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**VICKY
KAUSHAL**
bulks up

**RANVEER
SINGH**
SET TO SLAY IN
A DOUBLE ROLE

contents

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PHOTOGRAPH: TEJINDER SINGH KHAMKHA | HAIR: AMIT THAKUR
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HYATT REGENCY MUMBAI
Ruffled jumpsuit: Antithesis
Earrings: Saba Designs

Editor's Choice

03 The ed praises
Taapsee Pannu
72 25 years of *Dilwale*
Dulhania Le Jayenge



06

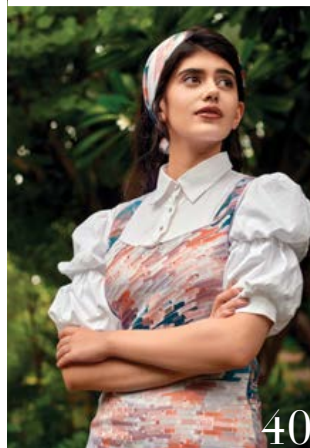
10



24



36



40



62



52

Masala fix

06 Ranveer Singh to play a double role in *Cirkus*, Kriti Sanon to play Sita in *Adipurush*, SRK-Kajol bronze statues to be unveiled in London and other grist from the rumour mill

Preview

12 Adarsh Gourav is waiting to strike it big
16 Tripti Dimri is basking in the success of *Bulbbul*

Fashion & lifestyle

20 Make-up and hair expert Namrata Soni reveals her secrets

Exclusives

24 Exclusive cover story: Taapsee Pannu speaks from the heart and narrates her incredible journey
36 Manoj Bajpayee on the power of reinvention
40 Sanjana Sanghi remembers
44 Sushant Singh Rajput
Swatilekha Sengupta looks back at her career with affection

48 Faruk Kabir is in a happy space
52 Shekhar Kapoor talks movies
56 Mithoon speaks about the changing face of film music
60 Obituary: Bhanu Athaiya
62 Profiling Sanjeev Kumar, the complete actor

Your say

68 Readers send in their rants
70 Shatrughan Sinha's wacky witticisms

Letter from the Editor

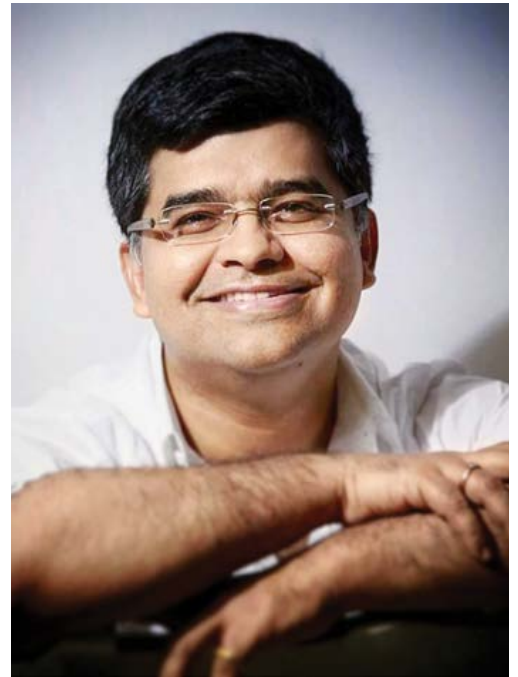
Top of the class

There's something about Taapsee Pannu that makes you take notice of her. That compels you to give that second glance. You realise that there's more to her than what meets the eye. That beneath those Punjabi good looks lies a core of steel. And it's this steel which has helped her evolve from being a virtual outsider to an actress capable of shouldering the fortunes of a film. It's this steel which helped her survive the topsy-turvy fortunes of the South industry, where everything mostly revolves around the whim of the male stars. She not only managed to find her feet in the industry but also managed to learn to speak Tamil and Telugu fluently. It's admirable really how North Indians like her, Tamannaah or Rakul Preet have managed to pick up tongues alien to them. Speaks a lot about their determination to succeed.

Taapsee came to Hindi films via *Chashme Baddoor* (2013). Though she was noticed in the comedy film, she made an impact two years later with Neeraj Pandey's *Baby* (2015). Though hers was a supporting role, she had a kickass fighting scene which brought in the claps and whistles of the audience. And she impressed Pandey enough for him to produce another film called *Naam Shabana* (2017). Directed by Shivam Nair, the film exclusively revolved around her character and was a prequel of sorts to *Baby*, showcasing how Shabana Khan of *Baby*, who was a normal girl, got transformed into a ruthless agent. By the time *Naam Shabana* came out, she had already wowed the audience over with her power-packed performance in *Pink* (2016). She played a girl whose only crime was to say no to the advances of a lecherous youth. She gets dragged into a court case, gets molested, and has the whole world questioning her for her behaviour. She somehow keeps her sanity alive amidst the madness and wins over the approval of the audience. In *Mulk* (2018), she played the Hindu *bahu* of a Muslim household. Though she's on the verge of getting divorced from her husband, she retains enough of a bond with her in-laws to fight on their behalf in court when they get into trouble. After that, she had *Saand Ki Aankh* (2019), where she and Bhumi Pednekar played 60 plus grandmothers with a yen for pistol shooting. Not many leading ladies would have chosen such a role but these two bravehearts did it and made a film which pulled all the right triggers.

She truly came into her own with *Thappad* (2020). The film had her playing a normal, unambitious girl, who is happy to be a homemaker. But that doesn't mean she's ready to be a doormat. When her husband slaps her, she chooses to walk out of her marriage, even though she's repeatedly told it was just one 'mistake' made by her husband. Through her stance, the film gave hope to the thousands of women who have let things slide for years and have suffered in silence.

The new-age diva graces our cover this issue. Her answers are all forthright and candid. There's a freshness to them. One can make out her eagerness to share her life with the readers. So turn on the pages to know more about the supremely talented Taapsee Pannu...



