

ALL NEW

August, 2020

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# FILMFARE

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**HOT TARGET**  
**ABHISHEK**  
**BACHCHAN**

**KAREENA**  
**KAPOOR**  
**KHAN**

**completes two**  
**decades in showbiz**

**SHOT EXCLUSIVELY BY**  
**SAIF ALI KHAN**

**Alvida**  
**SAROJ KHAN**

**AKSHAY**  
**KUMAR**  
**TO WRAP UP**  
**8 FILMS POST**  
**LOCKDOWN**



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PHOTOGRAPH: SAIF ALI KHAN

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# Letter from the Editor

## 20 Years of Kareena

She's now known as Kareena Kapoor Khan. Back then, she was known as Bebo, Lolo's younger sister. When was the last time I called Kareena Bebo or Karisma Lolo? How time flies. She has had her share of ups and downs since then. Was part of some good, some great films. Had her set of affairs. Got married. Had a kid. While others of her batch have all but disappeared, she's still going strong. Still getting author-backed roles. Still possesses an hourglass figure. It doesn't look like much has changed for her in the last two decades. Has it?

Back when she was launched with *Refugee* (2000), there was a huge buzz around her. She had reportedly refused *Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai* to work with JP Dutta. The press wrote about her supposed affair with Hrithik Roshan. Today, we don't see that hoopla anymore. Newbies are launched in a detached, clinical manner. Their replies, their clothes, their abs look perfectly sculpted. But Kareena wasn't like that. She was her own person. Chatty, inquisitive. And such a natural in front of the camera.

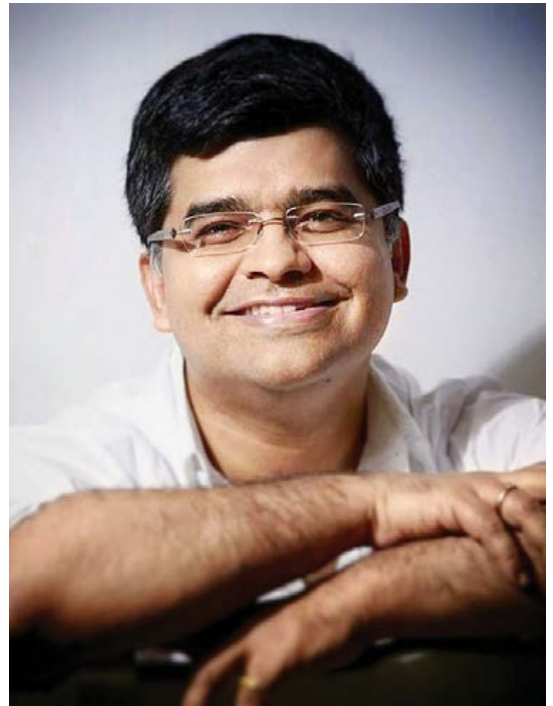
*Refugee* was praised to the skies but bombed at the box-office. She got her first hit opposite Tusshar in *Mujhe Kucch Kehna Hai* (2001). She played the good-looking Punjabi girl-next-door in it. Her effervescence carried the day. Her first blockbuster came ironically with Hrithik in *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* (2001), where her character, Poo, got immortalised. People still remember Poo. I guess Poo got a little older and wiser as Geet in *Jab We Met* (2007). It was Imtiaz Ali's version of Poo. She grew on you. And it was a perfect pairing with Shahid Kapoor. Many were left heart broken when their real-life *jodi* broke up. They starred together again in *Uda Punjab* (2016). But weren't paired opposite each other.

Kareena has been accused of doing one commercial film after another. People say she has been wasted in films like *Golmaal* and *Bodyguard*. It's said her best film as an actor is *Heroine* (2012). She certainly gave her all to the role. Pushing her limits, laying bare her heart. Sadly, the film bombed. Would she have charted a different route if it hadn't?

I loved her as Kalindi in *Veere Di Wedding* (2019). She was no arm candy but played today's woman dealing with today's problems. It was just the right role for her. Maybe, she should opt for more such roles that cater to the actor in her and not the star... Here's to 20 more years of movies and memories...

*Jitesh Pillai*

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# masala fix



Hrithik Roshan



Ranbir Kapoor



Aditya Roy Kapur



Varun Dhawan in *Good Newwz* sequel *pg 06*

Akshay Kumar to complete 8 films post the lockdown *pg 08*

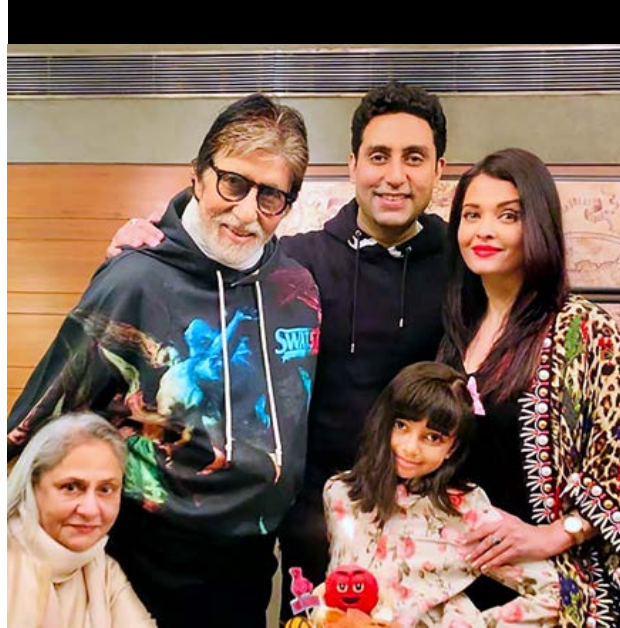
PHOTOGRAPH: YOGEN SHAH

## NEW NORMAL

Now that the lockdown restrictions have been lifted partially, the denizens of showbiz are slowly trying to get their lives on track. The way ahead isn't going to be smooth for sure. Wearing masks and shields is going to be the new normal. Stars like Hrithik Roshan, Ranbir Kapoor and Aditya Roy Kapur have already taken to it.

## GOOD NEWWZ FOR VARUN DHAWAN

Looks like there might be some good news for **Varun Dhawan**. The actor is all set to replace **Diljit Dosanjh** in the sequel to *Good Newwz* (2019). The film, which starred **Akshay Kumar**, **Kareena Kapoor Khan**, **Diljit Dosanjh** and **Kiara Advani** was a blockbuster. A close source revealed that director **Raj Mehta** has already cracked the idea for the sequel and has discussed it with producer **Karan Johar** and got a green signal from him. Varun is quite excited about the development and has reportedly given his nod to the project.



## AMITABH, ABHISHEK, AISHWARYA AND AARADHYA TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

The whole nation was jolted when **Amitabh Bachchan**, **Abhishek Bachchan**, **Aishwarya Rai Bachchan** and **Aaradhya Bachchan** tested positive for the coronavirus. The thespian along with his son Abhishek was admitted to Nanavati hospital in Mumbai. After a few days, Aishwarya and Aaradhya were also shifted to the same hospital. The country came together to pray for the recovery of the Bachchan family. To stave off any possible confusion, Mr Bachchan kept updating about his and his families health via social media. Amitabh, Aishwarya and Aaradhya had been discharged from the hospital at the time of going to the press.

## KATRINA KAIF, SIDDHANT CHATURVEDI AND ISHAAN KHATTER TO STAR IN PHONE BHOOT

We kept hearing rumours that **Katrina Kaif** might work with **Farhan Akhtar**'s Excel Entertainment. Well, Farhan recently confirmed that when he took to his social media to share the first look of his upcoming production titled *Phone Bhoot*. The film stars Katrina Kaif, **Siddhant Chaturvedi** and **Ishaan Khatter**. In the first look, we see the three leading stars suited in black, with candid expressions on their faces. Farhan Akhtar tweeted the first look saying, 'The one-stop-shop for all bhoot-related problems, #PhoneBhoot ringing in your nearest cinema in 2021.' The first look of *Phone Bhoot* left us brimming with curiosity. We wonder if this is a horror-comedy or something else entirely. Let's hope we see this film in theatres in 2021.



## Ajay Devgn and Sidharth Malhotra to begin *Thank God* in September



**Ajay Devgn** and **Sidharth Malhotra** are all set to star together for the first time in **Indra Kumar's** *Thank God*. The film is said to be a remake of the hit Danish film *Sorte Kugler* (2019). The original was known for its ribald humour and we hope this Indra Kumar-Ajay Devgn collaboration too will have us rolling in the aisles. Ajay Devgn who has the remake of *Kaithi*, as well as portions of *Maidaan* left to complete, will begin the first schedule of the film in September in Mumbai. A portion of the film also needs to be shot on foreign locales. The makers will plan that once the international travel restrictions are lifted. Fingers crossed!

**ONE RUMOUR THAT'S MAKING THE ROUNDS IS THAT FATIMA SANA SHAIKH IS DATING HER DANGAL CO-STAR SANYA MALHOTRA. REFUTING THE GOSSIP, FATIMA TOLD FILMFARE, "OUT OF NOWHERE THERE IS THIS RUMOUR THAT SANYA AND I ARE DATING. I HAVE NO ISSUES. I'M PRO EVERYBODY, LIKING WHOEVER THEY WANT. WE ARE BEST FRIENDS. JUST THAT WE ARE CONSTANTLY TOGETHER. BUT I TOLD SANYA THAT WE SHOULD JUST ACCEPT PEOPLE'S REACTIONS. SOME PEOPLE GET SHAKEN UP THAT A GIRL CAN LOVE ANOTHER GIRL." LOVE WILL FIND A WAY, AS THEY SAY.**







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# AKSHAY KUMAR TO COMPLETE 8 FILMS POST THE LOCKDOWN



**Akshay Kumar** now has some eight films seeking his attention. He was forced to take a break because of the lockdown. Now that the filmmakers are planning to slowly start shooting, the actor has his plans laid out. Khiladi Kumar will first work on the spy-thriller, *Bell Bottom*. Akshay and team are going to shoot the film in Scotland for a month in August. They're reportedly going to fly there soon on private jets. They will also shoot a few scenes in India. He is also planning to shoot YRF's *Prithviraj Chauhan* by October end. Akshay then has *Atrangi Re* helmed by **Aanand L Rai** and starring **Sara Ali Khan** and **Dhanush**. Akki is required to shoot for two weeks for this unusual love story. He has signed another film with Rai titled *Raksha Bandhan*, which will hit the theatres on November 5, 2021. Finally, he will start work on **Sajid Nadiadwala's** *Bachchan Pandey* by December-January. Next year, he has **Ekta Kapoor's** film, which is a remake of a Telugu film and a film with **Maneesh Sharma** as well. Being a workhorse, we're sure he's going to spring off to the finish line in no time.

## Road named after Sushant Singh Rajput

Politicians in **Sushant Singh Rajput's** hometown Purnea in Bihar have done something special in the memory of the late actor. They have renamed a road in Purnea after the actor. His fans thronged in large numbers even amidst the lockdown to see their beloved actor's name on the commemorative marker and were touched by the special gesture. Mayor **Savita Devi** spoke to a daily saying that as a mark of respect and tribute to the late Sushant, a roundabout and a road is being named after him. The Ford company roundabout will be called Sushant Singh Rajput chowk and the road that goes from Madhubani to Mata Chowk will be renamed as Sushant Singh Rajput road. His was a road less travelled but the road named after him will be well-travelled.



**ANUPAM KHER'S MOTHER DULARI TESTED POSITIVE FOR COVID-19. SHE WAS THEN ADMITTED TO KOKILABEN DHIRUBHAI AMBANI HOSPITAL. THANKFULLY SHE RESPONDED WELL TO THE TREATMENT. SHE WAS SOON DECLARED NEGATIVE AND RETURNED HOME HEALTHY ONCE AGAIN.**



## DEEPIKA PADUKONE TO STAR OPPOSITE PRABHAS

**Prabhas'** 21st film is one of the most talked-about projects currently and will be helmed by director **Nag Ashwin** of *Mahanati* fame. Speculation about the leading lady for this sci-fi drama was rife and a dozen names were bandied about. The production house Vyjayanthi Films put all the rumours to rest by announcing that **Deepika Padukone** will be starring opposite Prabhas. The production house released a video, commemorating their 50 years in the film industry and announced that they are excited to work with Deepika. With Deepika on board for this big-budget drama, the film will surely garner a nationwide appeal.



## RAJKUMMAR RAO TO PLAY A COP

Just before the lockdown was implemented, Telugu cinema saw *HIT - The First Case* starring **Vishwak Sen** and **Ruhani Sharma** hitting the screens. The film did great business and was loved by the critics and the audiences alike. But due to the lockdown, the film sadly had a short run at the theatres. Now *HIT - The First Case* will have a Hindi remake and will star none other than the versatile actor **Rajkummar Rao** in the lead. Rajkummar, who has been known to experiment with his roles, is going to play the role of a troubled cop who works in the Homicide intervention team and is on the trail of a missing woman. Confirming this news, Rajkummar said, "When I watched *Hit*, I instantly connected with the story. It's engaging and relevant in today's times. As an actor, I am always on the lookout for characters I have not explored before and *HIT* gives me the chance to do that." It is a hit combination, alright.



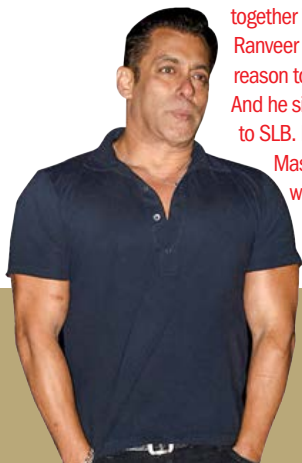


## RANVEER TO DO A GUEST APPEARANCE IN ALIA'S NEXT



**Zoya Akhtar's** *Gully Boy* will always be a special film for several reasons. One was **Ranveer Singh's** and **Alia Bhatt's** magnificent performances. The two were appreciated for their chemistry. Now Ranveer Singh is all set to do a cameo in Alia's *Gangubai Kathiawadi*. The *Padmaavat* actor shares a special bond with both Alia and the film's director **Sanjay Leela Bhansali**. It's said to be a powerful cameo. Alia and Ranveer have shared a special rapport from the time they worked

together in *Gully Boy*. So Ranveer had absolutely no reason to decline the offer. And he simply can't say no to SLB. Is he playing Haji Mastaan? -- is what we would like to know.



**REPORTEDLY, SALMAN KHAN IS CHARGING 16 CRORES PER EPISODE FOR THE NEW SEASON OF BIGG BOSS. IT'S THE HIGHEST FEES ANY STAR HAS CHARGED FOR A DAY'S SHOOT ON TELEVISION.**

## Vidya Balan to start shooting for *Sherni*

**Vidya Balan's** *Sherni* was put on the backburner after the lockdown was implemented in March this year. *Sherni* has Vidya playing a forest officer, who wants to find a solution to the man-animal conflict. She had started shooting the film on March 3 which also happens to be World Wildlife Day. The actress was shooting in Madhya Pradesh when the government implemented the lockdown. Now the makers are planning to start shooting the film post the monsoons. Directed by **Amit Masurkar**, *Sherni* will be shot on live locations in the forests of Madhya Pradesh. It will be interesting to watch Vidya Balan in an all-new avatar, don't you think?



## DILJIT DOSANJH TO STAR IN SINGH SOORMA

The ex-hockey player, who was known as Flicker Singh for his prowess in converting penalty corners, and currently Haryana's sports and youth affairs minister **Sandeep Singh's** journey is quite inspiring. His biopic *Soorma* (2018), directed by **Shaad Ali** and starring **Taapsee Pannu** and **Diljit Dosanjh** was based on his journey as a hockey player. After tasting success with *Soorma*, the makers have decided to make a sequel to the film which will focus on the political journey of Sandeep Singh. It will be titled *Singh Soorma*. Sandeep confirmed the news on Twitter with a post, "After the Success & love showered by all on *Soorma* now starting with The Onward Journey of Sandeep Singh as *Singh Soorma* with my Bro and Producer Deepak Singh. Seek Ur Blessings and support."

## TAAPSEE PANNU'S NEXT SHABAASH MITHU TO BE SHOT IN LONDON

After being caged in the lockdown for more than 100 days, the film industry is gradually returning to normalcy. One of the projects which is being readied to take off as soon as the travel restrictions get lifted is the sports drama *Shabaash Mithu*. The film stars **Taapsee Pannu** who will play the role of cricketer **Mithali Raj** on screen. For the unversed, Mithali was the skipper of Indian women's cricket team and has made our nation proud through her various achievements. A major chunk of the film needs to be shot in London. But as of now, no one has a clear picture when the ban on shooting abroad will get lifted. **Ajit Andhare**, the COO of Viacom 18 Studios said, "We have to figure out when it will be possible to shoot in the UK. At the moment, we are zeroing in on the venues while mapping the dates to suit all parties involved. Location hunting has been quite a challenge as recce is out of the question and we have to rely on pictures to determine if a venue is suitable for shooting. As a producer, I am jittery taking a call on something that we haven't seen." Let's hope the film zooms off to London soon.





## DUTT ROOTS FOR DABBAWALAS

**Sanjay Dutt** showed concern and urged all to support the dabbawalas, considered as Mumbai's lifeline. Taking to social media, the actor wrote, "The dabbawalas have been serving us for decades & bringing food to so many Mumbaiers. Now is the time when we should come forward and support them." Earlier too, the *Munna Bhai MBBS* star had pitched in to feed a thousand families in Mumbai. Sanjay has plum projects in the pipeline including *KGF: Chapter 2*, *Shamshera*, *Bhuj: The Pride of India*, *Torbaaz* and *Sadak 2*.



## ALIA BHATT IN RESUL POOKUTTY'S FILM?

A while ago, it was announced that the Oscar-winning sound designer turned producer **Resul Pookutty** is working on his debut venture. We hear that the film is inspired by the current tensions of India and China at the border and will feature **Alia Bhatt** in the lead role. The film is a story of an Indian soldier named Baba Harbhajan Singh. The film apparently will also include Prime Minister **Narendra Modi's** recent visit to the army camp in Ladakh. The film is a love saga set against the backdrop of Indo-China war that took place in 1967 at Nathula. Talking about the project, Resul Pookutty said, "The current tension between India and China is already a part of our film. It's bizarre that we had already written it and it just happened. I believe that Baba is there guarding our border. Our script is almost ready. We will take it to Army officials and get their feedback." Looks interesting for sure!

