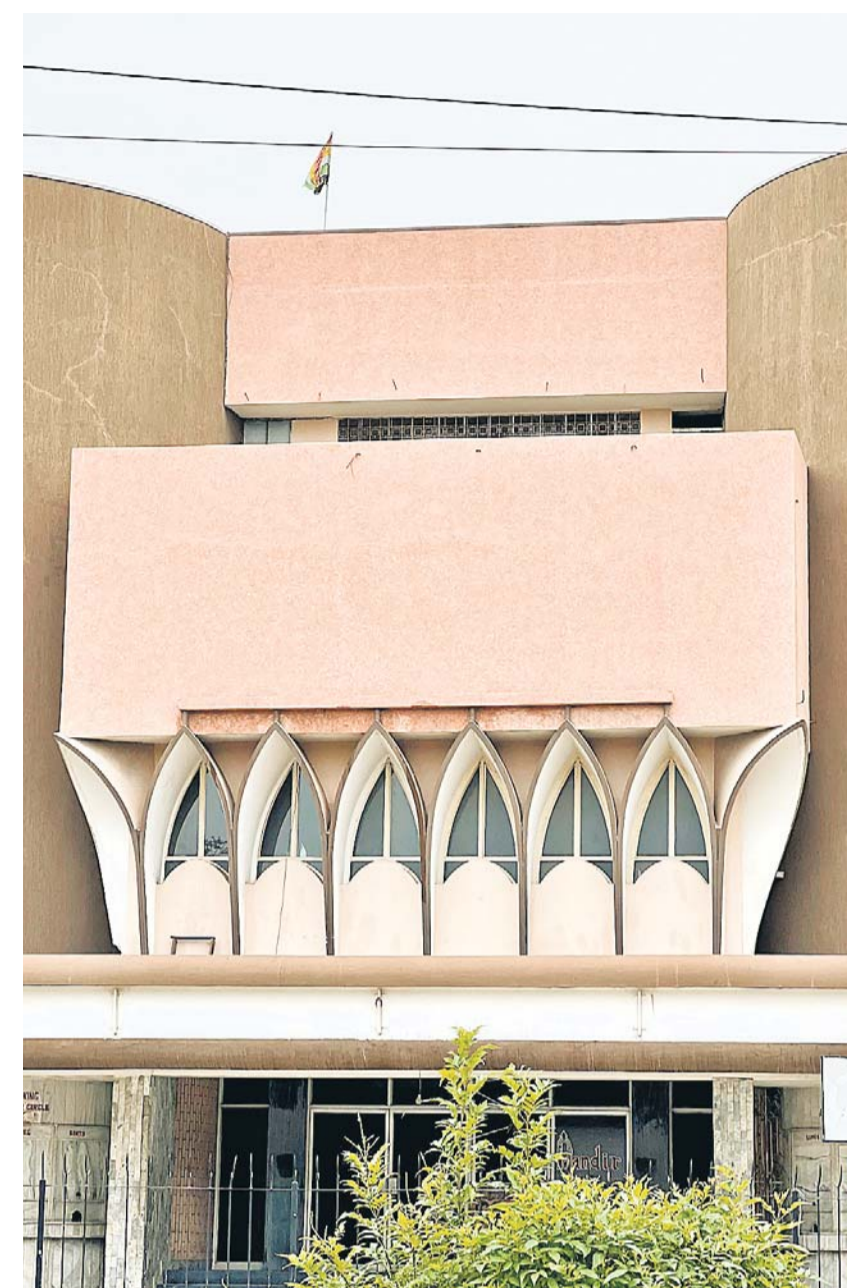
"The idea was not to start an Instagram page," Singh recalls, "but just to document our family house where three generations have lived, so that the memories can be kept alive." Thus, Jaipur Houses was born in 2022, initially envisioned as a 'private archive' for the future generations of the family. However, what began as a personal project soon evolved into a public endeavour as the page garnered unexpected attention. Within a mere two years, Jaipur Houses has amassed a devoted following of over 30,000 old people, drawn to its captivating portrayal of Jaipur's heritage.