Jitesh Pillai

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a bird's-eye view of show town's happenings

masala fix

Looking fresh:
Akshay Kumar and
Kiara Advani

MARCH PAST

It's good to hear that the film industry is gradually getting back to normalcy. Shootings have slowly started and so have promotions. We saw the lovely looking screen couple of Akshay Kumar and Kiara Advani coming together to promote their forthcoming OTT release *Laxmii*. It was such a relief to see them sans masks. The sight filled us with that all-izz-well feeling...



Ranveer Singh to play a double role in *Cirkus* pg 06

Ajay Devgn to play Lord Shiva in *Adipurush*? pg 06

PHOTOGRAPH: YOGEN SHAH

RANVEER SINGH TO PLAY A DOUBLE ROLE IN ROHIT SHETTY'S NEXT



Rohit Shetty and **Ranveer Singh** created a storm at the box office in 2018 with *Simmba*. Now we hear that they're going to create mayhem once more with their adaptation of **William Shakespeare's** *Comedy Of Errors*. It's called *Cirkus*. The Shakespearean comedy dealt with a pair of twins separated at birth. The most famous adaptation of the play in Hindi cinema has been done by **Gulzar**. His *Angoor* (1982) starred **Sanjeev Kumar** and **Deven Verma** in double roles and is considered a cult classic. Rohit Shetty has always appreciated the core idea and it's said some years ago he wanted to make the film with **Shah Rukh Khan** in the lead.



Presented by **Bhushan Kumar** in association with Reliance Entertainment, the film will also star **Pooja Hegde, Jacqueline Fernandez, Varun Sharma, Siddharth Jadhav, Johny Lever, Sanjay Mishra, Ashwini Kalsekar and Murlidhar Sharma**. Ranveer Singh will start shooting for the film next month in Mumbai, followed by schedules in Ooty and Goa. So Ranveer and Varun Sharma will play the leads roles of people who have identical twins and are separated at birth. We're sure this will be a heavy-duty entertainer, like all Rohit Shetty films.

SHEKHAR KAPUR APPOINTED AS THE PRESIDENT OF THE FTII

Internationally acclaimed filmmaker **Shekhar Kapur** has been appointed as the President of the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) Society and the chairman of its governing council. The director is one of the most celebrated personalities in the movie business, both in the country and around the world. Films like *Masoom*, *Bandit Queen* and *Mr India* are his biggest Indian films and *Elizabeth* and *The Four Fathers* are two of his most acclaimed international works.



Zaheer Khan and Sagarika Ghatge expecting their first child

Our celebrity couples are surely surprising us with good news amidst these critical times. After **Saif Ali Khan** and **Kareena Kapoor Khan**, **Virat Kohli** and **Anushka Sharma**, it's now **Zaheer Khan** and **Sagarika Ghatge** who have some good news to share. According to a report, Zaheer Khan and Sagarika Ghatge are expecting their first child. Here's wishing the couple our heartiest congratulations for this big news.

AJAY DEVGN TO PLAY LORD SHIVA IN ADIPURUSH?



Om Raut's next *Adipurush*

is one project that has already become the talk of the town. While **Prabhas** and **Saif Ali Khan** have already been confirmed for this adaptation of the Indian epic *Ramayan*, we now hear that **Ajay Devgn** might also be part of the film. It's rumoured that he's been approached to play **Lord Shiva** in the movie. While nothing has been confirmed, rumours are rife that Om Raut and Ajay Devgn will collaborate again for this project. We know that Ajay is a dedicated devotee of Lord Shiva and even has tattoos with Shaivism motifs on his body. So it might be a dream-come-true for him to play his favourite deity.

KATRINA KAIF'S MISSION EDUCATION

Katrina Kaif has dedicated herself to the cause of girls' education and gender equality in rural India. A lot of girls in the remote areas don't get an education and Katrina wants to change these statistics. She's currently identifying villages where such gender discrimination is at its worst. Before the lockdown, she'd visited a remote village in Madhya Pradesh to acquaint herself with the barriers to education in rural interiors and tribal regions. The NGO she's working with has helped enrol 7,50,000 girls in schools. And has improved the learning outcomes for over 1.30 million children to date. Wow! that's some statistics. More power to you, Kat.



KRITI SANON TO PLAY SITA IN OM RAUT'S ADIPURUSH AFTER SIGNING PRABHAS TO PLAY RAMA, SAIF TO PLAY RAVANA, THE MAKERS HAVE NOW GOT KRITI SANON TO PORTRAY SITA'S ROLE. AS PER OUR SOURCES, KRITI HAS ALREADY GIVEN HER NOD AND SHE'S HUGELY EXCITED ABOUT THE FILM. HER CAREER SEEMS TO BE ON A HIGH. SHE HAS MIMI, BACHCHAN PANDAY AND NOW ADIPURUSH. GREAT GOING, GIRL!





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SOUTH KOREA'S BIGGEST MARTIAL ARTS STAR CHOREOGRAPHS SALMAN KHAN

Looks like director **Prabhu Deva** and **Salman Khan** are leaving no stone unturned to make *Radhe: Your Most Wanted Bhai* an interesting proposition for the audience. We believe it has some high-octane action sequence. And the action is choreographed by none other than South Korea's biggest martial arts star and stuntman, **Kwon Tae-ho**. Both director Prabhu Deva and Salman Khan thought that an action scene where the actor takes on the drug mafia in Goa should be larger than life. Hence they zeroed in on Kwon Tae-ho. According to a source, Kwon Tae-ho stayed in the country for a month last year and the action sequence was shot between Salman Khan and **Randeep Hooda** at a Bandra studio. The source further revealed, "It has been picturised as a moody scene, complete with dim lights and lots of smoke. In fact, Tae-ho also features as one of the bad guys and is seen engaging in hand-to-hand combat with Salman." Can't wait to watch this one for sure.



KARTIK AARYAN AND RAM MADHAVANI WE HEAR HAVE JOINED HANDS FOR A HARD-HITTING THRILLER. KNOWN FOR HIS CHOCOLATE BOY IMAGE, THIS WILL BE A GAME-CHANGER OF SORTS FOR THE ACTOR. RAM MADHAVANI TOO IS EXCITED ABOUT THE PROJECT AS IT'S HIS SECOND FILM AFTER NEERJA. HE HAD ALSO DIRECTED THE ACCLAIMED WEB SERIES AARYA.