## VIDYA BALAN STRIKES AT MISOGYNY

**Vidya Balan's** *Natkhat*, a short film, premiered at the We Are One: Global Film Festival. Directed by **Shaan Vyas** and written by **Annukampa Harsh** and Vyas, it takes a hard-hitting look at misogyny, which often begins at home. Vidya plays an abused housewife, whose escape lies in the company of her son (**Sanika Patel**). The 33-minute film revolves around a mother educating her son about gender equality. The film is co-produced by Vidya Balan along with **Ronnie Screwvala**.



**PRIYANKA CHOPRA HAS COMPLETED TWO DECADES IN THE ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS. FROM BEING CROWNED AS MISS WORLD IN 2000 TO RULING BOLLYWOOD LIKE A TRUE QUEEN, PRIYANKA REALLY IS A STAR IN EVERY SENSE. SHE SHARED A SPECIAL VIDEO AND WROTE, "THANK YOU @OZZYPRODUCTION AND ALL OF YOU FOR SUCH A BEAUTIFUL REMINDER OF THESE 20 YEARS SINCE I STARTED IN THIS BUSINESS. I HOPE TO MEET YOU ALL SOMEDAY. MEANWHILE, I WANT TO CELEBRATE WITH ALL OF YOU... STAY TUNED! THANK YOU #PCMANIACS."**

## MADHURI'S ALL FOR PAY CUTS

A concerned **Madhuri Dixit-Nene** has come out in support of producers given the economic crisis in the industry, caused by the coronavirus. She reportedly said that everyone would need to take pay cuts to help the film industry tide over what is looking like losses worth over 3000 crores. **Taapsee Pannu** too had seconded the probability of pay cuts to get the industry rolling once again. Industry pundits believe that it's important, not only for the stars but also for highly paid technicians, to fall in line given the adversity.





# preview

movies on the block, set-talk, talent-buzz,  
hotties to watch out for



## A SUITABLE GIRL

**TANYA MANIKTALA**

**X FACTOR: STRONG SCREEN PRESENCE**

Hailing from New Delhi, Tanya Maniktala started acting while she was in college. She'd enrolled herself in the theatre society of Shivaji College. After graduation, she tried her hand at acting in front of the camera in The Timeliners' show Flames. Soon her zeal of not settling into a set pattern made her take up a job as a copywriter. After she made up her mind that she was born to act, she quit everything else and plunged into acting full-time. That's exactly when opportunity knocked on her door. When she was called to audition for Mira Nair's A Suitable Boy, she didn't know what she was auditioning for. After waiting for a couple of days post her Delhi audition, the newcomer talked to Mira Nair over a video call. Soon the ace director flew in to audition Tanya in person. She aced that test as well and the project was in her hand. Her dream journey in showbiz began with a bang. Tanya has been getting glowing reports for her performance. Looks like she has a bright future ahead of her.

Meet newbie actor  
Vishal Jethwa and  
director Om Raut pg 12

# Enter the villain

**RAGHUVENDRA SINGH MEETS UP WITH VISHAL JETHWA, WHO IMPRESSED AUDIENCES WITH HIS VILLAINOUS ACT IN *MARDAANI 2***

**M**ardaani 2 is one of those rare films, which has been narrated by the villain in the first person. Vishal Jethwa plays Sunny – a psychopath, who rapes and murders girls for fun. He's so good at being bad that he's been applauded left, right and centre for his performance. The young actor has proved his potential no doubt.

Vishal has been overwhelmed by all the outpouring of 'love', to say the least. He recounts how after one of the screenings, a woman came up and thanked his mother for giving birth to such a fine actor like him. The actor was thrilled to bits by that as he adores his mother. "I lost my father in 2008. Since then my mother took over the responsibility of my elder sister and me. My mother worked as a saleswoman at a supermarket. Later she started selling items like purses, kurtis, t-shirts and all from home. She has even served food at weddings to earn that extra buck," shares an emotional Vishal.

He started his career as a background dancer in 2009. He danced with Salman Khan, Ajay Devgn and Asin during the promotions of *London Dreams*. That's when the acting bug bit him. Vishal thought of joining an acting class in his vicinity in Mira Road. But the high fees put him off. His mother arranged for







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A shot from the personal album



Mardaani 2

the money and got him enrolled. "I started doing theatre and later joined TV. In my first serial, *Parvarish - Kuch Khatti Kuch Meethi* (2011), I was only required to laugh," he recalls. His big break came in 2013 with *Bharat Ke Veer Putra-Maharana Pratap*, where he got to play young Akbar, apart from roles in shows like *Crime Petrol*, *Peshwa Bajirao* and *Diya Aur Baati Hum*. A prudent Vishal didn't neglect his education and managed to gain a B. Com degree despite the hectic schedules.

**T**he actor mentions that there are several, who never get a chance to step inside YRF Studios their entire lives. So it was a dream-come-true when he got a call from Shanoo Sharma, the casting head at the studio. A few days later, he met Gopi Puthran, the director of *Mardaani 2*, with whom he had to undergo five

**Aditya Chopraji said there's a difference between a two-minute audition and a two-hour film. He mentioned that my co-star would be Rani Mukerji. So I'd have to be at my best**

rounds of auditions. From 250 candidates, three were shortlisted. Later, he was the only one left. He was then asked to meet YRF head honcho, Aditya Chopra. Vishal put on his best clothes and was nervous as hell till he set foot inside Aditya Chopra's cabin. The filmmaker's affable attitude put him at ease immediately. "Adi sir told me there's a difference between a two-minute audition and a two-hour film. I should keep that in mind. He mentioned that my co-star would be Rani Mukerji. So I'd have to be at my best throughout. He advised me to surrender myself completely to the director's vision."

Vishal was apprehensive about acting with Rani but she allayed his fears

at their first meeting itself. "She shook my hands and said, 'We'll be friends on the sets. You can come to me anytime to discuss anything'." He reveals that the fight scenes with her were difficult to execute because she was still the iconic actor, he'd grown up watching. He was afraid he might hurt her. "It would have been different if she was a guy because we would have become pals by then. But I could barely manage to talk to her and hence fighting with her was difficult. The underwater shots were difficult as well. We both don't know how to swim," he reveals.

Though his character is called Sunny in the film, paradoxically he lives in a dark mental space. To

get under the skin of his complex character, he attended workshops. He visited Meerut to grasp the body language and get the ethnicity right. Moreover, it was his fake innocence that made it a menacing portrayal.

Vishal is keen to work with directors like Sanjay Leela Bhansali and Imtiaz Ali. He hasn't signed anything post *Mardaani 2* but plans to announce something big soon. He mentions he's afraid of the high life and wants to remain the same guy, who helps his mother in the kitchen. "My sister calls me a scaredy-cat but I can't let go of my nature. Maybe in future, I'll let go of my inhibitions and get used to the stardom." We agree with you Vishal. ■



# TAKING THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED

**How philanthropist DR ANEEL KASHI MURARKA is bringing about change in the lives of the common man!**

**D**r Aneel Kashi Murarka is a reputed, Mumbai-based industrialist and philanthropist. He is the managing director of Mirachem Industries and the founder of social enterprise Ample Mission. Humble to the core, Aneel Murarka's approach to business, philanthropy and social work does not just encompass the resources he provides to make a difference to people's lives, but also in the way he approaches societal challenges.

A patriot to the core, Aneel is the grandson of freedom fighter and philanthropist Chiranjilal Murarka and son of industrialist Kashi Murarka who continues to undertake major socio-developmental activities. Aneel leaves no opportunity unturned to serve society and the nation at large. By playing different roles, he has successfully worked towards addressing a wide range of social issues that plagues society and our country.

True to his humanitarian values, Aneel is deeply passionate about the causes he believes in. It is this intense personal interest that inspires his philanthropic goals with a "bold and articulate vision" on furthering the cause. His work for gender equality by providing opportunities to the transgender community, creating employment avenues for neglected acid-attack survivors and specially-abled persons is really commendable and worth appreciating.

Through Ample Mission's Tribal initiatives, he reaches out to marginalised communities living in darkness, deprived of basic needs with no sources of income. Using his entrepreneurial skills and expertise, he is working on creating sustainable income sources for these neglected communities. Aneel and his son Sidhaant, along with Team Ample Mission, are actively pursuing many urban-focused initiatives such as slum-children's education, feeding the urban poor and homeless, and filling potholes as a weekend activity to prevent the loss of lives from road accidents. Ample Mission is also involved in inculcating good hygiene habits among school kids and slum children. By partnering with like-minded social organisations, he participates in a wide range of humanitarian causes across many states of India. These include rural healthcare activities such as propagating computer literacy among village kids, constructing toilets and sanitation facilities for poor families, Swachh Abhiyan activities and saving kids from death by malnutrition.



Dr Aneel Kashi Murarka



Dr Aneel Kashi Murarka with son Sidhaant

**'THE OBJECTIVE OF PHILANTHROPY IS TO IMPACT PEOPLE'S LIVES POSITIVELY AND IN TURN EVOLVE A BETTER SOCIETY AND NATION. PHILANTHROPY FOR THE SAKE OF PHILANTHROPY IS OF NO USE AT ALL' – DR ANEEL KASHI MURARKA**

Aneel Murarka is responsible for the construction of a crematorium named "Shivdham" which, with its modern facilities, is now considered one of the best crematoriums in Mumbai. What's worth a mention is that people who cannot afford to perform the last rites of their loved ones, are granted whatever they need. It's evident that change-makers such as Aneel Murarka are taking philanthropic decisions based on mind and heart, and are moving away from 'funding-only' roles to becoming active collaborators for the betterment of people. "The objective of philanthropy is to impact people's lives positively and, in turn, evolve a better society and nation. Philanthropy for the sake of philanthropy is of no use at all," Dr Murarka says. It cannot be denied that an emotional connection to philanthropy is what sustains one's giving over time, and Aneel focuses not only on inputs — funds and expertise — but also on the outcomes, to assess the effectiveness of his philanthropic measures. In doing so, he and his team are able to tackle the social problems of people in a holistic way and ensure that the solutions are sustainable.

On a positive note, we can safely conclude that when it comes to active participation in philanthropy, people such as Dr Aneel Kashi Murarka are increasingly diversifying their modes of engagement and appreciating the activities that go beyond cheque writing — a trend that truly reflects the maturity and immense promise of philanthropy in a new India.

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# D/code

# DESIGN BIENNALE

INDIA'S FIRST CURATED  
VIRTUAL ART AND DESIGN FESTIVAL

JAIPUR  
EDITION

CURATED BY  
SHANTANU GARG

PARTNERS



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## In Conversation with SHANTANU GARG

Young and dynamic, architectural designer Shantanu Garg is synonymous with the India-modern design aesthetic

**S**hantanu Garg is the undisputed champion of modern Indian design. Through his eponymous design practice, Shantanu Garg Design, he advocates transforming design into idiosyncratic concepts, turning them into compositions derived largely from customisation. He is on a quest to create spaces that are an amalgamation of international design aesthetics and functionality, whilst catering to native sensibilities and demands.

Shantanu took on his first project when he was barely 18. Since then, he's worked

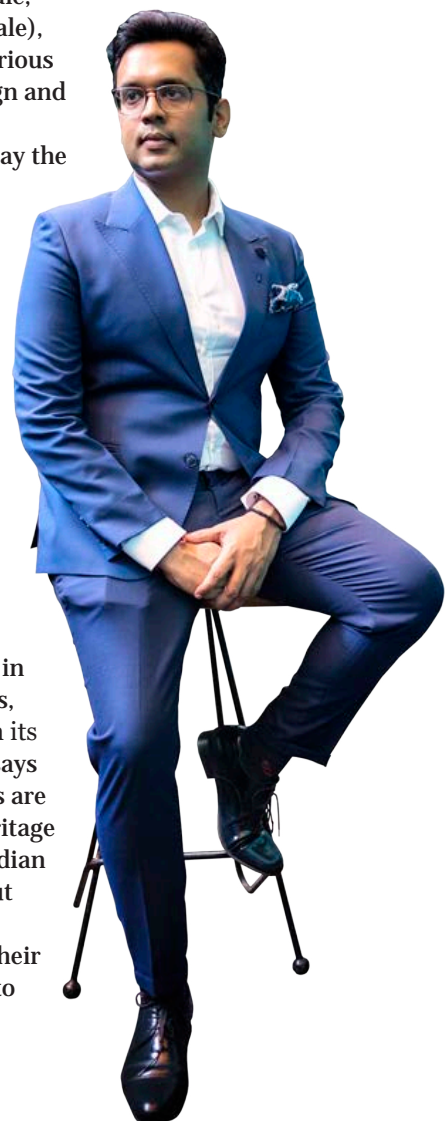
on numerous prestigious commercial and residential projects not just in India but internationally as well. His designs, whether seen in residential, commercial or retail spaces, or even the exhibitions or experiences that he curates, are based on a beautiful blend of contemporary minimalism and traditional extravagance.

It is this passion to carve a distinct identity for Indian design that led to his collaboration with the D/code Design Biennale (DDB). As curator of the virtual edition of D/code Design Biennale, (Phase I of Jaipur Design Biennale), he brings together over 50 illustrious names in the worlds of art, design and architecture.

"Through DDB, we aim to essay the fables of rich Indian heritage, culture and traditions and

Shantanu Garg, the undisputed champion of the India-modern aesthetic, comes on board as the curator for D/code Design Biennale, Jaipur Edition.

narrate its architectural history. From the influence of multiple dynasties that had ruled this country to a confluence of crossover boundaries and styles in modern Indian design narratives, we wish to project India through its crafts and artisanal approach," says the designer, whose own designs are evocative of the rich cultural heritage of India. "It's about time that Indian designers get their due. It's about time that we not only provide a platform for them to showcase their designs, but also catapult them to the International design arena."







“

*From the influence of multiple dynasties that had ruled this country to the confluence of crossover boundaries and styles in modern Indian design narratives, we wish to project India through its crafts and artisanal approach.*

— Shantanu Garg, Interior Designer





# MAKING HISTORY

OM RAUT HAS SOUNDED THE VICTORY BUGLE WITH HIS HINDI DEBUT, *TANHAJI: THE UNSUNG WARRIOR*, WRITES **SUMAN SHARMA**



**T***anhaji: The Unsung Warrior*, directed by Om Raut, is so far the highest-grossing Hindi film of 2020 fetching almost 300 crores. Set in the 17th century, it's based on the life of Tanhaji Malusare, a valiant military leader in Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's (Sharad Kelkar) army. The film depicts Tanhaji's (Ajay Devgn) attempts to recapture the Kondhena fort from Aurangzeb (Luke Kenny). The Mughal emperor had transferred its control to his trusted guard Udaybhan Singh Rathore (Saif Ali Khan). Om says it was always a dream to bring Tanhaji, the unsung hero to life. "Our history is full of dedicated people, who fought for the country. I want the masses to be proud of such heroes and through them, of our



Om Raut

Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior



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own history and heritage,” he declares.

It wasn't difficult for Om to get Ajay Devgn on board for *Tanhaji*. He had approached Ajay in 2017. The actor got so excited by the idea that he offered to produce the film as well. Om is impressed with the superstar's work ethics. “Ajay is like an octopus. He has so many things going on. At the same time, he's extremely focussed about what he's asked to do. He's a director's actor. The simplicity with which he portrays a character is remarkable,” gushes the director. The film is also Ajay's 100th and a milestone in his career.

He also has nice things to say about Saif, who played antagonist Udaybhan Singh. He's impressed by Saif's perfectionist streak. “Saif always says I can do better than this. He just goes on and on. Every take is an improvement over the last.” Om mentions that this hunger to excel is the reason why actors like Ajay and Saif have had such long careers. “The same is true of Kajol (plays *Tanhaji*'s wife, Savitribai) as well. The type of passion she brings to the table is fantastic,” he maintains.

Om's mother, Neena Raut, is a National Film Award winning producer. His father, Bharatkumar Raut, is a well-known author and a Member of Parliament. After attaining a Bachelor's degree in engineering, Om studied filmmaking at the Syracuse University in New York. He worked for

some time with the MTV network there. “I lived a great life there. A comfortable apartment, a fancy car, a lovely job... But I wanted to make my own kind of films,” he shares. He moved to India and directed his first film in Marathi, *Lokmanya: Ek Yug Purush* (2015), based on the life of the great freedom fighter starring Subodh Bhave. He won the Filmfare Best Debut Director Award in Marathi for it.

Om has acted in *Karamati Coat* (1993). He has also produced films like *City Of Gold* (2010) and *Haunted 3D*



Lokmanya: Ek Yug Purush

(2011). “I acted in films because I wanted to know what happens behind the scenes. I produced films to understand the business side of it. But actually, I've always wanted to be the guy, who stands next to the camera and tells everyone what to do,” he smiles. Om believes he's made his Hindi debut at a time when things are changing for the better. He cites films like *Article 15*,

*Shuddh Desi Romance*, *Badhaai Ho* and *Baahubali* as examples of a widening spectrum. He believes the lines between art and mainstream have blurred. “Hindi cinema is on the right track and evolving fast. I'm extremely happy to be part of the film industry,” he smiles. The film buff confesses to be a huge fan of V Shantaram. He likes Martin Scorsese and Christopher Nolan

among Hollywood filmmakers and Gauri Shinde and Nitesh Tiwari among contemporary Hindi directors.

He's signed Kartik Aaryan for a hush-hush actioner. On the personal side, Om loves cars and motorcycles. “I'm a petrolhead and like to take off on impromptu vacations. The open road holds an allure for me,” smiles the adventure enthusiast.