In 2022, when the page took its fledgling steps, only two similar initiatives, Delhi Houses and Calcutta Houses, existed. Venturing into the streets with his phone camera, Singh encountered both curiosity and resistance and he had to explain his motives to skeptical onlookers. "Sometimes, people used to get angry and ask what I am doing. I used to get called out as being sneaky! Once, I even faced a rebuke from a guard at *Mahilya Chikistalaya* for photographing the premises, citing potential safety con-



### International Day for Monuments and Sites

The *International Day for Monuments and Sites* got started in 1982, when it was established by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). Later, at the gathering of its 22nd General Conference, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) approved the adoption of the *International Day for Monuments and Sites*, bringing more worldwide recognition to the day. Each year, ICOMOS selects a unique theme that encourages individuals and organizations to consider various aspects of this day that recognize the significance of monuments and sites.



### Beyond Instagram Aesthetics

Driven by his innate eye for design, Singh initially intended to focus on documenting houses outside the walled city. Being a *UNESCO World Heritage site*, Singh assumed that significant efforts must have been made for the documentation of the buildings there. But he soon realized that there is a treasure trove of old buildings and structures inside the walled city that is being brought down at a huge speed. "A lot of old houses and buildings have already been broken down," he notes, underscoring the imperative to document them before

they vanish into oblivion. He also manages another page titled '*Jodhpur Houses*,' stemming from his frequent visits to the city and his familial connections with cousins residing there. Even though, it is not as active as Jaipur Houses, he envisions collaborating with his cousins to curate content and maintain the page.

Down the line, the ace Instagrammer envisions creating a coffee table book, comprising multiple volumes, dedicated to showcasing the old houses, buildings, and other structures of the Pink City. "The journey of raising awareness has only just begun," remarks Singh, who emphasizes the current perception of the page as primarily a 'cool' platform for featuring heritage. However, his aspirations extend far beyond mere admiration. Singh hopes for a future where individuals or organizations that have the financial wherewithal, invest in and restore these historic buildings, ensuring that *heritage preservation* transcends mere aesthetics and becomes a tangible reality.

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## #SPACE

# Astronomers unravel the mystery of the 'Dragon's Egg' nebula

Researchers, now, appear to have resolved this mystery while also explaining how the relatively few massive stars, that are magnetic, got that way. Blame it on stellar fratricide, they said. In this case, the bigger star apparently gobbled up a smaller sibling star, and the mixing of their stellar materials, during this hostile takeover, created a magnetic field.

Two large stars, residing inside a spectacular cloud of gas and dust, nicknamed the '*Dragon's Egg*' nebula have presented a puzzle to astronomers. One of them has a magnetic field, as does our sun. Its companion does not. And such massive stars are not usually associated with nebulae.



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"This merger was likely very violent. When two stars merge, material can be thrown out, and this likely created the nebula that we see today," said Chile-based European Southern Observatory astronomer Abigail Frost.

Computer simulations previously had predicted that the blending of stellar materials, during such a merger, could create a magnetic field in the combined star, born in this process.

"Our study is the observational smoking gun confirming this scenario," said astronomer Hugues Sana of KU Leuven in Belgium, the study's senior author.

These two stars, gravitationally bound to each other in what is called a 'binary system,' are located in our *Milky Way galaxy*, about 3,700 light-years from Earth in the constellation *Norma*. A light-year is the distance light travels in a year, 5.9 trillion miles (9.5 trillion kms).

The researchers used nine years of observations by the Chile-based *Very Large Telescope*.

The magnetic star is about 30 times more massive than the sun. Its remaining companion is about



25.5 times more massive than the sun. They orbit at a distance from each other, varying from seven to 60 times the distance between Earth and the Sun.

The *Dragon's Egg* is so named because it is located relatively near a larger nebula complex called the *Fighting Dragons of Ara*. The stars inside the *Dragon's Egg* appear to have started out 4-6 million years ago as a triple system, three stars

born at the same time and gravitationally bound. The *triple system's* two innermost members included a larger star, perhaps 25 to 30 times the mass of the sun, and a smaller one, maybe five to 10 times the sun's mass. The more massive one evolved more quickly than the other, with its outer layer engulfing the smaller star and triggering a merger that ejected into space the gas and dust that make up the nebula," the researchers said.