SHAH RUKH KHAN AND KAJOL'S BRONZE STATUE TO BE UNVEILED IN LONDON

Bollywood is incomplete without the mention of Raj and Simran. The iconic pairing of **Shah Rukh Khan** and **Kajol** became a blockbuster with *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (DDLJ). The film completed 25 years of its release this year. And now this iconic love story has another milestone to its credit. The Heart of London Business Alliance has announced that a bronze statue of both Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol will be unveiled in London's Leicester Square. The statue will depict a scene from the movie in the bustling city. London's Leicester Square has installations of **Harry Potter**, **Wonder Woman**, **Laurel and Hardy** and many other iconic characters. **Mark Williams**, destination marketing director, Heart of London Business Alliance, says, "*Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* is one of the most successful Hindi films of all time, and this statue is a fitting tribute to the global popularity of Bollywood." We couldn't agree more.



SHAH RUKH KHAN TO BEGIN SHOOTING FOR PATHAN

Shah Rukh Khan's last release was *Zero* which hit the screens in 2018. After that, SRK decided to take time-off from the big screen. Now, it seems he's ready to end his two-year hiatus with **Siddharth Anand's** *Pathan*. The film will see SRK reunite with his *Om Shanti Om* co-star **Deepika Padukone**. This will also mark the actor's first project with **John Abraham**. *Pathan* will go on floors in November with the filming focused on Shah Rukh. The film will be shot in Yash Raj Studios, Mumbai. The first schedule will go on for two months and the team will take a break around New Year's. In 2021, SRK will be joined by Deepika and John for the shoot. *Pathan* is a slick revenge drama. Since the film marks Shah Rukh and John's first on-screen union, **Aditya Chopra** and Siddharth have etched out dramatic scenes featuring them. Looks like we have another 'War' on our hands.

AMITABH BACHCHAN, RADHIKA APTE IN THE SCREEN ADAPTATION OF SHANTARAM

Gregory David Roberts' best-selling novel *Shantaram* is finally going to be adapted for Apple TV. According to reports in a leading daily, the show will have **Charlie Hunnam** in the lead and will be directed by **Justin Kurzel**. The show will also star **Radhika Apte** and **Amitabh Bachchan**. It's being said that Amitabh will play the role of crime lord Khader Khan. The show will start shooting in 2021 and will be shot in Dharavi and South Mumbai.

BIG B TO HAVE A BUSY YEAR AHEAD

Amitabh Bachchan may have just recovered from the coronavirus but that hasn't stopped the actor from putting on his working shoes. The actor has been shooting for the reality show *Kaun Banega Crorepati* non stop. Come November and he will resume work on *Brahmastra* where he plays a pivotal role alongside **Ranbir Kapoor** and **Alia Bhatt**. Post this, he has another film to complete before joining Vyjayanthi Films' sci-fi drama starring **Deepika Padukone** and **Prabhas**. Contrary to the reports, Bachchan has a major role to play in the film and hence he has allotted bulk dates to this project. After this, he will collaborate with **Vikas Bahl** in the comedy film *Deadly*, which revolves around a funeral. The thespian also has **Nagraj Manjule's** *Jhund* and **Rumi Jaffrey's** *Chehre* on his platter. He has been reportedly dubbing for both the films. Must say, he surely knows how to set an example for the younger lot of actors when it comes to work ethics.





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AAMIR KHAN'S SWEET GESTURE

Aamir Khan is known for his philanthropic ways and is always reaching out to people in need. A few years back, a cab service called **Sakha** made an appearance on his show, *Satyameva Jayate*. The cab service employs only female drivers who've been victims of domestic abuse. Now we hear that Aamir, while shooting for *Laal Singh Chaddha* in Delhi, instructed his team to use only Sakha cabs for commuting. In fact, he even made arrangements for the accommodation of the female drivers as he had hired them for 45 days. Now isn't it really sweet of the actor to support them?

TARA SUTARIA TO SING FOR DO VILLAIN



A news item recently stated that **Tara Sutaria** had signed **Mohit Suri's** *Do Villain*, which is a sequel to his *Ek Villain*. The film also stars **Disha Patani**, **John Abraham**, and **Arjun Kapoor**. We hear Tara plays a singer in the film. And she's excited about the role. You might not know this but Tara is a professional singer, who's been singing since the age of six. She has recorded music in India and abroad for films, commercials, concerts.

She has also sung the song *Slippin' through my fingers*, which featured in **Bharat Dhabholkar's** play, *Blame It On Yashraj*. No wonder, she's gung ho about this film. Tara has recently wrapped up *Tadap*, which is the remake of *RX100* and will see her romancing Ahan Shetty.

VICKY KAUSHAL TO PILE ON WEIGHT FOR HIS NEXT

Vicky Kaushal surely has an interesting line-up of films on his platter. He has a YRF film with **Manushi Chhillar** which is supposed to be a comedy. Then he stars in *The Immortal Ashwathama*, to be directed by **Aditya Dhar**. The two will team up once again after the success of *Uri: The Surgical Strike*. The actor's character is based on the mythological character **Ashwatthama**, the son of **Dronacharya** who was given the boon of immortality in the *Mahabharata*. For this three-part modern-day superhero film, Vicky Kaushal needs to train intensively and will have to weigh more than 100 kgs. Vicky will also have to train in horse-riding and various martial art forms, including jiu-jitsu and krav maga.



ALI FAZAL GETS A LEAD ROLE IN A HOLLYWOOD FILM

Ali Fazal is slowly making a name for himself in showbiz. That he's talented is a given. If he can make you laugh with his stint in *Fukrey*, he can send a chill down your spine with his act in **Mirzapur**. No wonder then Hollywood has taken a shine to the young actor. While Ali Fazal is awaiting the release of his Hollywood film, *Death On The Nile*, we hear the actor has bagged another film in the West. According to reports, it's a war drama titled *Code Name: Johnny Walker*. The film is written by **Alan Wenkus**, who's an Academy Award nominee,



and former writer of *The Tonight Show*. Meanwhile, the actor and his ladylove **Richa Chadha** have postponed their wedding until the coronavirus is under control.