**“I'M A PETROLHEAD OF SORTS AND LIKE TO TAKE OFF ON IMPROMPTU VACATIONS. THE OPEN ROAD HOLDS AN ALLURE FOR ME”**



# F&B

*fashion and beauty*

They are hot, they are cool.  
Meet our trend makers and breakers



Hiral Bhatia and Rohit Bhatkar



Sonam Kapoor Ahuja



Anand Ahuja and Sonam Kapoor Ahuja



Kiara Advani



Priyanka Chopra

## TRESS TALES

"I can do the most fabulous hairstyle but if it doesn't go with the rest of your look, then it can be the biggest blunder. It's the best accessory one can flaunt if done right"

**Hiral Bhatia and Rohit Bhatkar**  
spill some styling secrets to help you  
get long luscious hair...



Sidharth Malhotra



# FRINGE BENEFITS

HAIRSTYLIST COUPLE **HIRAL BHATIA** AND **ROHIT BHATKAR** SHARE  
HAIR GROOMING SECRETS WITH **ANALITA SETH**



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Healthy eating, eight hours of sleep and some love and care everyday can give you healthy and luxurious hair. The husband and wife team of Rohit Bhatkar and Hiral Bhatia share some styling and hair care secrets with us. Hiral has changed the way stars like Sonam Kapoor, Priyanka Chopra, Janhvi Kapoor and Kiara Advani style their hair while Rohit is responsible for Sidharth Malhotra's messy chocolate boy looks and Farhan Akhtar's neat grooming. Excerpts...

#### WHEN DID YOU DECIDE TO TAKE UP THIS PROFESSION?

**Hiral Bhatia:** I was in my last year of college completing Botany. My mother had a small salon and I'd spend time there scrolling through all the magazines. Later, I'd decode hairstyles and try them on my friends. Mom saw this creative streak in me and wanted me to nurture it. She took me to BBlunt after college. I fell in love with that place the minute I entered it. I enrolled there and have been in love with hairdressing ever since. It's been 11 years now.

**Rohit Bhatkar:** My father is also a hairstylist. As a

school kid, I'd visit my father's salon for a couple of hours every weekend. I used to get inspired by my father's work. The whole thing of making others feel good about themselves and making them look good made me certain that this is what I wanted to do in life.

#### HOW IMPORTANT DO YOU THINK A HAIRSTYLE IS IN

#### AN OVERALL LOOK?

**Rohit:** It's the best accessory one can flaunt, if done right. When it comes to creating a look, there are three factors that are considered crucial. Hair, make-up and wardrobe. If either one of them doesn't gel with the others, the look is incomplete.

**Hiral:** I couldn't agree more with Rohit.

I also think a hairstyle can make or break the look. At the same time, I can do the most fabulous hairstyle but if it doesn't go with the rest of your look, then it can be the biggest blunder.

#### WHO WAS YOUR FIRST CELEBRITY CLIENT?

**Hiral:** Vivek Oberoi.

**Rohit:** I was a hair assistant on the



Sonam Kapoor Ahuja



Sidharth Malhotra



Hiral with Sonam Kapoor



Kiara Advani



Alia Bhatt



Priyanka Chopra

*"Sonam Kapoor and I love to experiment and we're both quite impulsive. The whole creative process is great fun"*

1 Stimulating your follicles promotes hair growth.

2 Coconut oil is amazing for hair and scalp.

3 Castor oil promotes hair growth.

## GROOMING TIPS

4 Onion juice mixed with a couple of drops of coconut oil or castor oil is beneficial for hair growth.

5 Banana, eggs and honey mask is amazing.

6 Fermented rice water not only makes the hair soft and shiny it also promotes hair growth.

7 Avoid excessive brushing.

8 Tie a loose braid while sleeping.

9 Replace cotton pillow with a satin one.



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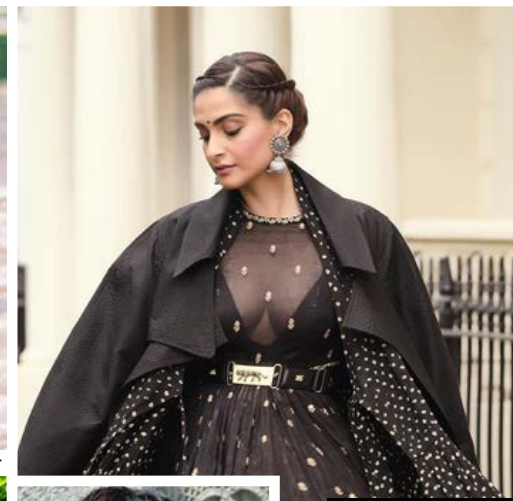
Hiral with Priyanka Chopra



Hiral with Disha Patani



Rohit Bhatkar with Farhan Akhtar



Sonam Kapoor Ahuja

*“When it comes to creating a look, there are three factors that are considered crucial. Hair, make-up and wardrobe. If either one of them doesn’t gel with the others, the look is incomplete”*

movie *Players* and got a chance to style Abhishek Bachchan, Bobby Deol, Neil Nitin Mukesh, Sikander Kher and Omi Vaidya.

#### ONE PERSON YOU LOVE TO WORK WITH AND WHY?

**Hiral:** Sonam Kapoor. We both love to experiment and we’re both quite impulsive. Rhea Kapoor is the one who styles her. The whole creative process, the thought behind putting a look together and executing it is great fun.

**Rohit:** My wife Hiral as she really tests my skills as a hairdresser and gets the best out of me whenever I am doing her hair.

#### ONE LOOK OF YOURS THAT YOU LOVE...

**Rohit:** I created this look for Sidharth Malhotra for a brand

#### THREE HAIRCARE/STYLE TIPS FOR MEN AND WOMEN RESPECTIVELY...

**ROHIT:** Use the right shampoo / conditioner for your hair. It makes a big difference

Live a healthy lifestyle if you want great hair and skin. It’s what you eat, drink and how you live that matters.

Less is more.

**HIRAL:** Get the correct shampoo according to your scalp type and conditioner according to your hair type.

Change your regime according to every season.

Do not blindly follow “trends”.



Sidharth Malhotra



Hiral Bhatia

campaign. His hair on the sides and back was very short so we had put some 280 pieces of extensions to create the length and texture.

**Hiral:** My former boss Adhuna (Akhtar) used to say, “you’re only as good as your last haircut.” And I totally live by it.

#### IT’S SAID STYLING YOUR HAIR REGULARLY CAN CAUSE INTENSE DAMAGE, HOW TRUE IS THAT?

**Rohit:** Yes excessive styling takes a toll on your hair. It leads to dryness and thinning because of

the tension given with the dryer, brush and also with the heat. But if the right styling products and equipment are used, it can protect your hair to a certain extent.

**Hiral:** Anything in moderation is fine. If you use a lot of hairspray and don’t end up brushing it off your hair or use a lot of wax or heat spa without using a heat protectant, you can cause irreversible damage to your hair.

#### WHAT ARE SOME HAIRCARE MYTHS THAT YOU

#### WOULD LIKE TO BURST?

**Hiral:** People think conditioning can cause hair fall but it’s not true. It just softens the hair. Also, products that claim to mend split ends do not really work. Split ends are the last stage of hair damage. The only solution is to trim it off.

**Rohit:** Plucking or using products increases grey hair. This is false. Grey hair is genetic and has got a lot to do with stress levels and lifestyle.

#### ONE HAIR-CARE ROUTINE THAT EVERYONE MUST FOLLOW REGULARLY?

**Rohit:** Diagnose your hair and scalp type to find out what works for you.

**Hiral:** I advocate finding the correct products for yourself and following a regime. ■



# exives

what's on their mind?

## HOTTIE AT 40!

**You're as old as you look. Simple as that. Not that I want to look sweet 16. I'm proud to be 40. I'm proud to have worked for 20 years. With God's grace, I will continue working for the next 20 years and proudly so at 50 or 60**

Kareena Kapoor Khan  
on marriage, motherhood  
and career in the times  
of coronavirus



# PLAY IT AGAIN... & AGAIN...

KAREENA KAPOOR KHAN COMPLETES TWO  
DECADES IN THE MOVIE BUSINESS. JITESH PILLAI  
REVISTS THE GOOD TIMES WITH HER

PHOTOGRAPHS: SAIF ALI KHAN







tar power she had in spades even when I first met her. From Studio NO. 4 to Studio NO. 6 in Filmistan, she saw to it that she was dropped in her car. She wasn't even a star then but had all the makings. She was just Karisma Kapoor's little sister waiting in the wings. I watched the rise and rise of Kareena Kapoor Khan in the last twenty years. She completed two decades in June. Besides her acting chops and alabaster skin what made her stay is that unique connect. She just connects. Everyone will tell you that. Everyone has a Bebo story. Most would be funny and diverting. She has the air of those content with life and watching it pass by. Be it as the star attraction for a fashion designer, or a judge on a reality show or in between takes—she's a chiller. Tension *nahi leneka* she says. Years ago, she was like a bull in a china shop. Cocking a snook at co-stars, grabbing the best projects in the business, flaunting a killer attitude. She still has all that. But there is restraint, a *theraav*. The same restraint you see in an *Omkaara*, *Asoka*, *Dev*, *Chameli* or even her debut *Refugee*. She's also all super star aura be it *K3G* or her latest *Veere Di Wedding* and *Good Newwz*. She's to the manner born. I suspect she's going to be here for a long long time and give full play to her talent and metier. I don't know if it's Saif Ali Khan's laid back style that's rubbed off on her but she glows. In the warmth of love and a deep sense of self security. It's not put on. She's become more self-aware and guarded when she talks. Gone is the derring-do which I admit I miss a lot. She's still fun and like I mentioned earlier everyone now has a Mrs Khan story to tell. Life with Taimur seems a lot like a fairy tale. And she plays the part perfectly. Just like those story-book princesses who will gather the folds of their gown and traipse into the darkness. So I quiz her about life and times, twenty years of showbiz and certain other assorted queries. We have teething troubles fixing our Skype call. Then we are on track. And I ask:

**I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A SUCKER FOR LOVE... AT THE PEAK OF MY CAREER, I CHASED LOVE. IT HAS GIVEN ME PEACE. THAT ALSO HAPPENS WHEN YOU'VE MET THE RIGHT PERSON... EVERYONE WAS LIKE, 'SHAADI MAT KARNA, CAREER KHATAM HO JAYEGA'. I SAID, 'CAREER HI KHATAM HO JAYEGA NA? JAAN TOH NAHI CHALE JAYEGI?'**

#### **WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT FROM THE LOCKDOWN?**

That one has to take each day as it comes. Life's so unpredictable and fragile. We need to keep our loved ones close. The only thing keeping me sane is that I can spend time with Saif and my son. You learn to value the people you care about. When you're shooting and have so much going on in your life, you tend to take them for granted.

#### **IS THIS THE LONGEST YOU'VE BEEN WITH SAIF AND TAIMUR AT A STRETCH?**


We've always wanted to take time out and travel together, be together. But it has been more than 90 days now. I'm loving it. I've lost count of the days. The fear is that we've all got used to just chilling and cooking and being at home.

#### **YOU'VE COMPLETED TWO DECADES IN SHOWBIZ. WHAT DO YOU RECOLLECT ABOUT YOUR FIRST FILM REFUGEE?**


We shot the entire film in Bhuj in Gujarat. Abhishek (Bachchan) and I were ready for it. It was

something that I wanted to do since childhood. Even though there was a phase where I wanted to be a lawyer. But after looking at those books, I got unnerved. I remember telling you that I want to be an actor. It's not like I've chased stardom. I've always chased the idea of being known as a star actor. Coming back to *Refugee*, I couldn't have asked for a better launch with J.P Dutta, Abhishek and the entire team. I was waiting to burst in front of the camera. That excitement to learn your





I'M EXCITED TO  
GET INTO THE  
40S. YOU'RE MORE  
CONTENT WITH  
YOURSELF. YOU'VE  
ALREADY DONE  
THE WRONGS, THE  
RIGHTS... YOU'VE  
TRIED EVERYTHING  
IN LIFE. NOW, YOU  
START LOOKING  
WITHIN. YOU  
FEEL LIKE DOING  
THINGS FOR  
YOURSELF ALSO...



lines, that fire was always there. Considering that Lolo (Karisma Kapoor) was a big star and coming from the family I belong to, I had to prove myself. Through the years, there have been super highs and also some disastrous lows.

### HOW DID YOU DEAL WITH THE HIGHS AND THE LOWS?

I wear my highs and lows equally with my collars up. Success or failure, I am what I am because of those films. There was a patch when every possible film flopped. I began wondering why it was happening. Post that I didn't do anything for one year. I even turned down films like *Race*, the one that Saif was in. I didn't want to do anything that I'd already done. It was after Imtiaz (Ali) called me (for *Jab We Met*) that everything fell into place. That one year changed my perspective. I didn't want to do run-of-the mill stuff that was not working for me at that time. I've worked with the biggest of directors and those films didn't work out the way I'd expected. Whenever I worked with a new director or probably a 'lesser name', it has taken me forward. Whether it was *Chameli*, *Jab We Met*



**I'VE WORKED WITH THE BIGGEST OF DIRECTORS AND THOSE FILMS DIDN'T WORK OUT THE WAY I'D EXPECTED. WHENEVER I'VE WORKED WITH A NEW DIRECTOR OR PROBABLY A 'LESSER NAME,' IT HAS TAKEN ME FORWARD. WHETHER IT WAS CHAMELI, JAB WE MET OR OMKARA. THE SLIGHTLY ALTERNATE PATH WORKED FOR ME. BUT EVERY FILM IS CLOSE TO MY HEART**



or *Omkara*. The slightly alternate path worked for me. But every film is close to my heart. Even *Main Prem Ki Diwani Hoon*. I love it. Even though the highs have been highs and the lows have been extremely low, I've enjoyed every minute of those 20 years.

### WHAT WOULD BE YOUR MILESTONES, IF YOU HAD TO SPLIT THE TWO DECADES IN THREE PHASES.

The first phase would be of *Refugee*, where it all started. Things went down later. But *Chameli*, *Dev*, *Omkara*, *Jab We Met*... were significant films. After marriage,





  
**TAIMUR'S A CHILD. HE HAS NO IDEA WHAT'S GOING ON. SO WE TRY TO EXPLAIN WHY THEY'RE (PAPARAZZI) TAKING HIS PICTURES. OUR JOB IS TO, GIVE HIM A NORMAL ENVIRONMENT TO GROW UP IN. THAT'S WHY WE RUN AWAY FOR HOLIDAYS. WHERE HE CAN RUN, WALK, GO FISHING... THINGS HE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO DO HERE**  


**SO WHAT WOULD A 40-YEAR-OLD KAREENA TELL A 25-YEAR-OLD KAREENA?**

Nothing in life is worth more than mental peace. If it's meant to work out, it will. If not, then you just have to let it go. Sometimes, it's hard to let things go. But success and failure, it's all transient. The hunger is still there for better work. So yeah, follow your dreams. But it shouldn't be an obsession. Having said that, *yahan woh bhook kabhi mitti nahi hai*. Actors have that *alag* kind of appetite. You just want to be at it, which is great. But sometimes you have to be like, 'No, this is it'. I learnt this when my films weren't working while films I feared wouldn't work, went on to become successful. I realised I should just do my work and not take everything so seriously. During the last 10 years, I've changed a lot. I look at life differently than I did before.

there were films like *Bajrangi Bhaijaan*, *Ki & Ka*, *Veere Di Wedding* and *Good Newwz*. The films were topical and relevant. It was about turning things around on its head. For an all-girls film like *Veere Di Wedding* to earn 12 crores in a day was unheard of.

**THERE'S A NOTICEABLE THERAAV IN YOU...**

In a journey of 20 years, if you've not matured as a person and as an artiste, you've not learnt anything. I started at the age of 17. *Ek alag si energy hoti hai* at that time. You're like listen I can do anything. But,

today I'm 40 and I'm like... I can't. I'm in Zen mode. I just want to do my work. Even if I do one film at a time, I'll give my best to that. But at 17, you want to be in every film and just kill it. The fire is still there but the flames were a lot higher at that time.



**I BELIEVE GIRLFRIENDS ARE MORE DIFFICULT THAN WIVES. GIRLFRIENDS ARE INSECURE. YOU'RE CONSTANTLY THINKING WHAT'S HAPPENING? IS HE TALKING TO HIS HEROINE? SAIF'S A GREAT HUSBAND AND FATHER. WHEN I MET SAIF, HE WAS CALMER WITH HIMSELF. THE TIMING WAS RIGHT... WE HAVE THESE COMMONALITIES, WHICH WE FIND SOLACE IN. THAT'S WHAT WE'VE LEARNT FROM EACH OTHER. TO FIND SOLACE IN THE SMALLER THINGS**

**PLEASE ELABORATE...**

The 'Phase 2' began at the time when *Jab We Met* released and I met Saif. I fell in love at the same time when I got super success. It was a catch-22 situation. I could have focussed on my career. My friends would say, 'You're stupid not wanting to do this film' or 'You're always saying no'. But that's me. I've always been a sucker for love.

**AND THEN YOU CHOSE TO GET MARRIED...**

Yeah, in 2008 at the peak of my career, no one would think of it. But I wanted it. I chased love more. It has given me peace and opened doors in my mind. That also happens when you've met the right person.

**WERE YOU EDGY AND ANXIOUS AS A WIFE IN THE FIRST FEW YEARS OF MARRIAGE?**

I wasn't edgy or anxious. But it's a new journey. I started living in with Saif before I got married not because I wanted to experiment or test. It was because we weren't getting much time to spend with each other as we were shooting continuously. After that, it was a natural transition. He asked me to marry him and that was it. Everyone was like, 'Shaadi mat karna, career khatam ho jayega'.

I said, 'Career hi khatam ho jayega na? Jaan toh nahi chali jayegi na?'. I love this man. If living with him means that producers don't want to work with me, so be it. Of course, after that I've done some good films. Saif has also been extremely encouraging. I only get edgy when we don't see each other for a long time.

