

Tune in to learn about the contemporary forces behind making 'City of temples' into a global Epicenter of Culture & heritage.

For Immediate Release

"Benares is older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend, and looks twice as old as all of them put together." – Author Mark Twain

Situated on the banks of River Ganges, Varanasi is one of the oldest living cities in the world. Known as Benaras or Kashi, this sacred city is a treasure of rich cultural heritage of India and is associated with divinity, civilization, and the birthplace of modern culture. The splendor of Banaras has continuously evoked imagination of the various artists and writers who in return have contributed to keep the city alive and relevant through their various artforms. Named as Creative City by UNESCO, today's Varanasi arguably stands as an epicenter to the art, music, culture, spirituality, and lifestyle of Modern Indians.

The next episode of Cultural Capitals - Future legacies of the India's cities presented by **Live History India** and **Avid Learning** will unravel the creative city, **Varanasi**, the oldest on earth, and yet the most vibrant for historians, scholars, artists, travellers, writers and pilgrims with speakers :

Hemang Agrawal Fashion & Textile Designer

Minhal Hasan Senior Executive Producer at Teamwork Arts Pvt. Ltd ,

Jeremy 'Jai' Oltmann Founder VaranasiWalks

Umesh Kabir Educator, Spiritual Mentor and Researcher of Theology.

These speakers will be in conversation with

Akshay Chavan Co-Founder and Head of Research at Live History India .

These speakers and experts will look at Varanasi through varied lenses – the city's growing arts scene, its world renowned architectural heritage and its emergence as a regional cultural hub. Our panel will examine Varanasi from a past, present and future perspective and chart its journey and evolution through the years – unearthing fascinating lesser-known nuggets, spotlighting influential personalities and documenting pivotal moments along the way – which have shaped its distinct cultural fabric.

Read more about the series below:

This series aims to spotlight India's cities and their legacy and contributions that have shaped the nation's heritage and continue to have tremendous contemporary influence and impact. Cities under the cultural microscope include Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Chandigarh, Lucknow, Kohima and Mysore. The highlight is on the particularities of each city's unique culture and heritage and how these aspects have changed and evolved over time, influencing their perceptions in the wider world. Varied perspectives on the cultural identity of these urbanscapes will be presented – as informed by history, hidden stories and local insights through diverse lenses. The conversations are focused on restoring, reinventing and reiterating the legacy of these great cities.

Join us to delve into ancient history, cultural complexities, archetypal connotations, rituals and vivid heritage of the spiritual capital of India.

When: Thursday 17th February 2022 | 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

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#CULTURALCAPITALS

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Future Legacies of India's Cities
VARANASI

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Co-Founder & Head of Research,
Live History India
Akshay Chavan

THU, 17 FEBRUARY | 6.00-7.30 PM (IST) | REG: www.avidlearning.in

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Speaker Bio's

Hemang Agarwal

Hemang Agrawal is an apparel & textile designer based out of Benares, India. Agrawal studied Fashion Design at NIFT- Mumbai, finishing amongst the top of the class & was awarded for textile development. He also received Merit and Golden Jubilee scholarships at Sydenham College, Mumbai pursuing Business Studies. Agrawal's eponymous label HEMANG AGRAWAL was nominated for The International WoolMark Prize in 2017-18. Agrawal was invited by The National Silk Museum, China at its International Conference in 2018, to deliver the keynote address on the textiles & handlooms from the Indian Subcontinent. As the Creative Director of The Surekha Group, over the last 15 years, Agrawal has worked closely with several International couture brands. HolyWeaves & Anjora Benares, co-founded by Agrawal along with his brother Umang Agrawal, are India's foremost Handloom textile labels. Agrawal's work has been featured on the Netflix Series "The Creative Indians."