Rajkummar Rao and Bhumi Pednekar to shoot *Badhaai Do* in January

Two years ago, **Neena Gupta** and **Gajraj Rao** won our hearts with their story of an elderly couple expecting a child. The film showcased various taboos that exist in our society and questioned what is considered as 'normal'. *Badhaai Ho* also featured **Ayushmann Khurrana** and **Sanya Malhotra** and was a massive success at the box-office. Now, we hear that a sequel to the film is on the cards. Titled *Badhaai Do*, the film will be helmed by **Harshavardhan Kulkarni**, who created *Hunternrr* in 2015. **Rajkummar Rao** and **Bhumi Pednekar** have been signed as leads. Rajkummar will play the only male cop in a 'mahila thana' in the film. While Bhumi Pednekar will be playing the role of a PT teacher. Well, here's hoping that *Badhaai Do* will provide double the entertainment than the first instalment.



preview

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



BITS AND BYTES

AYUSH MEHRA

X FACTOR: VERSATILITY

Ayush Mehra started out as a part of Shiamak Davar's dance troupe but soon realised that he wanted to become an actor. He did a bit of theatre to hone his skills. Next up, he assisted on films like *O Teri, Jai Ho*, *Uri: The Surgical Strike* and a Dharma project, titled *Raat Baaki*, which got shelved. This opened up his prospects and introduced him to the world of OTT. He worked on several sketches for FilterCopy, Arre!, TVF and more before getting his first web series, The Zoom Studios' *Mom And Co*. Then came Just Human Things' *Minus One*, and Dice Media's *Please Find Attached*. He also has Shaad Ali's *Call My Agent* slated for an OTT release and Dice Media's *Operation MBBS 2* for the coming year. Apart from acting and dancing, Ayush enjoys playing and watching football and is also a big foodie. His favourite actors are Anne Hathaway, Alia Bhatt, Christian Bale, Brad Pitt, Ranveer Singh, Ranbir Kapoor and Vicky Kaushal.

Meet newbie actors
Adarsh Gourav and
Tripti Dimri pg 12

YEAR OF THE TIGER

ADARSH GOURAV HAS BAGGED A BIGGIE IN *THE WHITE TIGER*. VEDANSHI PATHAK MEETS THE EXCITED YOUNGSTER



Adarsh Gourav was born in Jamshedpur. He moved to Mumbai in 2007. He was interested in singing and learnt music at Suresh Wadkar's Ajivasan Music Academy. He was the lead vocalist of Oak Island, a progressive rock band, which was even featured on MTV Indies. But then *My Name Is Khan*, where he portrayed the teenaged SRK, happened and the acting bug bit him.

Life is said to be hard for an outsider. Adarsh faced several rejections for every part he landed. He delivers the fact without the baggage of a sob story attached to it and says it's all part of the game. His love for cinema wasn't diminished by the rejections. Like a hopeless romantic, he lived in the hope of seeing his face on the silver screen once again. Adarsh got his first major break with an unreleased film called



With Priyanka Chopra in *The White Tiger*

“PRIYANKA CHOPRA CARRIES AN INFECTIOUS ENERGY AND EVEN A TIRING AND A DULL DAY ON SET WOULD BRIGHTEN UP WHEN SHE WALKED IN”

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“WORKING IN BANANA MADE ME REALISE THAT ACTING WAS THE MOST CREATIVELY AND MENTALLY SATISFYING JOB I'D EVER DONE. I KNEW THEN, THAT THIS IS WHAT I WANTED TO DO”



Banana. Facing the camera once again gave him an all-time high and he wanted to experience it again and again. He's certainly sad that his debut film didn't get to see the light of the day but waives it off as a learning experience. "Working in *Banana* made me realise that acting was the most creatively and mentally satisfying job I'd ever done. I knew then, that this is what I wanted to do," he reflects. He got to work with Manoj Bajpayee in *Rukh* (2017). Adarsh was praised for his acting in the film that had the father-son bond at its core. He was also seen in *Mom*, where he played Mohit, one of the antagonists. He

has also done web series like *Die Trying* (2018) and *Leila* (2019).

Adarsh was selected by director Ramin Bahrani to play an important role in the adaptation of Arvind Adiga's novel *The White Tiger*. It's front-lined by such names as Priyanka Chopra and Rajkummar Rao. The film, which showcases an ambitious driver's rise to the top will release on an OTT platform in December. Adarsh comes alive while narrating how he came to be part of *The White Tiger*. Says he, "I got a call from casting director Tess Joseph's office in the first week of June 2019 about the audition which was

also my first audition with her. Incidentally, while growing up I was not big into reading but *The White Tiger* was one of the few books I had actually read. After my first audition, I had multiple rounds of auditions and readings until I was locked for the part by the end of June."

The actor has been lucky to work with ace actor Rajkummar so early in his career. He first met Rao over a reading. They had lunch together afterwards and formed a bond. He smiles, "I've been an admirer of his body of work and how he always attempts to create something new with every project he takes up. He was really humble and by the end of the day we had exchanged multiple stories and I knew I had a great co-actor in him."

Meeting Priyanka Chopra too was a pleasant

surprise as the global icon floored him with her warmth and candour. They met for the first time at a reading session at her place and discovered they had common roots -- she too grew up in Jamshedpur. Soon, they were yacking away like old pals, sharing Hindi movie song playlists and listing their favourite snacks on a scale of one to ten. "She carries an infectious energy and even a tiring and a dull day on set would brighten up when she walked in," he gushes.