**DOES THAT HAPPEN OFTEN?**  
There have been such



**I'M A LOT LIKE MY MOTHER (BABITA). MOM IS ALSO FIERCELY INDEPENDENT. SHE'S STRONG- HEADED AND ALSO EMOTIONAL AT THE SAME TIME. HITLER AND SHE WERE BORN ON THE SAME DAY. SO WHEN WE FIGHT I TELL HER, 'YOU'RE SO ADAMANT.' WE'RE (KARISMA AND SHE) NOTHING WITHOUT OUR MOTHER. SHE HAS GIVEN US EVERYTHING. MY APPROACH TO LIFE IS THROUGH HER EYES. BUT I'M A LOT LIKE MY DAD (RANDHIR KAPOOR) AS WELL. HIS SENSE OF HUMOUR, HIS ZEST FOR LIFE, HIS ENERGY... HE'S AN AMAZING HUMAN BEING**



occasions. Saif is mad, he gets into these characters. He's an extremely passionate actor. He did *Laal Kaptaan*, which took him four months around Rajasthan. I did not see him for 50-60 days as I was working here. Taimur was just one-and-a-half years old then. I couldn't go to these strange places. That's what gets difficult between two actors.

#### **WERE YOU A DIFFICULT GIRLFRIEND AND AN EASY WIFE OR THE OTHER WAY AROUND?**

Generally, I believe girlfriends are more difficult than wives. Girlfriends are insecure. You're constantly thinking what's happening? Is he talking to his heroine? Saif's a great husband and an extremely good father. When I met Saif, he was calmer with himself. The timing was right. We're a decade apart, yet he thinks way ahead of me.

#### **WHAT QUALITIES OF HIS HAVE RUBBED OFF ON YOU AND VICE VERSA?**

He's one of our most outstanding actors. But Saif is not the kind to chase success. If he wants to do a film like *Laal Kaptaan*, he'll do it. He's not in the rat race. He's like I'm an actor and I want to stick by that belief. I love that about Saif. I also love that

he can switch off and talk about something else. He can watch a crime thriller called *Miss Marple*, which I guess no one would watch apart from us two. It's about a 60-year-old female sleuth. We have these commonalities, which we find solace in. That's what we've learnt from each other. To find solace in the smaller things. He's happy being home right now. He's like we need to stay in isolation because we need to help others. We have to stay positive about it. We can't moan about it. People are like '2020 is gone'. He says it's okay *na*. It's just a matter of a year. He's so calm and that has

me, 'Duniya bolti rahegi. Tum karo jo tum karna chahti ho. You'll learn that way'. Taimur is also teaching me the kind of mother he wants me to be. He brings out the best in me and also the worst. Because even I lose patience sometimes.

#### WHEN DOES THAT HAPPEN?

He's three-and-a-half years old now. He's kind of understanding his likes and dislikes. He says things like, 'I don't want to eat this. I don't want to eat that.' I end up losing my patience. I tell him, 'You have to eat your *paratha*. There's no option now'. It's a bit of a task. But in the end, we battle it out together.

**SAIF LOVES ALL HIS THREE CHILDREN HE'LL LOOK AT TAIMUR AND SAY, 'TAIMUR'S EYES ARE ALSO LIKE SARA'S'. IN FACT, ALL THREE OF THEM (INCLUDING IBRAHIM) HAVE THE PATAUDI EYES. THAT'S BEAUTIFUL. WHEN YOU SEE SARA'S CHILDHOOD PICTURES, SHE LOOKS SO MUCH LIKE TIM. TAIMUR IS A LOT LIKE SAIF ALSO. KABHI KABHI THODA TWIST HO JAATA HAI DIMAAG!**

rubbed off on me also. He's also grown more emotional and empathetic. He shows it in different ways. Like, if I'm upset about something I read or heard, I'll just cry. Usually, he won't show it. But now his emotional quotient has increased by 50 per cent.

#### TELL US ABOUT YOU BOTH AS PARENTS.

I'm over protective. I'm also a first-time mother. This journey is teaching me something new each day. My mother (Babita Kapoor) once said there's no crown for the best mother in the world. No one even knows who the best mother in the world is. Mom tells

#### IS SAIF COOL ABOUT HIS EATING HABITS?

Saif gets frazzled. He's like, 'I cannot take this dinner time stress'. Taimur keeps saying, 'I don't want to eat this'. The food remains in his mouth for 25 minutes. So Saif prefers to be in the other room because there's this whole mother-son tension going on at the dinner table. But, Saif's more relaxed now as a parent. He's been there. He knows what it's like. He's an amazing father to all his three children. He loves them deeply. That's the best part about him. Like he'll look at Taimur and say, 'Taimur's eyes are also like Sara's'. In fact, all three of them (including Ibrahim)



With Saif and Taimur

have Pataudi eyes. That's beautiful. Somewhere they have this connection, which is amazing. When you see Sara's childhood pictures, she looks so much like Tim.

#### IS TAIMUR LIKE THEM IN TEMPERAMENT?

From what I've heard, Ibrahim was a peaceful child. If you gave him potato chips, he'd be quiet. I guess Sara and Taimur are feisty. Taimur is a lot like Saif as well. *Kabhi kabhi thoda twist ho jaata hai dimaag!*

#### DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR SARA?

This generation doesn't need any advice. They're well trained and super

actors. Sara's extremely bright. She's doing amazingly well for herself right now. She has a mind of her own. She's gonna do what she needs to, learn from her own mistakes and enjoy her own success.

#### DOES IT BOTHER YOU THAT THE PAPARAZZI IS ALWAYS AFTER TAIMUR?

He's a child. He has no idea what's going on. So we try to explain why they're taking his pictures. Our job is to, as much as possible, give him a normal environment to grow up in. That's why we run off for holidays. Where he can run, walk, go fishing... things he wouldn't be able to do here. Our aim is to make him eventually





With mom Babita, sister Karisma and Taimur

understand, 'Don't take this too seriously because actually you're a nobody. You're just our son'.

### HOW MUCH ARE YOU LIKE YOUR MOM AND HOW MUCH LIKE YOUR FATHER, RANDHIR KAPOOR?

I'm a lot like my mother. Mom is also fiercely independent. She's strong-headed and also emotional at the same time. Hitler and she were born on the same day. So when we fight I tell her, 'You're so adamant.' We're (Karisma and she) nothing without our mother. She has given us everything. My approach to life is through her eyes. But I'm a lot like my dad as well. His sense of humour, his zest for life, his energy... he's an amazing human being. I connect with him on another level. He never says no for anything. His company is

so much fun. That's the kind of person I'd always want to be.

### IS KARISMA ALSO LIKE YOU AS A MOTHER?

No. Lolo is a helicopter mother. I'm much more relaxed even though I'm a first-time mom. Lolo's hyper and paranoid. But she's such a nice human being that no one can tell her anything. Being a single mother is difficult. So her approach is different. I fire her a lot. We try to ease her out.

### YOUR UNCLE, RISHI KAPOOR PASSED AWAY RECENTLY. YOUR THOUGHTS...

It's been a terrible tragedy. Like me Chintu uncle was a Virgo. He too believed in saying things as they were. If he loved your performance, he'd tell you so. If he hated your performance, he'd say he

**I'M OVER PROTECTIVE. I'M ALSO A FIRST-TIME MOTHER. THIS JOURNEY IS TEACHING ME SOMETHING NEW EACH DAY. MY MOTHER (BABITA KAPOOR) ONCE SAID THERE'S NO CROWN FOR THE BEST MOTHER IN THE WORLD.**

**NO ONE EVEN KNOWS WHO THE BEST MOTHER IN THE WORLD IS... TAIMUR IS ALSO TEACHING ME THE KIND OF MOTHER HE WANTS ME TO BE**

didn't like it. Saif misses him a lot more because he connected with him on another level. They believed they were similar actors. Unfortunately, I never had the opportunity to work with him.

### BEING PART OF AN AGEIST INDUSTRY, DID IT BOTHER YOU WHEN YOU TURNED 40?

You're as old as you look. Simple as that. Not that I want to look sweet 16. I'm proud to have worked for 20 years. With God's grace, I will continue working for the next 20 years and proudly so at 50 or 60.

### YOUR MOTHER-IN-LAW (SHARMILA TAGORE) HAS BEEN HERE FOR 65 ODD YEARS...

She's iconic and an inspiration. Today with the OTT platforms and the different kinds of films being made, there's place for everyone out here. Age is no barrier.

### WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE OTHER 40-YEAR OLD WOMEN?

I'm excited to get into the 40s. You're more content with yourself. You've already done the wrongs, the rights... You've tried everything in life. Now, you start looking within. You feel like doing things

for yourself also. Whether it's travel, whether it's reading a book. Just doing things that you couldn't do earlier because of the rush you were in.

### WHAT ABOUT VENTURING ON THE OTT PLATFORM?

Shows like *Sacred Games*, *Delhi Crime* and *Paatal Lok*, *Made In Heaven*... excite me as an actor. But they also make me extremely scared. The actors on the OTT platforms are on an international level as compared to our big screen actors. Shefali Shah was outstanding in *Delhi Crime*. She's a brilliant actor anyway. Even *Paatal Lok*... So, I'm both nervous and excited to dabble in it now. Honestly, I believe there's no difference between both the mediums. Saif has watched *Paatal Lok* twice already. He says it's a learning experience. It's the content that makes the experience memorable rather than the big screen.

### ANY PLANS TO HAVE A SECOND BABY?

It's all up to God and destiny. There's no planning as such. I never planned the first one. I'm not going to plan my life ahead either. Right now, we just have to have faith and keep the positivity going.

# OUT OF THE SHADOWS

RAGHUVENDRA SINGH  
CHATS UP WITH  
ABHISHEK BACHCHAN,  
WHO RECENTLY COMPLETED  
20 YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY

PHOTOGRAPHS: ABHAY SINGH





**TWENTY YEARS.** *We can't believe that two decades have passed since the release of Refugee, Abhishek Bachchan's debut film as an actor. There was an innocence about him back then. A vulnerability that set him apart from others of his breed. He was Amitabh Bachchan's son and comparisons to his father were all but inevitable. But Abhishek wasn't an Amitabh clone. He was very much his own actor. Slowly and steadily, he made sure everyone noticed that. There is a certain gravitas in him as an actor, something which has only increased with time. You saw that in Yuva, in Guru, in Manmarziyaan, He ventured into OTT space with Breathe: Into the Shadows and while the initial reactions were positive, he sadly tested positive for COVID-19. Panic ensued when both Abhishek and Amitabh Bachchan were admitted to the Nanavati hospital. He asked his fans to stay calm. "Both my father and I tested positive for COVID 19. Both of us having mild symptoms have been admitted to hospital. We have informed all the required authorities and our family and staff are all being tested. I request all to stay calm and not panic." We spoke to the actor via video chat a few days before he was tested and this is what he had to say:*

**TWENTY YEARS IN SHOW BUSINESS IS QUITE AN ACHIEVEMENT. WHAT HAVE THESE YEARS TAUGHT YOU?**

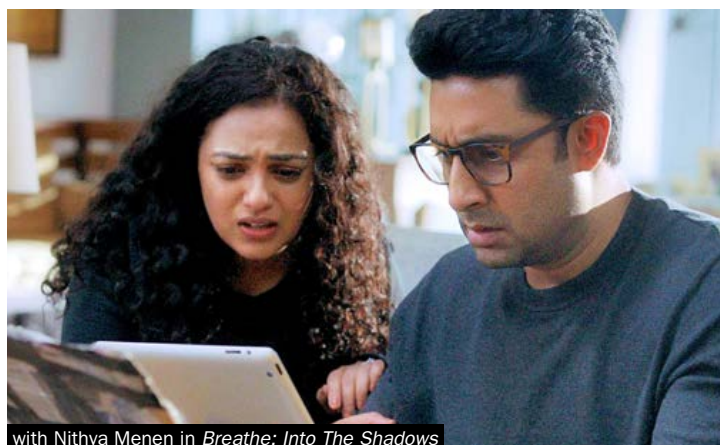
To be thankful for the work that you get, to be grateful to the audience for allowing you to be an actor for so long and to work even harder tomorrow to earn that respect and love again.

**WHAT HAS CHANGED AND REMAINED UNCHANGED ABOUT YOU?**

I think what's remained unchanged about me is my excitement to do what I do. I love being an actor, I love being part of films, I love making films, I'm passionate about it. So that hasn't changed. What has changed, I think experience teaches you a lot. Twenty years are enough to learn about how to do things, how to improve, how to better yourself. So I would like to believe that the experience of twenty years has taught me a lot and brought a change in me.

**DID YOU SPEAK TO JP DUTTA, WHO DIRECTED YOUR DEBUT FILM, AND TO KAREENA KAPOOR KHAN, YOUR FIRST CO-STAR, ON THE DAY REFUGEE COMPLETED TWENTY YEARS?**

Of course, I spoke to JP Saab. I had a long conversation with him. *Maine unse kaha ki main aap ko dhanyawad kehna chahunga ki aapne mujhe aur Bebo ko yeh mauka dia, hamein us layak samjha ke hum aap ki picture ke Refugee aur Nazneen ban paayein --* (I thanked him for giving Kareena and me a chance to become Nazneen and



with Nithya Menen in *Breathe: Into The Shadows*

**Digital is yet another medium that has come. It's the future because it's the latest technology. But is 'the' future means baaki sab pichhe chuut jayega? No. I think it will all co-exist...**

Refugee in his film). I also thanked him for introducing us to what was possibly, if I can speak for Kareena, the best decision we could have made in our lives and that was to become actors.

**THREE REASONS WHY BREATHE: INTO THE SHADOWS IS A MUST WATCH...**

It's a thrilling, edge-of-your-seat entertainer, which has something for everybody and a lot of twists and turns and surprises. It's perfectly suited for Amazon Prime as an original series. I think

people will enjoy the work we have done.

**DID YOU FEEL EMOTIONAL PLAYING THE FATHER OF A DAUGHTER...SINCE YOU ARE ONE IN REAL LIFE TOO...**

To be honest, if you'd asked me this question 10 years ago, I'd have said that I'm an actor, my job is to act and I have to learn through observation. Today, I can perform not just by observation but also by actually experiencing what I have gone through as a father. If I had asked you five years ago, how do you think it will feel to be a

father? Your answer would have been different. Today, because you are a father, you'll understand that emotion, you can answer that question better. That's the only difference. The difference is that today I have first-hand experience of that emotion. I don't need to create that emotion, that emotion is within me.

**YOU PLAY A PSYCHIATRIST, WHO HIMSELF IS GOING THROUGH AN EMOTIONAL TURMOIL IN THE SERIES. WAS IT CHALLENGING FOR YOU AS AN ACTOR TO DO THIS LAYERED ROLE?**



***I spoke to JP Saab... Maine unse kaha ki main aap ko dhanyawad kehna chahunga ki aapne mujhe aur Bebo ko yeh mauka dia, hamein us layak samjha ke hum aap ki picture ke Refugee aur Nazneen ban paayein. (I thanked him for giving Kareena and me a chance to become Nazneen and Refugee)***

The challenge was to make that turmoil seem believable. This medium does not allow for melodrama. This medium's requirement is that your emotions and performance have to be as believable and realistic as possible. So sometimes you might try a story which is very complicated but how do you portray that role as believably as possible. What is the emotion a father goes through -- to know that you have to look for your daughter, worry about your daughter's well being and to do that as believably as possible, I think that was the greatest challenge.

#### **HOW WAS THE EXPERIENCE OF WORKING WITH NITHYA MENEN?**

Outstanding. She is unbelievably brilliant as an actor. She is one of the best actresses I have worked with. She is so effortless, she is so natural, it's just been a pleasure.



With Kareena Kapoor in *Refugee*

#### **DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR DEBUT IN THE DIGITAL MEDIUM A MILESTONE. IS DIGITAL THE FUTURE?**

It's the future, it's not 'the' future. It's going to be part of the future. It's interesting that you asked it. First, there was theatre, then came cinema, no one thought theatre was going to die. After cinema came television, no one thought cinema was going to die. Today, the theatre scene is thriving in Mumbai. All over India too, theatre

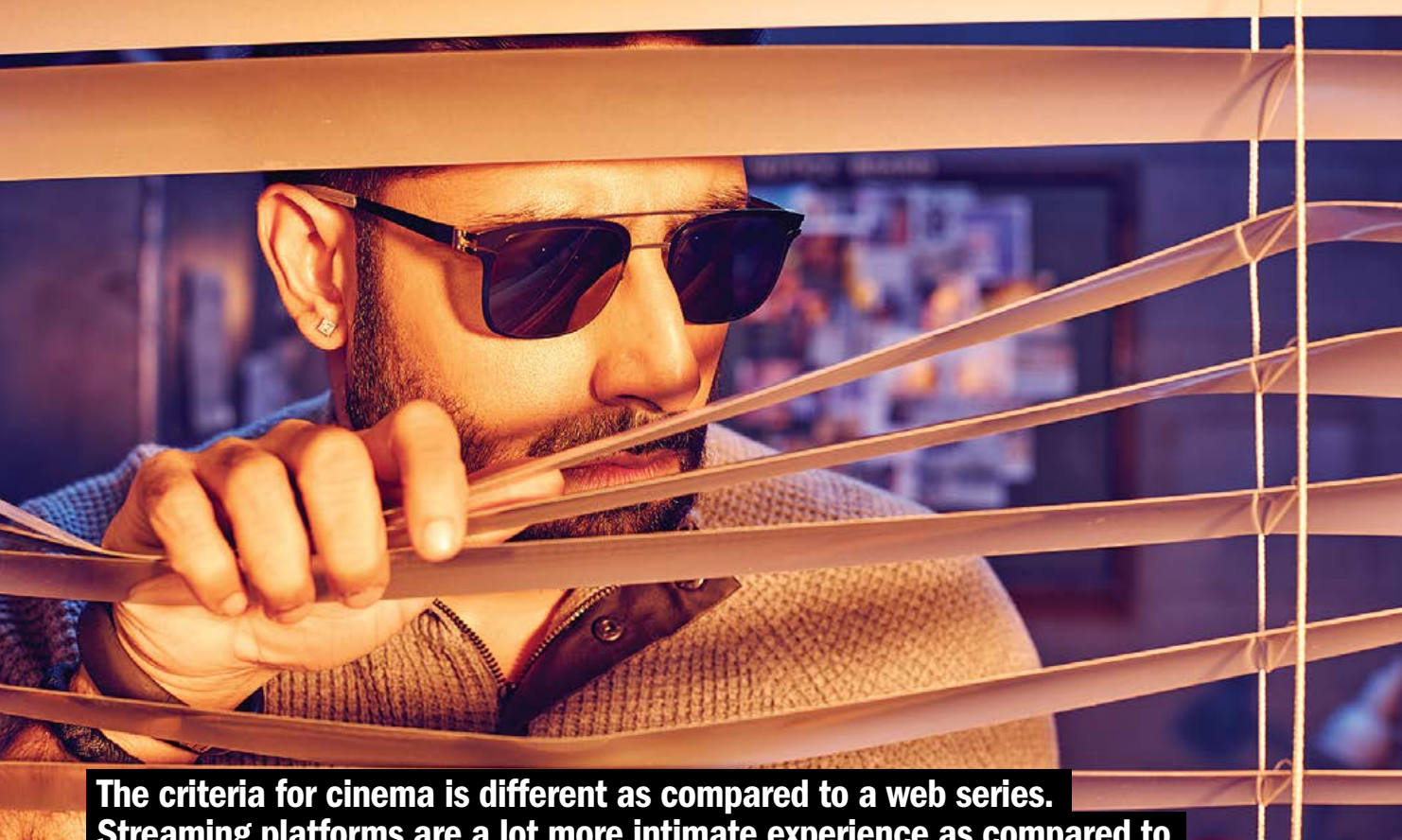
is still highly patronised by people. So is cinema, so is television. This is yet another medium that has come. It helps us as creative people to reach out to our audience. That's it. It is the future because it is the latest technology available. But is it 'the' future means *baaki sab pichhe chhut jayega*? No. I think it will all co-exist. And how wonderful.