Jeremy 'Jai' Oltmann

Jai hails from Minneapolis, Minnesota and is a Pravarsi Bharatiya (OCI), living year round in India since 1997. Initially volunteering in New Delhi as a social & community development worker, he also lived in Mussoorie while studying Hindi at Landour Language School. Jai moved to Varanasi in 2001 to assist the development and building of a widow and children home, now recognised by the U.P. Govt. While overseeing a Hindu Studies and Hindi Language study abroad course Jai developed a series of walks to introduce students to the city. This became the interactive walking tour company VaranasiWalks in 2007, the first of its kind in Banaras. A practitioner of yoga, Jai completed a Yoga Teacher Training course in Mysore and developed BanarasYoga in 2015 to give people an immersive experience of yoga history and classes that include aspects of yoga not often highlighted in Western based classes. Jai is a graduate of IGNOU with an M.A. Sociology degree, he focused on the contact points between tourists & pilgrims and processes of liminality in geo-sacred Varanasi. Jai often lectures to visiting tour groups on Indian social issues, tourism and spirituality. He is an avid listener and disk jockey of electronic and Indian music.

Umesh Kabir

Umesh Kabir is an educator, spiritual mentor and researcher of theology. He has spent living the Kabir philosophy in the Kabirchauramath, Moolgadi Ashram in Varanasi for the last 20 years where Kabir spent his life of 120 years spreading the message of brotherhood to humanity. At a very young age Umesh had an affinity towards spirituality and left his home in Allahabad and lived at Kabir Ashram, from where he completed his post graduation. His thirst for knowledge led him to do different specializations in Computers and even Law. At the Moolgadi ashram, Umesh is actively involved in all Kabir's literature and continues his research on Eastern philosophy, Karma, Dharma and Salvation vis a vis Kabir which will be part of the books he is currently authoring. He realized early on that all he wanted to do was spread the message of Kabir of kindness and compassion and fraternity amongst all. He started mentoring young children and has been giving talks on Kabir and his philosophy. He has been invited to various schools and universities all over the country to talk about the philosophy of Kabir where he takes care of all published material of Kabir and is the official spokesperson of the Moolagadi ashram. He is also a life coach and helps people to understand the complexities of life, urging them to move forward to their goal. He encourages and counsel's people on a range of professional and personal issues through the medium of Kabir. Currently, he is pursuing Philosophy and doing an in-depth study of the Indian scriptures to relate them to Kabir's teachings. As a life visionary his aim is to be able to guide people to overcome their fears and live their lives with greater fulfilment.

Minhal Hasan

Minhal joined Teamwork Arts in the year 2010 and is a Senior Executive Producer for multiple Festivals. His expertise lies in the curation of Festivals particularly in Music categories. He has helmed and

conceptualized music festivals like Mahindra Kabira Festival in Varanasi and The Sacred Festival in Pushkar. These Festivals have created their own space in the minds of the music going audience. He conceptualized and curated an innovative and experiential monthly music series "Friends of Music" Under the Banyan Tree on a full moon night in New Delhi. His passion and zeal for music and the arts brings a fresh energy to these festivals and his detailing and creative eye ensures magical experiences ! He curates and produces the Heritage events segment at the Jaipur Literature Festival. These events take place every evening at a Heritage venue in and around Jaipur. In addition to these Festivals, Minhal produced Teamwork Arts' comedy festival – the Melbourne International Comedy Festival for 2 years. He is part of the International festival team and has co produced our arts festival Sarang in South Korea and the Indian segment for the Shanghai International Arts festival. He has helmed the Shared History Festival in South Africa for the past few years. With his great sense of aesthetics and passion for the arts, he is able to create a breathtaking experience for the audience.

Akshay Chavan is Co-Founder and Head of Research at Live History India (www.livehistoryindia.com), India's largest digital platform on history and culture. A graduate of Lancaster University Management School (LUMS) in IT Management and Organizational Change, Chavan went on to pursue a decade-long career in digital media and marketing, before returning to his first love – history. He co-founded Live History India with senior journalist Mini Menon, to take Indian history to a wider audience in a digital, new-age format. Chavan has a special interest in researching the Princely States of India, and has written several papers and articles for various publications. He is also co-author of the book Quirky History: The Swan Car of Nabha & Other Unusual Stories From History (Harper Collins, 2020).

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