Adarsh did several workshops to nail his part in the film. Some days were pretty tough indeed as he had to prepare for a non-linear narration. But the bootcamp-like workshops came in handy when the cameras came on. "The most memorable day of shoot for me was when Raj and I were shooting the climax on one of the coldest nights in Delhi last year, in the rain, drenched from head to toe, covered in muck. But the cold weather and the incessant rain didn't matter because we knew we were part of something beautiful," he insists. The newcomer wants to work with directors who have their own distinct style. Ask him what sets him apart from the crowd, the newbie humbly describes himself as a curious guy who likes telling and listening to stories. He's in no rush to make it big, saying his brush with showbiz is both unexpected and random. He concludes by saying, "They say fame is like riding the Tiger. Now when I've hopped on it, I'll surely give it my best shot." ■

ZARINE MANCHANDA

Like millions of girls in India, Zarine Manchanda grew up in a village dreaming of being a Bollywood actress. And like so many such girls, she followed her heart and moved to Mumbai.

Once in Mumbai, Zarine experienced the same challenges that all young women who move to the City of Dreams with high hopes and aspirations face. Going to audition after audition but not securing the roles she wanted. Being offered roles in “bold”, B-grade movies that she had to decline due to her being from a prominent political family in Himachal Pradesh. And

even enduring unwanted “#MeToo” incidents.

Zarine explains: “Cracking Bollywood is not easy; it was a much tougher path than I expected.”

But Zarine’s story is different than most; she simply recharted a new pathway into the glamour industry. Zarine explains: “While I never gave up on my dreams, I realized I had other skills and talents that I needed to utilize because I knew I would be successful in other fields and other ventures.” So, she established a charity NGO, the Zarine Manchanda Foundation, which has administered hundreds of donation programs for



Mumbai’s poorest residents. Then she formed an interior design company, Zarine Manchanda Interiors, which designed her first commercial venture: an upscale and luxurious café in Versova, Zarine Manchanda Café. With these successful ventures established, Zarine created a different pathway into Bollywood – as CEO of her own production company.

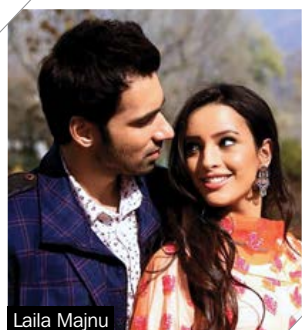
Zarine recently opened her film and entertainment production house that bears her name, www.zarinemanchandaproductions.com. Says Zarine: “Through my production shingle I will create my own content and will feature as an actress in projects that I produce. My Manager, Peter Ziebert, is an attorney and Hollywood

producer. We are co-producing a web series that will be directed by National-Award winning director Arunaraje Patil. The story is close to my heart as it blends the #MeToo movement into a supernatural thriller set in Aarey Colony, Mumbai where my Foundation is located. Aarey is the most beautiful spot in all of Mumbai – and it’s known as the most haunted place also, and so our story is a collision of real and imaginary worlds set in Aarey.” Zarine plays the lead role in the web series. Plus, Zarine and Peter Ziebert have joined forces to bring international crossover Hollywood projects to be filmed in India. So, expect to see more of Zarine Manchanda on the big screen – or on streaming platforms – soon. ■

Girl on fire

Bulbbul fame
TRIPTI DIMRI shares
her showbiz aspirations
with **VEDANSHI**
PATHAK

The most difficult phase in the life of an actor is the wait for the big break. Well, such was the case with *Bulbbul* actress Tripti Dimri as well. She began her journey in 2017 in the film *Poster Boys* along with Shreyas Talpade and Sunny Deol. She had a small role in the comedy which was all about being macho. She then waited a year to do her next project which was *Laila Majnu* directed by Imtiaz Ali's brother Sajid Ali. While the film and her role were much appreciated by the critics, *Laila Majnu* didn't perform well at the box office. She didn't let that daunt her and kept her hopes high. Fortune favoured her when she was approached by Anushka Sharma's banner Clean Slate films to play the title role in their next, a period horror titled *Bulbbul*. The film, which got released on an OTT platform, was massively liked by the audience and she sort of got an opportunity to start



Laila Majnu

“Anushka said we actors put pressure upon ourselves because we know there are 100 people looking at us, trying to achieve the shot. She said as an actress we should never take that pressure”



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“Rahul Bose came to me and said I’m going to go all out as an actor (for intimate scenes) but if you ever feel uncomfortable just tell me”

afresh on a clean slate with the film. Tripti is in awe of Anushka and praises the actor-producer sky high. The two outsiders bonded well together and Tripti cherishes the advice Anushka gave her about handling pressure on the sets. “Anushka said we actors put pressure upon ourselves because we know there are 100 people looking at us, trying to achieve the shot. She said as an actress we should never take that pressure because the director takes his time, the DOP takes his time, the entire crew takes their own time. So as an actor, if you are not ready just tell them that you are

not ready.”

Tripti worked with veteran Rahul Bose in the film and says she couldn’t have asked for a nicer co-star. She reveals she was initially terrified of the senior actor but he went out of his way to make her feel comfortable. They had a couple of intimate scenes in the film. It was something she hadn’t done before and hence was understandably nervous. Bose sat with her and broke down the scenes piece by piece for her and told her they’d stop whenever she felt uncomfortable. “He came to me and said I’m going to go all out as an actor but if you ever feel

uncomfortable just tell me. After every shot, he would come and sit next to me, tell me stories from his childhood just to make sure I was comfortable. There was so much to learn from him...He was there for me for everything,” she gushes.

Bulbbul had her transforming from a naïve girl into a rather fearless woman, who owns up to who she is and stands up for herself. The layered role was mentally exhausting and at times she found herself getting tired physically essaying it. It was rewarding as well as she gained insights about herself while playing the character “It was sometimes suffocating to play the part because she’s someone who is going through so much in her life. In the end, she becomes a person who is completely comfortable with who she is and

doesn’t care about what other people think -- that was special for me,” she reflects. Tripti counts on *Bulbbul* as a huge learning experience. She mentions there was something new for her to learn everyday both as an actor and as a human being. She’ll always cherish the memories of making the film.

Tripti believes an actor must wait it out for the right opportunity.

Contrary to the popular opinion floating in social media, the actor believes things are currently looking better for the outsiders and that there’s plenty of work for every one. Ask her about what she’s learned from her three years in showbiz and she remarks that hard work and talent can’t be topped. She adds that socialising is good to make oneself comfortable on the sets of a project. “Today, when I go out, I make sure to talk to every one out there, so that I can be comfortable with them if I ever get to shoot with them. I’m someone who can never text people for work because when you know that you know your work, you don’t have to indulge in socialising and I feel these things don’t work for everyone.”

The newcomer wishes to work with Anurag Basu, Sriram Raghavan, Shoojit Sircar, Sanjay Leela Bhansali and Imtiaz Ali in the future. She further adds that she has a keen interest in mythological characters and would love to play Sita or Draupadi one day.

Let’s hope the Universe is listening. ■



Sonam Kapoor Ahuja

F&B

fashion and beauty

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

“WHETHER IT IS A LINER, MASCARA OR YOUR EYEBROWS, IT IS ALL ABOUT GIVING WOMEN THE CONFIDENCE TO STAND IN FRONT OF A CAMERA AND BE HERSELF”

Namrata Soni shares her personal vision when it comes to hair and make-up treatments



Rakul Preet Singh



Deepika Padukone



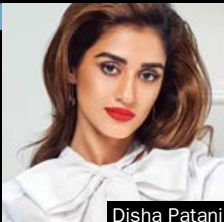
Namrata Soni



Athiya Shetty



Diana Penty



Disha Patani



Manushi Chhillar



Namrata Soni



Sonam Kapoor



Deepika Padukone



Shilpa Shetty

DIFFERENT STROKES

CELEBRITY MAKE-UP ARTIST AND HAIRSTYLIST **NAMRATA SONI** TALKS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF MAKE-UP IN A CANDID CHAT WITH **ANALITA SETH**

Make-up isn't limited to just brushing up on a few techniques and trends. It's an art that creates magic out of brush strokes to give one the confidence to be comfortable and expressive. One of the most sought after celebrity make-up artists and hairstylists, Namrata Soni feels make-up is an extension of oneself. You don't wear it to hide your flaws but to accentuate your natural beauty. Sharing her experience of working in the beauty industry for almost two decades, Namrata has some interesting tricks of the trade, up her sleeve. Catch her talking about the magic of the make-up box and how a well-placed stroke can literally make heads turn...

WHAT DOES MAKE-UP MEAN TO YOU?

Make-up is an extension of oneself. I don't leave my house without curling my eyelashes and putting on some mascara. There is no reason for it. I just like it when my eyes look big and beautiful. It gives me confidence.

IN A WORLD WHERE PEOPLE ARE CONSTANTLY TALKING ABOUT SELF WORTH AND BODY POSITIVITY, WHERE DO YOU THINK THE IDEA OF MAKE-UP STANDS TODAY?

Make-up plays an important role because it gives women a lot of confidence. Wearing make-up doesn't mean you

are artificial or trying to be someone else. It is worn to enhance your features. Whether it is a liner, mascara or your eyebrows, it is all about giving women the confidence to stand in front of a camera and be themselves.

HOW HAS THE LOCKDOWN CHANGED THE PROCESS ON FILM SETS?

Firstly, the number of hours of work are less. But the one thing I love about the process of work now is that everybody's time and life is precious. Earlier, make-up artists and hair stylists didn't matter. No one cared what time we came and left,

no one bothered about the environment we were working in. The vanity van used to be dirty and the production wouldn't care. There were only a few production houses who would actually look after us the entire time. But now, with COVID-19, it has become my right to ask for a clean van and my right to not go if it is not clean enough. I hope this lasts forever.

HOW DIFFERENT IS HAIR AND MAKE-UP FOR AN EDITORIAL SHOOT COMPARED TO THE RED CARPET AND PROMOTIONAL LOOKS?

Editorial and red carpet are different because of the light you are photographed in. On the red carpet, you are clicked in big spotlights, so the make-up needs to be flawless. If you're doing a Veronica Lake, a big Bollywood glamorous look or an old Hollywood look, you have to be completely immersed in that look. You have to be photographed correctly on the red carpet. Make-up has to match the lighting. I can't go with an editorial glass skin on the red carpet because it ends up looking oily in the wrong places.

ARE THERE PRODUCTS YOU AVOID WHEN DOING A LOOK FOR THE RED CARPET?

If you are someone who has massive pores on the skin, try and avoid putting highlighter on those areas because it will accentuate it under the flashes. If you have dry skin patches, your face needs to have a balance of products. You can't have too much highlighter or too little of it. You can't go with a lip stain on a red carpet because it will not photograph the way it's supposed to.

MAKE-UP IS CONSTANTLY EVOLVING WITH NEWER TRENDS LIKE WAVY



Diana Penty



Vaani Kapoor



Disha Patani

EYEBROWS AND CURLY EYELASHES. WHERE DO YOU SEE IT GOING FROM HERE?

Yes, make-up is indeed constantly evolving and it will continue to do so. One of the biggest trends right now is the special effects make-up where they can make your leg look like a banana or your face look like a shark. It's random but creative. It requires skill to achieve it. So the future of make-up is limitless. What people are realising is less is more and we do have people who love the natural look. On the other hand, there are ones who love to cake up. They want



Manushi Chhillar



Sonakshi Sinha

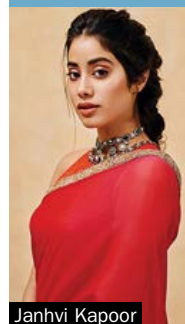
RAPID FIRE

Who is the most fun to work with?
SONAM KAPOOR.

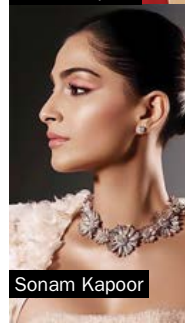
Who is the easiest to work with?
SONAM KAPOOR.

Who works a red lip the best?
SONAKSHI SINHA, SONAM KAPOOR, MANUSHI CHHILLAR AND ALAYA F.

Who works the nude lip the best?
ANUSHKA SHARMA AND JANHVI KAPOOR.



Janhvi Kapoor



Sonam Kapoor



One of the biggest trends right now is the special effects make-up where they can make your leg look like a banana or your face look like a shark. It's random but creative

everything covered. So the evolution will not hinder the balance between these. There's just going to be new techniques that will make application super easy.

MINIMAL OR EXTRAVAGANT TRENDS... WHAT'S YOUR PREFERENCE?

It depends on my mood. I love skin so for me doing the no make-up look is the absolute favourite. But when there is an outfit or a personality sitting in front of me who I know can carry off something extravagant, I get inspired to do something amazing.

WHAT ARE SOME MAKE-UP TRENDS YOU ARE OBSESSING OVER RIGHT NOW?

I love glass skin. I love doing an iridescent eyeshadow with beautifully curled eyelashes.

ONE TREND YOU DO NOT WANT TO TRY...

The contouring the Kardashians do. It's something I would never do.

ASIANS HAVE STARTED USING LATEX TO ENHANCE THEIR FEATURES. IS THAT A TREND IN INDIA YET?

You need to live in a climate where that is possible. In India, you can do it if you live up in the hills. In Mumbai and Delhi, you can't do latex because with it on, you just cannot sweat. If you do, it will come off your face in twenty minutes.



With Sonam Kapoor

When I went with Sonam to Cannes, I created some iconic looks with her. I think one of the most popular ones is the one from 2016. It had the exaggerated big liner with a berry lip and a nath (nose ring)

IT'S AN ASTONISHING TREND NEVERTHELESS. DON'T YOU THINK?

It's actually scary. When I see Korean, Chinese and Southeast Asian women doing their make-up, they stick their eyelashes to the skin to make their eyes open up and then wear lenses to make them look bigger. Imagine waking up next to your family members and they don't know what you look like if you're doing this every day.

SEVERAL ACTORS ARE STARTING THEIR OWN BUSINESSES WITH BEAUTY LINES. DO YOU THINK IT COMES FROM BEING EXPERTS OR IT JUST SHOWCASES THEIR PASSION FOR MAKE-UP?

I think it's their passion. There are some celebrities who love make-up. I think it comes from there. They do rely on experts to get the products right because they have so much on their plates already, it's not possible for them to know what goes in making those products. But they have enough knowledge about how a product should look on a face and what it should feel like when applied.



IF YOU HAD TO PICK ONE OF YOUR FAVOURITE LOOKS YOU'VE DONE ON SONAM KAPOOR, WHICH ONE WOULD IT BE?

I've done so much on her but when I went with her to Cannes, I created some iconic looks with her. I think one of the most popular ones is the one from 2016. It had the exaggerated big liner with a berry lip and a nath (nose ring). It was a very sought after look and represented India beautifully. So it's one of my all-time favourite looks.



Athiya Shetty



Saiyami Kher



Sameera Reddy



SOME HACKS AND TRICKS LEARNT ON THE JOB...

If your hair gets too oily and you don't have time to shampoo it, use a dry shampoo. If you don't own one, use a little bit of talcum powder on your scalp and then blast dry it with cold air.

If you're suffering from a frizzy hair day, take a little bit of hand cream and massage it in your hand. Then apply it in your hair by twirling it around your fingers. It really gets rid of the frizziness.

Learn to curl your eyelashes. It gives your face definition for the camera.

You can use pink or red lipstick as a blush.

You can use a good brown eye or Kajal pencil as an eyebrow filler.

FOR SOMEONE WHO WEARS MAKE-UP REGULARLY, SKINCARE IS A PRIORITY. WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE THEM AS AN EXPERT?

Double cleansing. You use micellar water or make-up remover on your face to thoroughly remove all the product. Then use a mild milk-based or cream-based cleanser to massage your face to remove the excess product from your face. The liquor removers don't do the job completely. So double cleansing is very important.

WHO ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVOURITE MAKE-UP ARTISTS?

Around the world, I love Pat McGrath, Lisa Eldridge and Kevin Aucoin. I love to follow them. In India, I love Clint Fernandes, Mickey Contractor, Anil Chinappa and Subash Vagal.

IF YOU WERE TO PICK SOMEONE TO WORK WITH FROM AROUND THE GLOBE, WHO WOULD YOU PICK?

Meryl Streep from the older generation and Lily Collins from the younger generation.

WHO WAS THE FIRST PERSON IN THE INDUSTRY YOU WORKED WITH?

I think my first break was with Sameera Reddy.



Lisa Hayden



Nora Fateh Ali

exclusives

what's on their mind?

WOMAN ON TOP!

I've always felt that sometimes women are more mature compared to guys their age. You need someone to be an anchor. A guy needs to be a man to be with me, he can't be a boy. A man who is matured, who's travelled the world and who's lived and made his life himself can handle me well

Taapsee Pannu talks about life, relationships and more...

PHOTOGRAPHS:
TEJINDER SINGH KHAMKHA
Jacket: Swapnil Shinde

POWER GIRL

JITESH PILLAI HAS A HEART-TO-HEART CHAT
WITH THE TALENTED TAAPSEE PANNU

PHOTOGRAPHS: TEJINDER SINGH KHAMKHA | MAKEUP: EVANIA PANNU
HAIR: AMITTHAKUR | STYLIST: AMANDEEP KAUR
LOCATION COURTESY: HYATT REGENCY MUMBAI
Waist coat, pants, shoes & studs: Dior