#### **DOES DIGITAL PROVIDES MORE FREEDOM IN THE**

#### **KIND OF SCRIPTS AND CHARACTERS ONE CAN ATTEMPT?**

Yes, it does. And there's a reason for that. The criteria for cinema is different as compared to a web series. Streaming platforms are a lot more intimate experience as compared to cinema. In theatre you watch a film with two hundred and sometimes with five hundred people -- and sometimes you're even with your family. The web series you can watch alone on your phone or TV or laptop in your room. So there are different requirements all together. You can push the envelope a lot more on OTT platforms. Going to the film theatre is seen as a family outing in our country. So it is not just an individual that you cater to. Yes there are many people who go





**The criteria for cinema is different as compared to a web series. Streaming platforms are a lot more intimate experience as compared to cinema. .. You can push the envelope a lot more on OTT platforms**

with their friends, but it's more of a community experience. When that is there then I need to make a film, which the whole family can sit together and enjoy. That means putting something for everybody in the film. That is not necessary in a web series. It can be there as well, I'm not saying that can't be a criterion.

**ON OTT PLATFORMS, YOU DON'T HAVE BOX-OFFICE PRESSURES. BUT IS THERE SOMETHING THAT STILL MAKES YOU FEEL APPREHENSIVE?**

Yes, if you are talking about the Friday jitters -- they aren't there because currently there is no barometer to judge. But the endgame is all the same. At the end of the day, the audience has to like your work. If they like your

work in a film they'll go for repeat viewings. That means your collections will increase and your film will be called a hit. Here also, if your work is good then they will watch it again and again and the streaming service will know what the figures are and they will employ you for their next product. It's as simple as that. So, in both cases at the end of the day it's the audience which matters. The audience has to like what you do.

**YOU WERE ONE OF THE FIRST CELEBS WHO STEPPED OUT OF THE HOUSE AND GAVE THE MESSAGE THAT NOW WE SHOULD COME OUT OF THE HOUSE FOR WORK...**

I had to step out as I had to dub. Thankfully, all the precautions and permissions were

taken. I think that's more important. People should be educated about the fact that it's alright to move out provided you take all the precautions, in line with what the government has said. People have become too lax. They behave as if there's nothing to worry about. I told the paparazzi that came to our dubbing to first wear the mask, and even better, wear a helmet. Another thing is that they ride three people to a bike. I asked them to stop doing that in these times. The police might catch them and throw them in jail. What'll they do then? They might get into trouble if they don't follow the rules. I feel everybody has to be a responsible citizen.

**HOW DID YOU SPEND THESE THREE MONTHS OF LOCKDOWN?**

I spent them at home. Where else could you go? I looked upon it as a blessing because I got to spend quality time with my family, which I get to do rarely. The whole family was together after a very long time and for such a huge period of time. It was nice to have everyone under one roof.

**WHICH IS ONE MEMORY FROM THE LOCKDOWN YOU WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER?**

There are so many ya. It's difficult to choose just one. But one thing you should understand that for a country of 1.3 billion people to successfully lockdown to whatever possible degree, I think is commendable. You should look at the positives. I don't want to look at the negatives. ■

*“I see everything positively. I try and manage everything. You can see I am constantly over the phone with my kids even as I’m doing the interview. I’m multi-tasking. In that case, you can call me a supermom”*

PHOTOGRAPHS: ABHAY SINGH/FEMINA





# Mother's day out

**KARISMA KAPOOR'S BEST ROLE IS THAT OF PLAYING SUPER MOM TO HER KIDS, WRITES SUMAN SHARMA**

**K**arisma Kapoor recently won rave reviews for playing a yummy, yuppie mom, Meira Sharma, in the Ekta Kapoor produced web series *Mentalhood*. The series was all about a gaggle of mommies, played by Karisma, Sandhya Mridul, Shilpa Shukla, Tillotama Shome, and a single dad, played by a still hot-looking Dino Morea, trying to raise their kids in a fast-changing world. Karisma's own mother, yesteryear star Babita, was kind of known as a 'Tiger Mom'. Fiercely ambitious, she's said to have pushed both her daughters hard to reach where they have. Karisma, a mother of two children, daughter Samiera and son Kiaan Raj Kapoor, though not as go-getting, is undeniably devoted. Her own experience, as well as the influences of her mother, have helped her shape her as a mother and a woman. Excerpts from a heart-to-heart interview with the talented actor and super mom...



## **What made you say yes to *Mentalhood* after such a long sabbatical?**

When Ekta Kapoor offered me the series, I wasn't sure whether I wanted to do it. But after hearing the script, I agreed. I want people to know what I go through on a daily basis. I want to tell audiences they aren't alone. That we, as parents, are going through this journey together. This is the show which every woman, every mother, young girls,

old people... can identify with. Either they've been through this or are currently experiencing it or will experience it in the near future. In each episode, we dealt with sensitive and relevant topics like bullying, surrogacy, adoption, being a 'tiger mom', single parenting... The topics are serious but the narrative is humorous.

## **How did your children, Samiera and Kiaan, react to**

## **you take on a new medium?**

They were like if Mama's happy, we're happy. They're excited I'm working again. I wasn't nervous at all. It's been a great journey for me. I've done some great films. The audience has loved me. I'm thankful for that. I like doing new things. I've done a radio show before. I've done TV. Now it's the web. The digital medium is a different platform. It's more creative. It gives you a

voice. The webspace is a perfect balance of film and television.

## **How was it facing the camera after a long gap?**

I do face the camera regularly for ad shoots. So it isn't a big gap as such. I enjoyed playing a mom. There were children around on the set. I was involved at every level of the project. Even while scripting was on, I gave suggestions as a mom, I would do this or

wouldn't do this. It was interesting to draw from my own experience.

**You put your career aside to be with your kids...**

Yes. That was the choice I made. I wanted to be with my kids. Motherhood completely changes you as a woman. Your children become your priority. Work is secondary for me. It's all about rushing back home and being with them. Nothing's more important than that. Since the kids are older now, I've taken up acting again. Yet I'm selective about it.

**Do you ever regret giving up your career at the peak?**

No, I don't. I started working at a young age. In that period, I did a lot of work. Those days we used to do three-four shifts a day. I'd be working day and night, round the clock for months together. I was ambitious too. I wanted to be on the top. I enjoyed reaching it. I left after achieving what I wanted to. So, there are no regrets. That's because I believe in going with the flow and living to the fullest.

**“Kareena (Kapoor Khan) has set an example – have a private life, get married, have children and you can still be at the top of your game and look your best”**





**How like or unlike are you from your mother Babita?**

I'm quite like my mom. As I grow older, I appreciate her more. She gave us a strong value system, which remains rooted in us. Respect for elders, spending time with family, a strong work ethic...all these I've imbibed from her. Hopefully, I've passed these on to my kids. Often when I say something to my kids, I turn around and tell my mother, 'Look I'm sounding just like you'.

**Something specific you learnt from your mother?**

I learnt simple things from my mother. Be an honest person, maintain integrity of character... remain focussed, work hard and value money. You can come from anywhere; you can do anything. But your basic value system has to be strong.

**Is it tough being a single mom?**

I see everything positively. I try and manage everything. (Smiles) You can see I am constantly on the phone with my



***“I learnt simple things from my mother (Babita). Be an honest person, maintain integrity of character... remain focussed, work hard and value money. Your value system has to be strong”***

kids even as I'm doing the interview. I'm multi-tasking. In that case, you can call me a supermom.

**How do you manage to juggle work and home?**

If you know your priorities, you can work out everything. I'm clear about not working on Sundays. It's a family day. Today production houses understand that as there are so many working moms, like my sister (Kareena

Kapoor Khan). So they're accommodating.

**You share a special bond with Kareena...**

Yes, we've always been extremely close. We're like any two sisters. We talk about everything – the price of vegetables, what's happening in the kitchen, with the drivers, parenting tips... Things sisters normally share. We also share fashion tips, what's happening at a shoot. Kareena has set an example for the future generations – please have a private life, get married, have children and you can still be at the top of your game. You can still work and you can still look your best.

**What kind of a mother are you?**

I'm a protective mom. But I won't call myself a Tiger Mom. I'm disciplined.

I guess my mom was a big disciplinarian. It helped me in my career and in shaping the way I am as a person. I like having a conversation with the children after school, whilst having dinner. I make it a point to spend quality time with them every day. I pay total attention to them when I'm with them. I enjoy their company.

**Do you cook for them?**

Yes, I do. I try my best. When they're younger, you have to make the food look interesting. But now they've become health conscious and are forever reading up on better eating habits. I learn so much from them. This generation is so intelligent. Many a time they tell me something isn't healthy and suggest better alternatives.

**In the last few years cinema has more scope for female actors. Do you agree?**

There have always been good roles for actresses. Right from *Mother India* and *Mughal-E-Azam*, which are remembered today for their female leads. I too moved from *Dil Toh Pagal Hai* to *Raja Hindustani*, *Fiza*, *Zubeidaa*... doing different roles. Actresses of all ages are getting to do interesting roles today. Also, you can do TV, web series... the options are many.

**What's next on the cards?**

I don't plan anything. But yes, I do enjoy doing comedy. I can't talk right now about it. Let the producers make the announcement.



With Kareena Kapoor Khan, Kiaan, Babita and Samiera

# FINDING HOMI

Raghuvendra Singh meets Homi Adajania, the reclusive director of the critically acclaimed *Angrezi Medium*

He'd rather be deep-sea diving off Lakshadweep islands than make films or give interviews. Homi Adajania is more of a traveller, more of a sea creature than a filmmaker. One can say making films is a hobby and diving his vocation. Films came to him out of the blue. He says before *Being Cyrus* (2005), he didn't know a thing about making movies. People thought of him as an ad filmmaker. But all he had done till then was shoot a prank video involving a bomb and two unsuspecting friends. He's done some crazy things as a traveller, like living with a Vietnamese family for a bet. Also, he lived in Europe for four months working his way through odd jobs like babysitting, washing sofas, painting houses to save money to buy a ticket back home. These experiences taught him that it doesn't matter



On the set of *Angrezi Medium* with the late Irrfan Khan and Dimple Kapadia

“WE NEVER TIPTOED AROUND THE FACT THAT IRRFAN (KHAN) HAD CANCER. WE USED TO LAUGH ABOUT IT, JOKE ABOUT IT... HE'D TELL ME THAT YOU'RE SUCH A F\*\*\*\*R, YOU HAVE NO FILTER... IRRFAN NEVER WANTED ANYONE'S SYMPATHY, ANYONE'S PITY”

what culture you come from. Human beings, at the core, have the same primal emotions, which help you both structure a story and sell it.

“A friend gave me a story and said it was being rejected everywhere


because it's full of profanities. I liked it and said I'd make a movie on it. My wife (Anaita Shroff Adajania, fashion stylist) and my friends were like, 'Homi's again going to do some f\*\*\*\*\*g shit,' he laughs at the memory

today. The psychological drama, *Being Cyrus*, starred Saif Ali Khan, Naseeruddin Shah and Dimple Kapadia.

“I have a visual mind. I can connect the emotional dots. These are my few strengths. Apart from that, I believe I'm an average filmmaker,” he states self-deprecatingly.

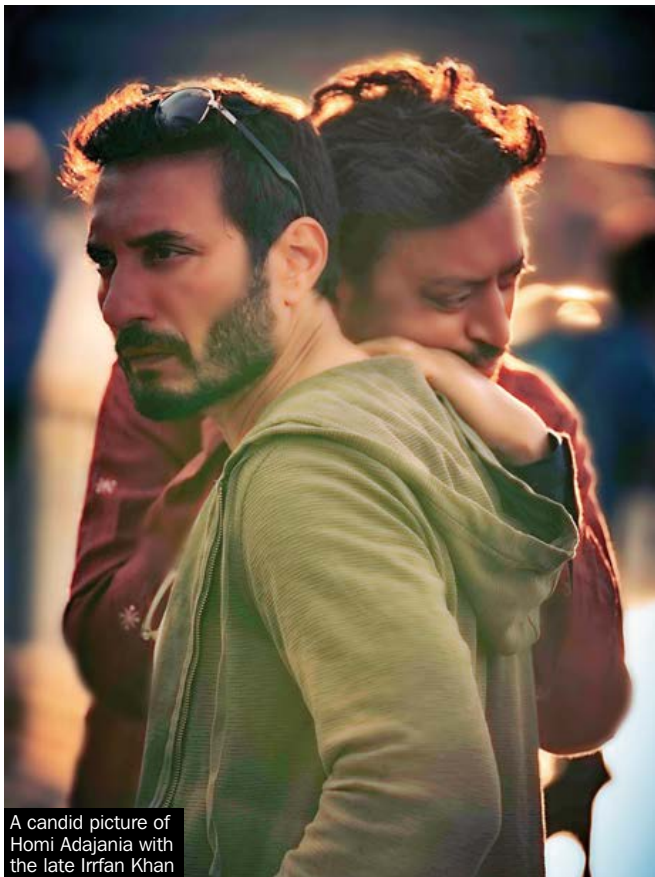
The Bollywood naach-gaana shenanigans excited him while making *Cocktail* (2012). He was scared of it and yet wanted to experience it all. The film, written by filmmaker Imtiaz Ali and produced by Saif Ali Khan and Dinesh Vijan under Illuminati Films, starred Saif, Deepika Padukone and Diana Penty. With regards to *Finding Fanny* (2014), he wanted it to be like an edible picture book. “I guess it went over a lot of people's heads. But for me, it was a story about loneliness and longing. I wanted to shoot each frame, where I felt you wanted to pick out a





“PEOPLE HAVE EXPERIENCED A FULL BELLY LAUGH WITH *ANGREZI MEDIUM...* THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I’VE DELVED INTO A COMEDY, WHICH HAS A LOT OF SOUL. PEOPLE ARE LAUGHING LIKE MAD BUT HAVE GOT THE EMOTIONAL GIST AS WELL”





A candid picture of Homi Adajania with the late Irrfan Khan

“ I TELL STORIES INSTINCTIVELY. I RELY ON MY INSTINCTS... I HAVE A VISUAL MIND. I CAN CONNECT THE EMOTIONAL DOTS. THESE ARE MY FEW STRENGTHS. APART FROM THAT, I BELIEVE I'M AN AVERAGE FILMMAKER ”

piece and bite into it.” The satirical comedy starred old favourites Dimple, Deepika, Naseeruddin Shah, Pankaj Kapur and Arjun Kapoor.

The director was in news once again for his latest release *Angrezi Medium*. Saket Choudhary's *Hindi Medium*, the first part of the franchise in 2017, was a social commentary on the flaws of the education system. Thematically, *Angrezi Medium* took the franchise forward. It's about a girl's desire to

study abroad. Moreover, it's a father-daughter story. The late Irrfan Khan, who had won the Filmfare Best Actor for *Hindi Medium*, was last seen in *Angrezi Medium*. The film features Radhika Madan, Kareena Kapoor Khan and Dimple Kapadia.

**T**he universe of *Angrezi Medium* was something he was unfamiliar with. And that excited Homi greatly. “Udaipur was a new space for me. The

## HOMI ON IRRFAN

When Irrfan Khan walked in on the set of *Angrezi Medium*, the first day, it had been a year since he had acted. He had been undergoing treatment for neuroendocrine cancer. I jokingly asked whether he'd forgotten to act. He replied in a serious tone that he could well have. We cracked up hysterically. Regardless of how tense or stressful a situation seemed, we always saw the absurdity of life and laughed.

Towards the end of our shoot, Irrfan told me that he had changed deeply as a person. He had redefined pain as another sensation in his mind. It wasn't pleasant. But it was different. He said he didn't want fame or stardom anymore. But when he said, “*Yaar Homi mujhe acting se bahut mohabbat hai*,” I could feel his words. He seemed to be watching the circus of life from the outside. He wasn't interested in jumping into the thick of it anymore. Once I asked him why he wanted to shoot considering he was undergoing treatment. His retort was a simple, “*Ch@#th! I'm not dead na... Toh let me live doing what I love.*” Ironically, the crew looked to him for strength rather than the other way around. Irrfan never made his problem anyone else's. I always knew he was a fantastic actor. It's difficult to think about cinema without thinking of Irrfan. But more importantly, I got a chance to cross paths with an incredible human being.

characters were different. But underneath it all, the emotional core was something I could relate to,” he explains. Homi confides he'd never have made *Angrezi Medium* if it was just a sequel to *Hindi Medium*. It was the father-daughter (enacted by Irrfan and Radhika) relationship that attracted him. Being a father (to sons Zane and Zreh), he could identify with it. “As a parent you handhold your kid and take him through life. But one day you have to let go of that hand. For me, that's going to be extremely painful. I'll do it with pride but with also a lot of pain. Your love for your child is unconditional.”