This occurred very recently in a cosmic time scale, about 7,500 years ago, based on the expansion velocity of the material in the nebula. It consists of mostly hydrogen and helium, but also an unusually large amount of nitrogen, thanks to the merger. Many sun-sized stars generate magnetic fields. "For low-mass stars like our sun, convective heating, like the movement of hot water in a radiator in your home, creates a movement of stellar material. This, in turn, creates a dynamo effect which induces a magnetic field," Frost said.

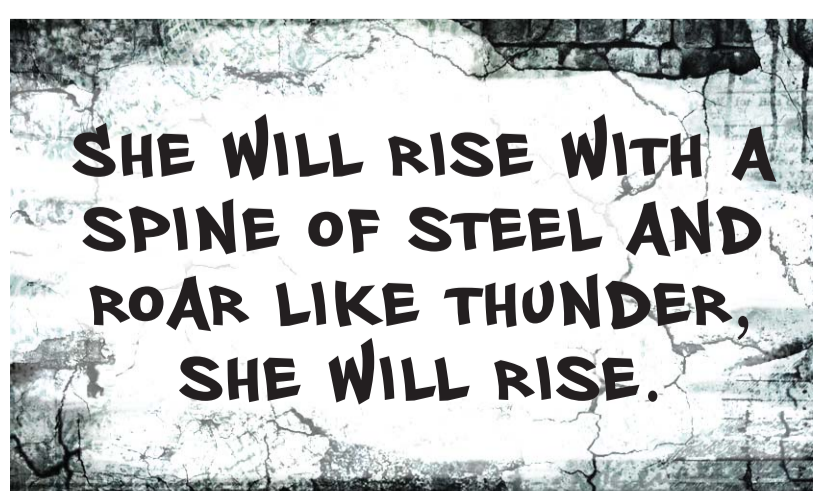
"However, for massive stars, greater than eight times the mass of our sun, different heating effects are in play, and so explaining the presence of magnetic fields for these types of stars is more tricky. This merger scenario ticks all the boxes," Frost added.

About 7% of massive stars are known to have a magnetic field. The second star in this binary system, uninvolved in the violent merger, does not. Stellar magnetic fields store immense amounts of energy. The sun's magnetic storms can interact with Earth's atmosphere and create our planet's thrilling auroras, but also can disrupt radio signals and navigation systems.

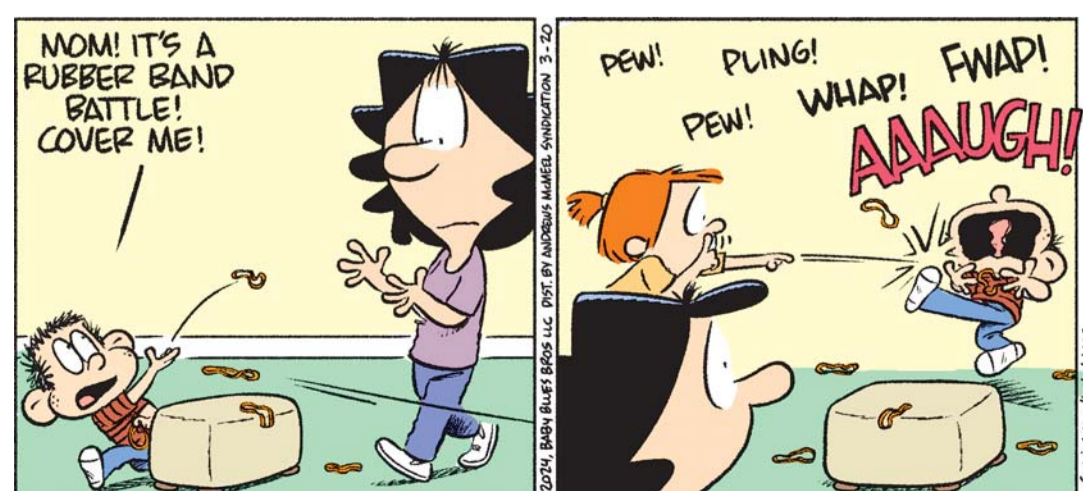
An image of the nebula released with the study is visually striking. "The richness of the physics and chemistry at play gave rise to a beautiful structure," Sana said.



### THE WALL



### BABY BLUES



### ZITS



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman