

## **Interview with Mr. Owais Altaf Syed, Director of Skyview by Empyrean**

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In an exclusive interview with Mr. Owais Altaf Syed, Director of Skyview by Empyrean shares how the second edition of Sama-Vaya is set to be even more special, building on last year's success. Hosted at Skyview by Empyrean, this retreat will feature eight talented artists from diverse backgrounds, fostering collaboration and creativity in the stunning setting of Sanget-Patnitop and the Pir Panjal range.

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### **Travel And Tour World: What makes the second edition of Sama-Vaya even more special, and how have you built upon last years' experience to enhance this year's retreat?**

**Owais Altaf Syed:** The fact that we are hosting Sama Vaya by demand this year, on the back of the huge success of the retreat last year has truly made this event very special. It tells us that we have been able to tap into the true potential of Jammu, be it its beauty, heritage, art or culture. Also, that the world gets to see the inspiring works of art of a completely different set of very talented artists, that too mostly women, from across India this year, is something we are all looking forward to.

This group of eight artists will stay with us at Skyview by Empyrean for 3-4 days, taking in the beautiful surroundings of the stunning Pir Panjal range with the best views from our property. They will work individually as well as in pairs, collaborating, learning from each other, and taking inspiration from what they see around them before they display their pieces at the exhibition on August 25 that will be held on our premises. Last year, Anu Mehta's single-minded dedication and vision successfully steered 'Sama Vaya' and the group of six participating artists, but this year, we also have the very talented author and crafts curator Anu Chowdhury Sorabjee joining us and sharing her expertise and knowledge with the eight artists.

### **Travel And Tour World: How do you envision the mix of artists from diverse backgrounds contributing to the creative output and overall experience of Sama-Vaya?**

**Owais Altaf Syed:** The word 'Sama-Vaya' in Sanskrit means 'union' and signifies the art of weaving together colourful threads to create one beautiful fabric. Sama-Vaya was conceptualized with the intention of bringing together the voices and vision of famous and acclaimed artists and craftsmen from across India to collaborate, exchange ideas, and produce inspiring masterpieces. I think all creative people perceive their environment and are inspired in their own unique way. A gathering like this plays a crucial role in fostering a more inclusive and interconnected global community through the power of art.

Last year, we saw Jammu and Skyview by Empyrean brought to life different canvasses of the artists in retreat. Not a single artwork was alike in any way, be it in the methods, textures or colours used. This year too, artists come from different backgrounds with their unique skill sets — Lado Bai (Bhil art), Kritika Joshi (Phad painting), Saroj Shyam (Gond painting), contemporary artists Rachita Dutta, Rachna Badrakia, and Neha Lavingia, as well as the local artists from Jammu — Suman Gupta and miniature artist Sohan Singh Billawaria — each bring in their own unique flavours, techniques, and styles to create one beautiful collection of art.

### **Travel And Tour World: How do you think the unique setting of Sanget-Patnitop and the scenic views of the Pir Panjal range will inspire the artists' creations?**

**Owais Altaf Syed:** You have to visit Jammu to see firsthand how beautiful the landscape here is. Sanget Patnitop is nestled amidst the beautiful Pir Panjal range that draws inspiration across the seasons throughout the year, and from Skyview by Emphyrean, guests have some of the best views of this natural beauty. For artists, these breathtaking landscapes with their majestic mountains, lush greenery, and tranquil valleys, provide a visually stunning backdrop and a large dose of inspiration! Our local traditions, cuisines, folklore, and handicrafts inspire artists to infuse their creations with a dash of local flavour. What more can an artist need? Our ultimate goal is to inspire artworks that celebrate the beauty of the natural world, raise awareness about environmental issues, and enable artists to explore the relationship between humanity and its surroundings.

**Travel And Tour World: How does Anu Chowdhury Sorabjee's involvement enhance the overall vision of Sama-Vaya, and what specific contributions can attendees expect from her curation?**

**Owais Altaf Syed:** Anu Chowdhury brings in two decades of engagement with Indian traditional and tribal artists! As an author and crafts curator, Anu Chowdhury Sorabjee has organised several workshops, lectures, and retreats with master artists to promote and preserve their inherited artistic traditions. Her expertise and eye for detail will bring out the best in each artist, enabling them to create some of their finest masterpieces while at this retreat.

**Travel And Tour World: How do you see events like Sama-Vaya impacting the local community and promoting Jammu as a top destination for art, culture, and tourism?**

**Owais Altaf Syed:** Through niche, carefully curated events like these, we are able to draw the attention of world to Jammu! We can platform the region's natural beauty, culture, and heritage to a larger audience, which pumps in a cycle of prosperity for the local economy. Tourism revenues are positively impacted, local businesses grow and expand, and local artisans are appreciated for their skills and talent, giving them stable livelihoods. Collaborations like 'Sama Vaya' are crucial to promote the region as a top destination not only for tourism but also for the heritage and legacy of its art and culture.

**Travel And Tour World: What are your aspirations for the future editions of Sama-Vaya, and are there any plans to expand the retreat or introduce new elements to continue evolving this unique artistic gathering?**

**Owais Altaf Syed:** Yes, absolutely! We will try to bring in new, exciting elements and unite yet another diverse and talented group of artists with each new edition. Other than Sama-Vaya, we will also be exploring new initiatives and collaborations with different types of creative individuals and cultural organizations in order to create a vibrant ecosystem that reflects our commitment to excellence and inclusivity. India is such a rich and diverse nation that has a gold mine of talent waiting to be explored across its villages, cities, and towns. All they require is some inspiration, and we are here to provide it in abundance!