He adds that when you let go of that hand there's also hope that one day your child will come back and hold it. That's the nuance he wanted his writers to capture in *Angrezi Medium*. The film made people crack up with laughter. But there's a difference between simply laughing and laughing heartily he points out. “People have experienced a full belly laugh with my film. To be able to give just that is extremely joyful. This is for the first time I've delved into a comedy, which also has soul. People laughed like mad. But they got the emotional gist as well.”

*Angrezi Medium* featured Kareena and Dimple essaying what can only be called ‘guest appearances’. He says neither Kareena or Dimple approached their roles like a guest appearance. “They said, ‘Hey, we want to do our bit. Because it's





←  
Cocktail



←  
With wife  
Anaita Shroff  
and children  
Zane and  
Zreh

crucial to the narrative'. That's the bunch of people I had, extremely professional and secure actors." He claims he's never experienced a star tantrum. "I'd rather part ways amicably than change my story for anyone," he asserts. "I need to tell it the way I intend to. Actually, the story sort of becomes a person. The director merely holds its hand like a parent, making sure it's on the right path. Finally, beyond a point you can't guide its fate," he reflects.

A particular picture of Homi from the sets of *Angrezi Medium*, where Irrfan Khan is seen leaning on his shoulder, created a stir on the internet when the actor passed away on 29 May. It spoke volumes about the bond they shares. "It's not just me and Irrfan, there was so much love on the sets of

*Angrezi Medium*, whether it was because of the circumstances... it was emotionally draining," he muses. The whole journey has made him a lighter person. He realised he's merely making films and not sending people to Mars. As a result, he has stopped sweating over small stuff. "We never tiptoed around the fact that Irrfan had cancer. We used to laugh about it, joke about it... Sometimes we'd talk about it seriously. He used to tell me that you're such a f\*\*\*r, you have no filter. You say anything. That's what I love about you. Irrfan never wanted anyone's sympathy, anyone's pity."

Homi's full of admiration for Irrfan's resilience and admits the actor was under a lot of pain while making the film. "My only thing with him was tell me as soon you want to stop. I don't care if I get the scene right or not. Now when I look back, I'm

“AS A PARENT YOU HANDHOLD YOUR KID AND TAKE HIM THROUGH LIFE. BUT ONE DAY YOU HAVE TO LET GO OF THAT LITTLE HAND. FOR ME, LETTING THAT HAND GO IS GOING TO BE EXTREMELY PAINFUL. I’LL DO IT WITH PRIDE BUT WITH ALSO A LOT OF PAIN”

like how did it all come together?"

To think of it, *Being Cyrus*, *Cocktail*, *Finding Fanny* and *Angrezi Medium* seem like works of different filmmakers. Homi says he'd get bored if he ever made a film in his comfort zone. He'd rather pick a project, which offers him something he's unsure of. "I tell stories intuitively. I rely on my instincts. God forbid one day if I wake up and I don't have that instinct, I don't know what the f\*\*k I'll do. This approach keeps me engaged as it's unpredictable."

He underlines that the audience today has grown story-specific rather than being star-specific. You

can't fool the audience any longer. "It's not as if they're starved for a choice. There's some brilliant stuff out there on different platforms. They're more exposed. You have to give them the real deal. Otherwise, they'll look for it elsewhere," he says.

His next is the web series, *Saas Bahu Aur Cocaine*, about women running a cocaine cartel. The Kutch-based series, produced by Dinesh Vijan, is going to be a funny, gritty and bold show. He says with a glint of pride in his eyes, "What I love about Dinesh is that he pushes me into things, which he believes only I'll be able to pull off." ■

# THEY ARE PLAYING MY SONG

LYRICIST **SAMEER** DOESN'T FANCY REMIXES AND POINTS OUT THAT THE MUSIC INDUSTRY IS UNDERGOING A CRISIS. HE SHARES HIS CONCERNS WITH **DEVESH SHARMA**

**S**ameer Anjaan was the go-to lyricist in the '90s. Name any hit song of the era and chances are that it would have been written by the bard. Today, when the '90s music is making a comeback thanks to remixes, Sameer's lyrics are in vogue once more. But the lyricist is far from happy. He's disgruntled that someone else has rearranged the words

and, according to him, made a hash of them. He's not against remixes per se. His grouse is why can't filmmakers come to the original composer/lyricist to rejig it. "Ninety per cent of my songs are being remixed today. They can't change the hook line because it's popular. So they retain it. But the rest of the lines have no relation to the opening lines," he points out angrily. He

mentions that lyricists/composers are considering filing a case against remixes as such practices are eating into their copyrights. According to the present rules, those who have remixed the songs, have to share the royalty with the original writers/composers. "We toiled day and night to make a hit song. How can someone, who wasn't part of the original film get a royalty for making a

couple of changes? Is this justified?" he questions.

He reminds you that the Writers' Guild of America brought Hollywood to a grinding halt some years ago demanding better work conditions and pay. The studios had to agree to their demands. "We don't have that kind of unity here. A music director or a lyricist shouldn't accept remix work




Being honoured by Shri Devendra Fadnavis

**“NINETY PER CENT OF MY SONGS ARE BEING REMIXED TODAY. THEY CAN'T CHANGE THE HOOK LINE... BUT THE REST OF THE LINES SEEM TO HAVE NO RELATION TO THE OPENING LINES”**



Sameer with the Black Lady





**“WE TOILED DAY  
AND NIGHT TO MAKE  
A HIT SONG. HOW CAN  
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**“A MUSIC DIRECTOR SHOULDN'T ACCEPT REMIX WORK ON ETHICAL GROUNDS... I DON'T THINK TANISHK BAGCHI WOULD ONLY WANT TO BE KNOWN AS SOMEONE, WHO JUST REMIXES SONGS”**



Yeh Dillagi



Kuch Kuch Hota Hai



Aashiqui



Rajneeti

on ethical grounds.” He wonders why people are playing with their careers as what counts is your originality. “I don’t think Tanishk Bagchi would want to be known as someone, who just remixes songs. He’d also like to be known for original work.”

He spells out that there’s a larger conspiracy at work. “The music industry is going through a strange kind of transit. There’s a conspiracy by some to ruin the music industry. They don’t want a star to emerge from the music world.” He explains, “Because when you become a star, you become a brand. You begin to demand more. You begin to set your rules. They don’t want that.”

He claims that’s why in the last five years, there’s

hardly been an album that can stand the test of time. He also points out that there are a dozen lyricists and composers credited to a film album. “WhatsApp culture has invaded the industry. People send you tunes on WhatsApp and expect you to write back the lyrics on WhatsApp. They also ask 50 composers to send tunes and select five-six out of them. You can’t expect quality work in such a scenario,” he thunders. There’s a school of thought that Hindi films would do well to get rid of songs altogether. He scoffs at that and says blockbusters in every era became popular because of their music. “*Mughal-e-Azam*, *Sangam*, *Madhumati*, all Rajesh Khanna films, *Saajan*,

## SAMEER'S TOP 10

Honthon pe bas tera naam hai  
(YEH DILLAGI)

Mera dil bhi  
(SAAJAN)

Aisi deewangi  
(DEEWANA)

Dheere dheere se  
(AASHIQUI)

Pardesi pardesi  
(RAJA HINDUSTANI)

Dil ne yeh kaha hai dil se  
(DHADKAN)

Tum paas aaye  
(KUCH KUCH HOTA HAI)

Aapke pyaar mein  
(RAAZ)

Jab se tere naina  
(SAAWARIYA)

Mora piya  
(RAJNEETI)

*Aashiqui*, *Maine Pyar Kiya* - take away the music and let’s see if the films earn as much as they did,” he challenges.

He reveals there’s much money to be made through music. He points out that *Aashiqui*’s (1990) music still keeps the cash registers ringing. He gives the example of the Indian Performing Rights Society (IPRS), which started as a 10-crore entity but now has 200 crores in its coffers. He alleges some entities

don’t approve of the IPRS as well. “They’re against the IPRS as earlier they were getting 90 per cent of the royalty. But now, they get 50 per cent and the rest is distributed between the author and composer.” He thanks the IPRS for doing a commendable job of collecting royalties worldwide and ensuring the rightful candidates get the money. “We’re not a money-savvy breed. Some of us would have literally been on the streets if not for them,” he asserts.

He wants to know why there’s such a lack of empathy towards the older generation in the industry. He has seen stalwarts like RD Burman and Laxmikant-Pyarelal being driven to tears because the new generation was giving them short shrift. He questions why singers like Kumar Sanu, Udit Narayan and Sonu Nigam aren’t getting work. He says even today Anu Malik can deliver a tune like *Moh moh ke dhaage* (*Dum Laga Ke Haisha*) if trusted. “Through this interview, I’m asking filmmakers to give the veterans a chance. Their experience, their work ethics will add to your product. Ignore them if they don’t meet your expectations. But give them that one chance,” he urges.

Sameer is a second-generation lyricist. His father, veteran Anjaan, was a much-respected name between the ’60s -’70s. Sameer says there was no nepotism back then. “The only time my father recommended me was to Laxmikantji and got severely reprimanded. The composer said don’t do it again because then I





**“WHATSAPP CULTURE HAS INVADDED THE INDUSTRY. PEOPLE SEND YOU TUNES ON WHATSAPP AND EXPECT YOU TO WRITE LYRICS ON WHATSAPP. THEY ALSO ASK 50 COMPOSERS TO SEND TUNES AND SELECT FIVE-SIX OUT OF THEM”**

He mentions that the worst year of his life was 1997 when he almost quit the industry. Gulshan Kumar was killed. Tips' owner Ramesh Taurani was sent behind bars. Nadeem of Nadeem-Shravan fled the country. His father, Anjaan, too expired during that period. Sameer was part of the biggie, *Dus*, directed by Mukul Anand, starring Sanjay Dutt and Salman Khan. Sadly, even Anand passed away. The project was abandoned. “The media was hounding me because of my closeness to Nadeem. After completing the last rites of my father in Benaras, I was in two minds whether I should return to Mumbai or not.” At that stage, Karan Johar offered him *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*. “Javed saab was supposed to write the lyrics. But he left the project as he found the title of the film vulgar. I worked with Jatin-Lalit in the film. I not only survived the worst phase of my life but bounced back stronger. I'm hoping for a similar comeback even now.” ■

won't give him work even if I want to,” recalls he. Sameer used to stay with his grandfather in Varanasi. He hardly saw his father until he came to Mumbai after being bored by his bank job. “I must have seen him four-five times in 20 years. He was more like a distant relative than a father. It's only when I came here and started living with him, that we became close,” he says.

To honour his father's memory, Sameer started adding Anjaan to his name a few years ago. He said it

happened during *Housefull 2*. He was missing his father and felt adding the name would help fill the void. Anjaan's most famous song is *Khaike paan Banaras wala* from *Don* (1978). Sameer rubbishes all rumours concerning its genesis. “Neither Manoj Kumar (said to have recommended the song) nor the film *Banarasi Babu* has anything to do with it. It was written for Don by my father. It wasn't filmed because the film was ready and the filmmakers didn't want to delay the release.

It was Javed (Akhtar) saab, who insisted that the song be filmed.”

He has started a show called *Sameer Safarnama*, wherein he chooses different songs from his father's repertoire and his own and narrates the story behind them. The format has been picked up by both Javed Akhtar and Irshad Kamil as well. “Why can't lyricists have their own shows? They are as much responsible for a song's success. I plan to bring out a version of it on the OTT platforms as well.”



# LAUGHTER UNLIMITED

**DEVESH SHARMA**  
 PROFILES THE VERSATILE  
 COMIC ACTOR **JAGDEEP**  
 WHO PASSED AWAY  
 RECENTLY

(MARCH 29, 1939  
 - JULY 8, 2020)

**H**e's known as a comedian today but he wasn't always so. Jagdeep, in fact, was a leading man in many AVM Productions films like *Bhabhi* (1957), *Barkha* (1959) and *Bindiya* (1960). He was cast opposite Nanda in the first two. Many popular songs like *Paas baitho tabiyat bahal jayegi* from *Punarmilan* (1964), *Chal udd ja re panchi* and *Chali chali re patang*, from *Bhabhi*, were picturised on him. He later became a comedian and went on to act in more than 400 films.

The Partition of India brought forth an exodus of people to Mumbai. Jagdeep, born Syed Ishtiaq Ahmed Jafri on March 29, 1939, was one such person. He came to Mumbai with his mother at the tender age of seven. They had lost everything while crossing over into the country. So he took all kinds of work at that young age, to make ends meet. He sold fruit, cutlery and sundry knick-knacks on trains and on the street. He even worked as a waiter and as a handcart puller. His harsh beginnings made him observe life closely -- something that came handy when it came to portraying real-life characters later



TIMESCONTENT





With friends Rajesh Khanna, Jeetendra and Raza Murad



With son Javed and grandson Meezaan



With Amitabh Bachchan in Soorma Bhopali



With Mehmood and Salman Khan in Andaz Apna Apna



With Amitabh Bachchan and Dharmendra in Sholay

**Jagdeep's most famous role perhaps as a comedian is that of Soorma Bhopali from *Sholay* (1975). His line *Hamara naam Soorma Bhopali aise hi nahi hai* became hugely famous**

in films. He was said to be quite resourceful and soon got a small role in BR Chopra's *Afsana* (1951). In one of his interviews, Jagdeep described how he was promoted from being paid Rs 3 per day to Rs 6 in his first film itself. His role was that of an extra who had to just clap for a scene in the film. "There was a drama scene where children are performing drama. When the scene began the boy who was performing the lead role could not say the dialogue. It was in Urdu. Hence I volunteered to act the scene and did it with ease. Chopra *saab* paid me Rs 6 per day instead of Rs 3."

He played the young Kishore Kumar in *Dhobi Doctor* (1952) and later acted under Bimal Roy in *Do Bigha Zameen* (1953), where he played a shoeshine boy.

He appeared in children's films like KA Abbas' *Munna* (1954), Raj Kapoor produced *Ab Dilli Door Nahin* (1957) and AVM's *Hum Panchhi Ek Daal Ke* (1957), which became quite famous.

His role reportedly won him praise from the then Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who is said to have gifted him a walking stick. The film went on to win the Best Children's Film trophy at the National Awards. As said earlier, AVM took him under their wing and launched him as a hero. But none of his films, barring *Bhabhi* which was a big hit, reportedly made money. He then became a character artiste and started specialising in comic roles.

**J**agdeep first became famous as a comedian in the Shammii Kapoor starrer *Brahmachari* (1968). He played Murli Manohar in the film and became quite popular for his mannerisms. His most famous role perhaps as a comedian is that of Soorma Bhopali from *Sholay* (1975). His line *Hamara naam Soorma Bhopali aise hi nahi hai* became hugely famous. Salim-Javed, who wrote the film, are from Madhya Pradesh. They helped him

get the Bhopali accent right. Though Jagdeep, who was said to be a master of improvisation, brought in his own cadence and mannerisms while speaking the dialogue and made the character memorable. Years later, in 1988, he produced and directed a film called *Soorma Bhopali*. Despite special appearances from stars like Amitabh Bachchan, Dharmendra, Rekha, Danny Denzongpa, Farooque Shaikh, and many other friends of the actor, the film didn't make it big at the box-office.

His other memorable roles include playing Mithun Chakraborty's informant in *Surakksha* (1979), Muhammed Ali, a spoof on the famous boxer in Feroz Khan's *Qurbani* (1980), Taarachand Baadlani in *Shahenshah* (1988), Bankelal Bhopali, an extension of his *Sholay* character in *Andaz Apna Apna* (1994), where he played Salman Khan's father and Subedar Ramaiyah in *China Gate* (1998), where he brought comic relief to

the otherwise heavy-duty action film. His role in *Qurbani* became so popular that a mock fight between him and the actual Muhammed Ali was reportedly arranged in America to organise funds for a mosque.

Jagdeep is said to have married thrice. His first wife was Naseem Begam with whom he had a son named Hussein, who passed away in 2009 and two daughters named Suraiya and Shakira. He then married Sughra Begam with whom he had two sons Javed Jaffrey and Naved Jaffrey. He then married Nazima with whom he has a daughter named Muskaan Jaffrey. Javed is a successful actor known for his dancing skills, while Naved is a successful TV producer. Javed's son Meezaan Jaffrey was launched by Sanjay Leela Bhansali in *Malaal* (2019).

Jagdeep passed away at 8.30 pm on July 8, 2020, at his residence in Bandra. He was not keeping well due to age-related issues. He was 81. ■

# FAREWELL, KUMKUM

DEVESH SHARMA PROFILES VETERAN DANCER AND ACTRESS KUMKUM WHO PASSED AWAY RECENTLY

(APRIL 22, 1934-JULY 28, 2020)

**T**hey say it's either glamour or necessity which attracts people towards the film industry.

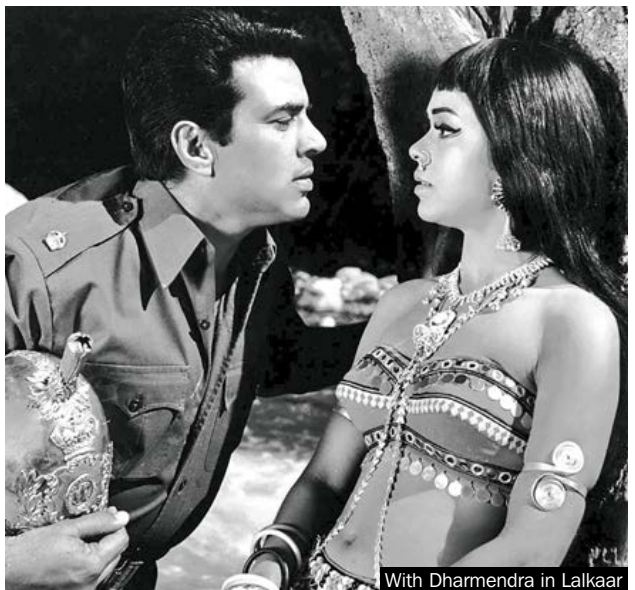
Kumkum, who was a naturally-gifted dancer, wanted to be an actress in her childhood like any other girl but it was necessity which actually made her turn towards films.

The actress, who was originally christened Zebunnisa, was born in Hussainabad in Bihar on April 22, 1934. Her father Nawab Manzoor Hasan Khan was the landlord of Hussainabad near Patna. When their financial condition started deteriorating the family left for Kolkata. It's said her father remarried and left for Pakistan afterwards. The family then reportedly shifted to Lucknow.

Kumkum learnt Kathak under the tutelage of Shambhu Maharaj in Lucknow and then migrated with her family to Mumbai in 1952. It's said she knew Naushad and the composer helped her get a break in films. He put in a good word for her with filmmaker Shaheed Lateef. That was how the actress got a break in *Sheesha* (1952). She was just a teenager then. She danced to the Shamshad Begum song *Angana baje shehnai*



THE SONG *KABHI AAR KABHI PAAR* WAS FIRST PICTURISED ON JAGDEEP BUT THE CENSORS REPORTEDLY WANTED IT TO BE PICTURISED ON A FEMALE ARTISTE AND HENCE KUMKUM GOT CHOSEN







With Ramanand Sagar and Mala Sinha



Striking a pose



On the cover of Filmfare



With Johnny Walker in CID

re, aaj moi jagmag atariya, composed by Ghulam Mohammed. Nargis and Sajjan played the leads in the film. Though she appeared on the screen for only a few minutes, she created a good impression and soon work started coming in.

Her claim to fame was Guru Dutt's *Aar Paar* (1954). The song *Kabhi aar kabhi paar* was first picturised on Jagdeep but the censors reportedly wanted it to be picturised on a female artiste and hence Kumkum got chosen. Guru Dutt, who was said to be in a hurry to finish the film, choreographed the song himself. It became hugely famous

and Kumkum became a star. Guru Dutt gave her an acting role as well in later films. She played his *bhabhi* in the satire *Mr and Mrs '55* (1955) and played the mother of five children despite being quite young at that point of time.

She is best known for her roles in *Mother India* (1957), *Ujala* (1959), *Kohinoor* (1960), *Son Of India* (1962), *Mr X In Bombay* (1964), *Aankhen* (1968), *Geet* (1970), *Lalkaar* (1972), and *Ek Kunwari Ek Kunwara* (1973).

She also deviated towards Bhojpuri movies and acted in one of the biggest blockbusters called

## KUMKUM ACTED IN ONE OF THE BIGGEST BHOJPURI BLOCKBUSTERS CALLED GANGA MAIYA TOHE PIYARI CHADHAIBO (1963), WHICH WAS THE FIRST BHOJPURI FILM

*Ganga Maiya Tohe Piyari Chadhaibo* (1963), which was the first Bhojpuri film. She also appeared in Bhojpuri films like *Ganga* and *Bhauji* as the heroine.

Her evergreen dance numbers include *Ae dil hai*

*mushkil jeena yahan* from *CID* (1956), *Ja ja re ja balma* from *Basant Bahar* (1956), *Reshmi salwar kurta jali ka* from *Naya Daur* (1957), *Tera jalwa jisne dekha* from *Ujala* (1959), *Madhuban mein radhika nache re* from *Kohinoor* (1960), *Daga daga vai vai vai* from *Kali Top Lal Rumaal* (1959), *Mera naam hai chameli* from *Raja Aur Runk* (1968) and many more.

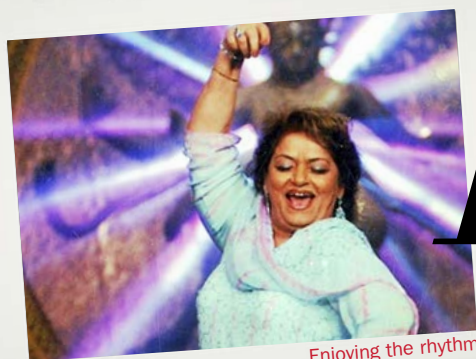
She was active in the film industry until 1973. One of her last films was the anti-drugs film *Jalte Badan* (1973) where Kiran Kumar was her hero. Her last release is said to be *Bombay By Nite* (1979), which took a decade in the making. Sanjeev Kumar was her hero in the film.

Kumkum got married in 1975. Her husband Sajjad Akbar Khan used to work in Saudi Arabia and after marriage, Kumkum too shifted there. The couple were blessed with a daughter named Andaleeb Khan. Kumkum remained in the Gulf for around twenty years and even after coming back remained a recluse, preferring to stay away from the film industry. ■

# DANCE *of* LIFE

DEVESH SHARMA CHRONICLES THE LIFE AND TIMES OF CHOREOGRAPHER **SAROJ KHAN**, WHO PASSED AWAY RECENTLY

(NOVEMBER 22, 1948 – JULY 3, 2020)



Enjoying the rhythm



With Madhuri Dixit Nene



With late Sridevi



With Amitabh Bachchan

Saroj Khan's story is akin to something spun by Salim-Javed in the '70s. Partition played a hand in shaping many a destiny. Hers too became a riches-to-rags story. Her father, Kishanchand Sadhu Singh, was said to be an established businessman in Karachi, Pakistan. He and his wife Noni seemingly lost everything while crossing over to India. Saroj was born as Nirmala Nagpal on November 22, 1948. Soon, the family grew and she had to share a room in a chawl with five more siblings. In one of her interviews, she stated that they were so poor during her childhood that


sometimes they had to subsist on one meal a day. Her mother used to put water to boil and tell the children to sleep saying she'd wake them up after the food was cooked. A neighbour, who used to sell onion *pakoras*, used to give them the leftover stuff in the evenings. Young Nirmala was fond of looking at the shadows and dancing along with them. Concerned, her mother took her to the doctor, thinking something was wrong with her. The doctor told her mother that she was an imaginative child who loved dancing and advised her mother to teach her dancing.

She joined the film industry reportedly at an early age of three

as a child artiste. Her first song as a dancer was in the film *Aagosh* (1953). She played the child Radha, as she was a better dancer, and Baby Naaz played the child Krishna. The song was *Bansuriya kahe bajaaye*, sung by Lata Mangeshkar and Sudha Malhotra and composed by Roshan. She became a full-fledged background dancer at the age of 10. One of her earliest numbers was the stunning Madhubala song, *Aaiye meherbaan* from the noir film *Howrah Bridge* (1958), directed by Shakti Samanta. She was dressed up as a boy, leading another group dancer. She can be prominently seen in the song. She however, remained poor, despite

**HER FIRST SONG AS A DANCER WAS IN THE FILM AAGOSH (1953). SHE PLAYED THE CHILD RADHA, AS SHE WAS A BETTER DANCER, AND BABY NAAZ PLAYED THE CHILD KRISHNA**





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## ***SAROJ HAD AN UNCANNY MEMORY FOR DANCE AND USED TO PICK UP NUANCES WHICH OTHERS FAILED TO NOTICE***

it all. In a documentary made on her life, she recalls asking Shashi Kapoor for money on the eve of Diwali, as she would only be paid later in the week. And the thought of being without money during Diwali was unbearable. Shashi had 200 rupees in his wallet, a big sum in those days, which he generously gave her. She said she never returned the money, thinking of it as a blessing.

Saroj had an uncanny memory for dance and used to pick up nuances which others failed to notice. Soon, she was asked by dance directors to render the heroine's part to the leading ladies. By the time *Dr Vidya* (1962) came along, she was counted as a full-fledged assistant. The film was choreographed by B Sohanlal, who was a trained classical dancer. Vyjayanthimala

was the heroine of the film and Saroj was instructed to make sure the heroine got her steps right. It must have been an uncanny experience for a chit of a girl to supervise the movements of an established star but she didn't lack confidence even then.

**S**ohanlal became her guru, and later, her lover and husband. He was already married and 30 years her senior. She was his assistant from 1962-73. She confessed that she wouldn't have achieved anything if not for his strict training. He taught her all he knew. And she perhaps was more in love with his dance than the person himself. Like an apt pupil, she absorbed it all. Cultivating it for a time when she branched out on her own. He reportedly used to make her

stand in one posture for hours together, till she got it right. Like him, she later became known for being a hard taskmaster. Their marriage didn't survive long, however. Though she continued to love and respect him as a teacher. Two children were born to them. A son, Raju Khan, and a daughter, Kuku Khan, who died in 2011 due to liver failure. She then married businessman Sardar Roshan Khan in 1975 and it's said she converted to Islam around that time. She has a daughter named Sukaina Khan by that marriage.

Life is hard indeed for those who live in the margins of fame and fortune. In order to earn a more stable income perhaps, Saroj learnt nursing and worked for some time at the KEM hospital. She also passed the steno-typist exam and worked as a

telephone operator for a while in the Glaxo company. But her heart wasn't in these mundane jobs. Dance always remained a priority and she thankfully caught the first break as an independent choreographer in Sadhana's directorial debut *Geeta Mera Naam* (1974). But the struggles were far from over. It was only with the advent of Sridevi in Hindi films that Saroj Khan came to be recognised for her craft. Her first big hit was perhaps the Nagin dance, *Main teri*



With Shah Rukh Khan



With Kajol



With Aishwarya Rai Bachchan

With Sara Ali Khan







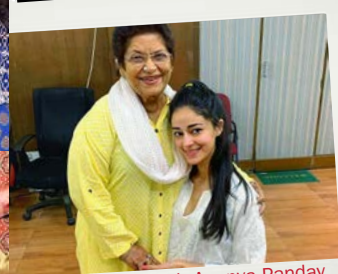
With Madhuri Dixit and Juhi Chawla



With Rekha



With Kareena Kapoor Khan



With Ananya Panday



With Varun Dhawan

## SHE CHOREOGRAPHED MADHURI DIXIT FOR THE EK DO TEEN SONG AND IT PROVED TO BE SUCH A BIG HIT THAT IT'S SAID PEOPLE USED TO GO TO THE THEATRES TO JUST SEE THE SONG

dushman, from *Nagina* (1986). Back-to-back hits with Sridevi in the form of *Mr India* (1987), where her song *Hawa hawai* took the nation by storm, *Chandni* (1989) and *Lamhe* (1991) cemented her fame.

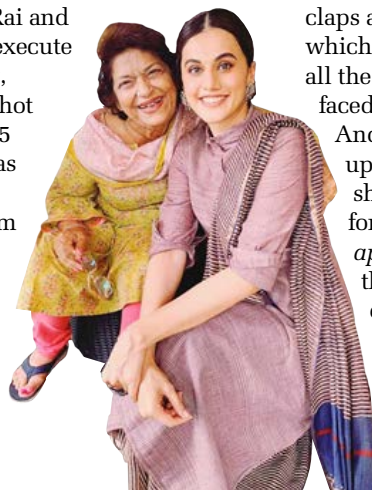
**T**ezaab (1988), was the film which proved historic for her. She choreographed Madhuri Dixit for the *Ek do teen* song and it proved to be such a big hit that it's said people used to go to the theatres to just see the song. She won the inaugural Best Choreographer Award the next year at the Filmfare Awards, and came dancing on stage to collect it when her name was announced.

She is the recipient of eight Filmfare Awards as the Best Choreographer, a record of sorts. She won them for *Tezaab*, *Chalbaaz*, *Sailaab*, *Beta*, *Khal-Nayak*, *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam*, *Devdas* and *Guru*. She has also won three National Awards for *Devdas* (2003), Tamil film *Sringaram* (2005), and *Jab We Met* (2008).

*Sringaram* (2005), starring Aditi Rao Hydari in dual roles was based on the life of a Devdasi in the 1920s. Saroj Khan was known for her film dances but here the film was based on Bharatnatyam. Such was her choreography that no one believed it was executed by a Bollywood choreographer. At long

last, she was able to demonstrate her love for dance in all its purity. It's something she lived for. In one of his interviews, Sanjay Leela Bhansali recollected how she was so ill during the making of *Devdas* (2002) that she could hardly move. And yet, lying on the floor, ignoring all the pain, she used to instruct Madhuri and Aishwarya Rai and was able to execute *Dola re Dola*, which was shot for around 15 days. She was hospitalised when the film got released. After watching the first show,

With Taapsee Pannu



both Bhansali and Aishwarya went to meet her in the night. She was heavily medicated, and even in that drowsy state, she asked the filmmaker whether people clapped and whistled for the song or not... This anecdote perhaps, sums up her life in a nutshell -- someone who lived for the claps and whistles, which made her forget all the darkness she faced earlier in life. And we're sure that upstairs, in heaven, she's correcting the form of *hoors* and *apsaras* -- knowing that applause doesn't come easy. ■



# HIT PARADE!

**DEVESH SHARMA  
LISTS OUT SOME  
OF THE BEST  
CHOREOGRAPHED  
SONGS BY  
SAROJ KHAN**

**A**ffectionately known as Masterji, the late Saroj Khan was said to be a strict disciplinarian who nevertheless had a soft corner for all her heroines. She made sure all her stars gave their best, no matter what. It's no wonder people clamoured to be choreographed by her. Her most fulfilling partnerships were said to be with Sridevi and Madhuri Dixit. But she gelled well with other heroines as well. Presenting a list of her best dance numbers down the years...



## MAIN TERI DUSHMAN, DUSHMAN TU MERA

NAGINA | 1986

The song had Sridevi gyrating like a snake. It combined elements of classical dance forms and folk traditions to create something unique. It was an intricate dance number with long takes. Saroj Khan reportedly made Sridevi rehearse like mad to get the look right. It's all in the eyes as they say and when Sridevi looked at the camera, her eyes brimming with anger, you felt a shiver going down your spine.



## HAWA HAWAI

MR INDIA | 1987

It was a fun, frothy number. Sridevi looked stunning even in that bizarre costume. Saroj Khan's forte was in making sure the actors got their expressions right. And Sridevi gave some 40 expressions in that song, her mercurial face flitting from one expression to the other. You had eyes only for that body shimmering to the fast-paced number. Saroj Khan caught the *sur* of the song right and turned it into a number, which is still remembered today.



## KATE NAHIN KAT TE

MR INDIA | 1987

The heroine clad in a blue saree was slowly making love to an invisible man. The combination of Shekhar Kapur and Saroj Khan made us believe that Sridevi was romancing an invisible man as she sexily gyrated to the tune. Sridevi did a hell of a job under Saroj Khan's ministrations. It was one of the most sensual numbers ever filmed but the great thing was that there was no vulgarity in it. You can watch it with your family without feeling embarrassed. It has become a gold standard of sorts when it comes to picturising such songs.

## EK DO TEEN

TEZAAB | 1988

*Ek do teen* was the number that catapulted Madhuri Dixit to the top. Choreographer Saroj Khan won the Filmfare Award for her efforts in 1989 (the category was created that year, thus making Khan the first winner). The song showcased Mohini's (Madhuri Dixit) acute professionalism. She had just fought with her father but you couldn't see it in her eyes or her movements as she got onto the stage and bantered with the crowd. Saroj Khan reportedly made Madhuri rehearse for 16 days. And the song, which was to become one of the most iconic dance numbers, was shot over a week's time.







## MERE HATHON MEIN NAU NAU CHUDIYAN HAI

CHANDNI | 1989

The song was a typical wedding number and yet magically got transformed into an ethereal thing, thanks to the combination of Sridevi and Saroj Khan. Sridevi is dancing at a Ladies Sangeet, something that's an integral part of every Punjabi wedding. It had fast-paced choreography, again with long takes and Sridevi did it all to perfection. The hand movements, in particular, were in sync with the sound of the bangles. Saroj Khan was known for noticing such things and creating great moments out of little things.



## HUMKO AAJ KAL HAI

SAILAAB | 1990

The number showed the heroine, caught in the first flush of love, dancing with gay abandon. Madhuri was a traditional Koli woman in the song. She was shown to be rescued from a fishing net and then she breaks into a dance. Strangely, most of the lines were sung by the chorus. Madhuri didn't have many lines to lip-synch and conveyed the feelings contained in the song through her eyes, through her movements. Saroj Khan reportedly asked her to keep her hair loose to showcase the free spiritedness of the character. Saroj Khan won a Filmfare for the song.



## MORNI BAGA MA

LAMHE | 1991

The song was picturised at a campfire on the sands of Rajasthan. It's difficult to dance in the sand but Saroj Khan somehow overcame that difficulty and gave Sridevi movements that mimicked the body language of the peacock. Again, it was all in the eyes and Sridevi captured perfectly the feelings of a girl very much in love.



## TAMMA TAMMA LOGE

THANEDAAR | 1990

It was a fast-paced number. Saroj Khan was known for her traditional numbers but this time she showcased her versatility by using Western choreography in this frothy number. The song reportedly got okayed in 48 takes. It had a complicated set of movements where Madhuri Dixit and Sanjay Dutt were seen using the chair as a prop. They wore a cap and Madhuri's cap had to fall on her foot and remain there. But it kept falling off and hence multiple takes had to be taken. Madhuri and Sanjay both reportedly had bruised knees by the end of it all.





## DHAK DHAK KARNE LAGA

BETA | 1992

It was easily one of Madhuri's most popular numbers. She came to be known as the *Dhak dhak* girl after that. The sensuality contained in the song was almost palpable. But it's said that the song was almost dropped from the film as director Indra Kumar was running behind schedule and couldn't afford a delay. Half of the song was shot over a three-day schedule and Saroj Khan reportedly took up the challenge to wrap up the other half during one night. She kept everything flowing smoothly. Both Madhuri and Anil danced through the night and were said to be dead tired by the morning. Thankfully, the song came out perfect and went on to create cinematic history. Saroj won another Best Choreography trophy at Filmfare for it.

## CHOLI KE PEECHE KYA HAI

KHAL NAYAK  
1993

It's perhaps the most risqué song of Madhuri's career. The double entendre contained in the lyrics could have totally gone haywire in lesser hands but Saroj Khan handled it deftly. Madhuri was seducing Sanjay Dutt in the song but her expressions weren't cheap. They were of a girl lost in love. The song had numerous dancers and props and was difficult to shoot because of all the people and objects involved. It's said it took over ten days to shoot the complete sequence. It won Saroj Khan another Filmfare trophy.



## NIMBOODA

HUM DIL DE CHUKE SANAM  
1999

Saroj Khan won an award for Best Choreography at the Filmfare Awards for this song. It was a fast-paced number and Saroj Khan is said to have rehearsed umpteen times with Aishwarya Rai to get the steps right. It was said that Aishwarya's feet were swollen while filming the song but she sportingly carried on. The hook moment incidentally involved hands and not feet.



## AKHIYAAN MILAON KABHI

RAJA | 1995

The song had Madhuri partnering with Sanjay Kapoor. He wasn't as proficient a dancer as Madhuri and Saroj Khan never let it show in her choreography. She kept their movements together to a minimal, concentrating on expressions to get the job done. It was only when the camera focussed solely on Madhuri did the movements become fast-paced.



## CHANE KE KHET MEIN

ANJAAM | 1994

It was a typical wedding/engagement function song made special by Madhuri's deft movements. It was the song where Shah Rukh Khan gets mesmerised by Madhuri. The camera focussed on her face. Facial expressions were Saroj Khan's speciality and she made Madhuri utilise them to the best of her capabilities.





## RADHA KAISE NA JALE LAGAAN | 2001

It was a traditional number, intricately choreographed. Unlike most Saroj Khan's songs, it was a slow burner. The steps were taken from folk and *Kathak*. The song was almost like a prayer and the movements retained the sanctity of the prayer. Gracy Singh was quite a revelation in it, executing all the moves to perfection and Aamir Khan too was graceful. The song had a lot of *theraav*, something you don't associate with choreography but Saroj Khan pulled it off.



## DOLA RE DOLA DEVDAAS | 2003

The song was picturised on Parvati (Aishwarya Rai) and Chandramukhi (Madhuri Dixit) and appears during the celebration of Durga Puja. It featured a face-off between Madhuri and Aishwarya. Saroj Khan reportedly used a mix of Bharatnatyam and Kathak to choreograph the song. The song had multiple dancers and featured both close-ups and long shots. It's said to be one of the most expensive songs ever picturised. Bhansali is said to have shot it for around ten days. The shooting used to happen during the night, leaving everyone exhausted. But Saroj Khan made sure both the heroines stayed on their toes throughout.

## BARSO RE MEGHA MEGHA GURU | 2007



Aishwarya Rai became one with the elements in this dance number from *Guru*. It was filmed amidst pouring rains. Saroj Khan came up with movements which looked good even in the monsoon. The song captured the joy of a young girl who is enjoying the rains and the choreography captured it to a T. Saroj Khan won another Filmfare trophy for the song.

## YEH ISHQ HAYE JAB WE MET | 2007

It's said that Saroj Khan used to scold Kareena Kapoor during the making of the song for not moving her feet fast enough. The choreographer asked her to forget everything else and concentrate on capturing the emotions and Kareena deftly nailed the required movements. It was a song which had different set changes and flowed from one situation to the other. Saroj Khan proved equal to director Imtiaz Ali's requirements and won a National Award for her choreography. ■





# your say

reader's reviews, box-office, celebrity column & more

## INSTA LIKE

### Medley of moments

Check out what your favourites are upto on Instagram...



@iamsrk: Don't know when my passion became my purpose and then turned into my profession. Thank u all for so many years of allowing me to entertain you. More than my professionalism I believe my passionism will see me through many more years of service to all of you. 28 years and counting... and thank u @gaurikhan for capturing this moment. *Almost three decades and this man can still make anyone's heart flutter with just one look.*



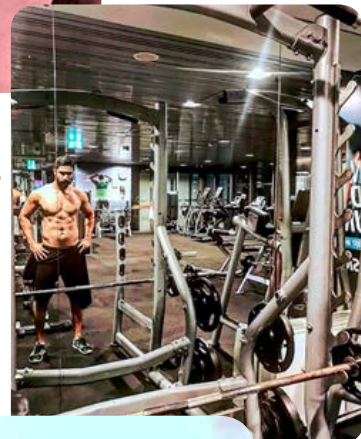
*Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas' love story only gets better with time. Here's to this couple celebrating each day of their beautiful marriage.*

@priyankachopra: To the greatest joy of my life. 2 years ago on this day you asked me to marry you! I may have been speechless then but I say yes every moment of everyday since. In the most unprecedented time you made this weekend so incredibly memorable. Thank you for thinking of me all the time. I am the luckiest girl in the world! I love you @nickjonas



@ranveersingh: Hair by: @deepikapadukone Very Mifune in 'Yojimbo'. I like it. What do you think? *Deepika Padukone looks all set for an alternate profession as a hairstylist and here's her first piece of art.*

@vickykaushal09: I miss machines. #majormissingmonday *Vicky may be missing the machines, but this picture sure comes as a treat for sore eyes.*



@aliaabhatt: pink sunset and a cool breeze thoroughly enjoyed by two sweet peas 🍷 *Alia Bhatt and sister Shaheen Bhatt are enjoying their lockdown with some gorgeous views and good company.*



Shatrughan Sinha's racy rejoinders pg 70



# IN THE MAIL

READERS WRITE AND BITE BACK... WITH LOVE AND AFFECTION

**1st Prize**  
₹1500

## CELEBRATING BOLLYWOOD NEWCOMERS WITH OPEN ARMS

Today, when there's so much debate about nepotism everywhere, it was wonderful to read an interview of the newcomer Radhika Madan (May). When a brand as prestigious as yours, gives a platform to the outsiders, it sends a positive vibe to aspiring actors.

Smita Bansal, Bangalore



## → SONU SOOD, THE OFF-SCREEN HERO

In these times of gloom, your piece on Sonu Sood (June) came as a ray of light. The actor really went all out helping those in need and I feel he has set an example for the entire industry with his actions. It was great to see such a Good Samaritan getting featured.

Gurmeet Chaddha, Chandigarh

Real Hero:  
Sonu Sood

## → 10 MINUTES OF HAPPINESS

Your new online series titled '10 Minutes Of Happiness' really lives up to its name. The show is all about positivity which I feel is much needed in these testing times. You should definitely get more stars on board for the show.

Rohan Joshi, New Delhi

## SWEAT IT OUT WITH STARS!

Not too long ago, I came across an article on the Filmfare.com which showed superstar Aamir Khan joining his daughter Ira in a workout session online. After looking at that video, I got inspired to watch more of such fun stuff. It would be amazing if you start a workout video series with our favourite movie stars.

Aarti Goswami, Rewari



Girl power: Anushka Sharma

**2nd Prize**  
₹1000

## ↑ ANUSHKA SHARMA'S ON A ROLL

I love Anushka Sharma and I'm proud of the fact that she's making giant strides as a producer too. Her production company Clean Slate Films is churning out some really exciting stuff. After watching their show *Pataal Lok*, which was phenomenal, I saw their latest film, *Bulbbul*, a one of a kind supernatant drama. It definitely is one of the best things I've seen in recent times.

Rahul Iyer, Chennai

## THE MAKING OF A RED CARPET OUTFIT

Your interview with Deepika Padukone's personal stylist Shaleena Nathani (June) was a delight to read. I'm obsessed with Bollywood fashion and keep a close eye on trends from Bollywood events. The interview gave me a much deeper insight into everything that goes into making a Bollywood star's outfit.

Akriti Bhatt, New Delhi

## THE OTT ERA

It's truly laudable how the world of OTT has gained prominence over time, not just in India but globally. I love how today we are exposed to diverse content from different parts of the world, which we can watch anytime as per our convenience. Recently, I watched Jitendra Kumar's show titled *Panchayat* and absolutely loved it. I would recommend everyone to watch it, not just for some great performances but even for its comic punches. In our house, we have ditched our cable TV and adopted this new way of life.

Komal Kulkarni, Mumbai



## FASHION FOCUS

While people typically expect *Filmfare* to be only about movies, I love the fact that as a brand it goes beyond that and also shares the latest fashion trends of the industry. Keep up the good work!

Ananya Reddy, Hyderabad





Two gems: Rishi Kapoor and Irrfan Khan

## ↑ FILMFARE'S FITTING TRIBUTE

Bollywood lost two gems in Rishi Kapoor and Irrfan Khan within a span of days. Naturally, this was a hard pill to digest for many Bollywood fans like me. But when I read about their work once again in *Filmfare* (June), it filled me with happiness and reminded me that cherishing their work is the best way to mourn their loss.

Aaryan Nagda, Mumbai

#AtHomeWithFilmfare



## ← FILMFARE'S LOCKDOWN CONVERSATIONS

I've been following *Filmfare* for a really long time on social media. There's a series which really impressed me. *Filmfare's* Lockdown Conversations with editor Jitesh Pillai is so

different from the usual celebrity interviews. His ease with the stars, which I guess comes from his years of interacting with them, is truly commendable. What's great is that he makes an extra effort to take a deeper insight into not just the professional but the personal life of the stars, without making them uncomfortable. It would be exciting if he gets superstar Amitabh Bachchan on board for a fun chat. Good luck with everything.

Arjun Nadkarni, Pune

## VARUN DHAWAN PROVES WHY HE'S MR PERFECT

Now, when the pandemic has put the entire world in a state of lockdown and some of us are forced to stay away from our loved ones, my favourite Bollywood actor Varun Dhawan proved that even during the

lockdown we can make those close to our hearts feel special. When I read about Varun's sweet gesture for his lady love Natasha Dalal's birthday in *Filmfare* (June), I was extremely touched. He sure knows how to charm a girl on and off the screen.

Simran Ahuja, Lucknow



Master and pupil: Amitabh Bachchan and Ayushmann Khurrana

## ↑ BIG B AND AYUSHMANN KHURRANA'S MAGIC ON THE SMALL SCREEN

I was eagerly looking forward to watching Amitabh Bachchan and Ayushmann Khurrana in *Gulabo Sitabo* and felt it certainly lived up to the expectations. The on-screen chemistry that they shared makes me hope for another such collaboration in the future. Shoojit Sircar proved yet again why he's regarded as one of the best in the business.

Rohan Chaturvedi, Gujarat



OTT: The new order

## ↑ NEW AGE STARS

Thanks to the OTT platforms, we've seen a fresh wave of content come our way. While there's no doubting the top-notch quality of these projects, what caught my attention was that shows like *Paatal Lok* and *Asur* have brought along a phase of the unconventional protagonist. Even though they might not be larger than life, they certainly come across as more relatable to the audience.

Aashish Gupta, Ratlam

## Just one Point



Rishi and Irrfan in D-Day

I recently watched Rishi Kapoor and Irrfan Khan's *D-Day* and was blown away with their work. I must say that the two have left an irreplaceable void in Indian cinema.

Ranjana Bisht, Nainital

As a Bollywood fan, I constantly keep checking *Filmfare* for paparazzi pictures. But as we deal with the pandemic, I wonder when the 'normal life' will be back on track again. Until then, stay safe everybody.

Atul Pujari, Assam

I recently read on *filmfare.com* that Shah Rukh Khan might team up with Rajkumar Hirani for his next project. Well, I hope that the rumour is true because I can't wait to see my favourite hero on screen again.

Joyce Pinto, Goa

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PHOTOGRAPH: MEETESH TANEJA

# Shatrughan Sinha's Rapid fire



Packing a punch: Priyanka Chopra

**Why does Sushant Singh Rajput's untimely death seem like a personal loss to us?**

Abhijeet Sharma, Faridabad

Sushant Singh Rajput was a true son of the soil, a wonderful human being, a beautiful soul who remained rooted till the end. He was well educated and so grounded. And from a good family – we all could relate/ identify with him easily. Hence it seems like a personal loss.

**Priyanka Chopra earned more money playing Mary Kom than Mary Kom earned in her entire boxing career. Please comment.**

Lalitkumar Kumpalath, Mumbai

How does it matter to you by the way – when Mary Kom, the daughter of the nation, herself isn't complaining? Why

are you so cheeased off?

Priyanka Chopra is a very beautiful celebrity, a good human being as well as an attractive actress. She certainly seems to get what she deserves.

**Why do successful people end their lives?**

Santosh Mohan Joshi, Miraj

I wish I knew. Mostly circumstances and depression combine to make a person take such a drastic step. But I could be wrong. This is a question that should be asked to a psychologist. I can only say that ending one's life is never the right thing to do. Success may get you happiness, peace and love but as they say...It's always lonely at the top.

**Is anger ever a good thing?**

Pankaj Goyal, Ambala

Never, never and never. Anger is a negative emotion. It's destructive and it's never advisable to act impulsively when one's angry.

**Your single line suggestion to those who are sitting on the edge and thinking that their life is not worth living anymore.**

Kabir, New Delhi

They must talk to people they are comfortable with and seek a professional help – the sooner the better.

**#Metoo, ragging, nepotism – have you ever gone through this phase in Bollywood?**

Asif Kamruddin, Cuttack

These are sensitive issues. I've no such experience of going through these most talked about issues at the moment. I hope, wish and pray to the Lord that no one ever gets entangled in such problems, besides other problems as well.

**Is joint family better than living separately?**

Santosh Mohan Joshi, Miraj

In the times of corona, living is more important than living in a joint family or separately. However, at this age, I do feel joint family is better than living separately. Currently, the

**Does nepotism exist too much in our Hindi film industry?**

Karan Nangia, Gurgaon

It's said favouritism exists everywhere – in every industry. People point fingers at the film industry because it's visible here.

*Abhijeet Sharma*





**Golden memories:** Sushant Singh Rajput

## 1st Prize

**What are the dumbest questions you have come across**

**Mrs Deviya Kumar, New Delhi**

There are many to name a few – Shall I tell my parents I'm adopted? Does it take 18 months for twins to be born? Do you think NASA invented thunderstorms to cover the sound of space battles, and etc etc.

## 2nd Prize

**Many Bollywood stars are afflicted with rare cancers. Is their lifestyle one of the reasons for the ailments?**

**Satya Behera, Odisha**

I'm not sure of that – which rare cancers are you referring to? Cancer is dreadful but it's curable too. They say almost 70 per cent of cancer – thanks to our scientist and doctors is curable today and 30 per cent is controllable. If you are able to choose the right doctors and the right medication, right in time, there is a high chance that you might survive the disease. And one has to change the lifestyle to a certain extent as well for sure.

joint family can provide the security, safety and care needed when everyone is living under the fear of the pandemic. Both have their pros and cons, actually – it's up to you to decide.

**How much longer can Bollywood hide its ugly and shameful face?**

**Vijayalakshmi Aravind, on email**

Why do you say so? The so-called Bollywood, like any other organisation, has both good and bad sides. Its shameful issues are being exposed gradually. Every

industry has its shameful and ugly side – it takes a while before things are put in order.

**Bollywood has a dark underbelly. don't you agree?**

**CV Aravind, on email**

It's now too late for me to agree or disagree on this matter.

**Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely – is it applicable in Bollywood – and that too during the time of coronavirus?**

**Jayanthi Subramaniam, Mumbai**

It's applicable all over the world – everywhere. It has got nothing to do with coronavirus. Power and corruption have been hand-in-hand since the beginning of time. Power, corruption and money are a deadly combination but coronavirus is deadlier than anything. And has nothing to do with them.

**In spite of all the adversities and hardships, life is beautiful; Isn't it?**

**Manoj Somai, Ajmer**

Life is beautiful indeed. It's God's gift to us – so

my dear Manoj, perhaps we should handle it with extra care.

**Has COVID-19 pandemic united humanity?**

**Santosh Mohan Joshi, Miraj**

It has frightened humanity. Currently, everyone is isolated at their own homes so surely it has united the family.

(Feature co-ordinated by **DEVESH SHARMA**)

Please note: The column doesn't reflect Shatrughan Sinha's political or personal views. His answers are given in jest and humour.

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**YOUR QUESTIONS WILL BE FORWARDED TO:** Shatrughan Sinha, who insists his answers do not reflect his political and social views.

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# The great leveller

**T**he entire nation underwent a tsunami of shock when the news of Amitabh Bachchan, Abhishek Bachchan, and later even Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and Aaradhya Bachchan contracting the dreaded coronavirus came calling. We had heard that some members of Karan Johar's staff, Aamir Khan's staff, and some members of Boney Kapoor's staff had got the virus. But an actual star getting it was something else indeed. Such is the love and respect that the Bachchans command that their fans from all over the world started praying as one for their recovery.

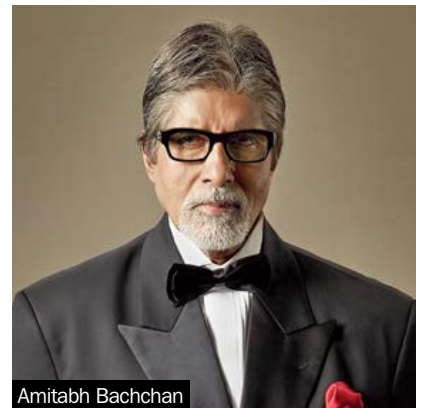
Thankfully, they all seem to be out of danger. Anupam Kher's mother, Dulari who must be well into her 80s, has recovered as well. So there is hope indeed for all of us. The disease can be fought, the danger it represents can be surpassed.

But the bigger message here is that no one is immune to this disease. If the biggest Indian star and his

immediate family can contract it, then the common man on the street is doubly suspect. It can come from anywhere and conversely we can pass it on to anyone, without even consciously doing so. The sad truth is that till a reliable cure or vaccine comes along -- and we don't know how far into the future that is -- we're all in danger from it.

Strangely, despite being bombarded with enough messages about it, we all seem to be taking it lightly. We see images of Americans sunning themselves on beaches, of Europeans enjoying their coffee in bistros, of Indians going to places of worship without any care. Shouldn't we, collectively as citizens of one planet fighting this worldwide threat, come to a consensus about it?

The film industry, like almost every industry out there, had been shut down since four months. It's slowly limping back towards normalcy. There have been talks of films resuming shooting under the strictest of guidelines. TV shows we hear have started shooting



Amitabh Bachchan



Abhishek Bachchan with daughter Aaradhya and wife Aishwarya Rai Bachchan



Anupam Kher with mom Dulari and brother Raju Kher

and if they're able to pull it off successfully, then we're sure the film industry will follow suit as well. These are hard times indeed. Going forward, we're going to be tested every step of the way. We've to be steady in our resolve and not let our guard down. Learning to live with the coronavirus is the new normal and the sooner we adapt to it, the better it will be for all concerned...

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