SHE'S

feisty, she's a spitfire and she calls a spade a spade. Scratch beneath the surface and there's a powerhouse inferno. She can be as soft as gossamer or as turbulent as a storm. You can see the eddies churning behind her face. Watch her as the edgy girl in *Manmarziyaan* or as a cool collected woman in *Thappad*, Taapsee is a woman with many stories. She will show them to you on screen. Be it *Mulk* or *Saand Ki Aankh*. Everytime you are done with a Taapsee performance, you feel you know her a little bit more. That's Tapsee's legacy. She will connect with you and allow you into the interiors of her mind and play with your memory. She will remind you of a lost love, she will remind you of a scar in your soul and she will also show you what it is to heal. On social media, she's nifty and her self deprecating humour makes the most corrosive people back off. And the roles that she will do, be it *Haseen Dilruba* and *Rashmi Rocket*... only attest to her talent and let you know that roles are being written with her in mind. She's had an impressive track record in Tamil and Telugu too, slaying the box office charts but she's found her true metier in the Hindi film firmament. An outstanding student and a sports woman all her life, she's now drawing the stares as an actor to reckon with. Which just adds up as the right time to ask Taaspee a few questions. And I ask:



Crop top & slit skirt: The Label Jenn
Earrings: Metallurgy by Adveita Mathur

I THINK THE CHEMISTRY WORKS BEST BECAUSE I'VE SWITCHED OFF THE BUTTON IN MY HEAD THAT HE IS THE AMITABH BACHCHAN. I TREAT HIM LIKE ANY OTHER YOUNG CO-STAR, BE IT VICKY KAUSHAL OR VARUN DHAWAN. I DON'T TREAT HIM LIKE A DEMI-GOD, HE DOESN'T TREAT ME LIKE SOMEONE WHO ISN'T FROM HIS GENERATION

YOUR RECENT HOLIDAY WAS ALL OVER SOCIAL MEDIA. TELL US ABOUT THAT.

This has been a tradition in my work life that after every film I take some time off. I plan my holiday according to the number of days I get off. So, this time when I finished my Tamil film in September, I decided that before I start work on *Haseen Dilruba* I will take a week off. My travel agent gave me two options - Dubai and Maldives. The Maldives, regardless of whether everything is open or not, is my favourite destination. It was just picture perfect everywhere. It was indeed like a surreal dream and I woke up after seven days.

TELL US ABOUT THIS BIKINI BODY YOU'VE MADE AND HOW HARD YOU'VE WORKED ON IT?

It's still a work in progress. I'm working towards getting the perfect sprinter's body for *Rashmi Rocket*. I want to have a perfectly-muscled body. Not big muscles but lean muscles. I'm giving it all to hit the mark. I'm almost midway through the process. My fans have not seen me in bikinis because I don't post such overtly glam photos on social media. Apart from *Judwaa 2*, I never had the chance to show off my body. People just never imagined me to be in a bikini.

A LOT OF WOMEN, CHILDREN GO THROUGH BODY ISSUES. YOU ARE TOLD TO HAVE THE PERFECT SKIN, THE PERFECT HAIR, THE PERFECT BODY. DID YOU FACE ANY SUCH ISSUE DURING YOUR GROWING UP YEARS?

I remember for the longest time in school I was

skinny. I was an extremely hyperactive kid. I used to run around in school and would later come back home and keep playing whatever sport we used to play around the house. I'd only come back home to eat and to sleep. That made me thin and always hungry. The eating habits continued even when I'd cut down on physical activity to study before

I WAS AN EXTREMELY HYPERACTIVE KID. I USED TO RUN AROUND IN SCHOOL EVERYWHERE AND WOULD LATER COME BACK HOME AND KEEP PLAYING WHATEVER SPORTS WE USED TO PLAY AROUND THE HOUSE. THAT MADE ME THIN AND ALWAYS HUNGRY



Oversized jacket: Swapnil Shinde

I DON'T THINK LONG DISTANCE IS A PROBLEM. IF YOU HAVE A LIFE WHERE YOU'RE CONSTANTLY HOPPING FROM ONE PLACE TO ANOTHER THEN WHAT'S THE POINT OF EVEN STAYING NEXT DOOR

added a lot to my personality and confidence.

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR EARLY DAYS THAT HAD AN IMPACT ON YOU?

I had a regular, boring childhood. I never faced extremely terrible times while growing up. Even if there were bad times, it was probably something that every middle-class family would face. You know those restrictions on how much you can do as a girl and how much you can spend as a middle-class family...It was in the eighth standard that I first set a target and achieved it. I wanted to become the head girl of the school. And to top that, I was declared the student of the year at my school. That made me realise that if I genuinely set my heart on something, I can achieve it. It's not that I achieved everything I aimed for. I wanted to crack my MBA with a 90-plus percentile, which did not happen.

HOW DID YOU LAND UP IN FILMS?

I'm glad that this will break the notion that actors are either backbenchers or dropouts. I loved going to school.



Ruffled jumpsuit: Antithesis
Earrings: Saba Designs

exams and hence I used to put on weight. I was never obese, but I did become slightly overweight towards the end of my school and college. When I entered the Hindi film industry, many people asked me, 'Did David Dhawan tell you to reduce weight?' Even for *Judwaa 2*, they asked me did you lose weight? I said nobody has asked me to reduce weight ever. Be

it in Hindi, South, for ads...nobody has pushed me to become skinny or anorexic. I've been fortunate that way.

YOU MENTIONED THAT YOU WERE NATURALLY INCLINED TOWARDS SPORTS.

I used to play basketball for my school, which I was forced into because of my height. Otherwise, I'm not into the kind of games where you have a

lot of physical contact because then it gets ugly. I love playing racket sports. I played badminton in school. I used to participate in 100m, 200m, 400m and relay races. That gave me whatever competitive spirit and sportsmanship I have as a person today. It also made me a team player. I became good at handling a team and at being part of a team. It really changed me as a person and

I used to be one of the frontbenchers and genuinely liked studying. I might not have the best attendance in the last few years because I started participating in a lot of extra-curricular activities like dancing and public speaking. But, when I was in my class, I was there. That thing of giving your 100 per cent wherever you are, I learnt from there.

WHICH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE WERE YOU IN?

I was in Mata Jai Kaur Public School in Ashok Vihar in Delhi. Then I was in Indira Gandhi Delhi Technical University for Women, Kashmiri Gate during my engineering days. I had this one year to myself after the MBA “failure”. In my head I was a failure because I didn’t cross the 90 percentile. I got 88. I thought okay I’ll take the exams again next year and score 90. Taking up a job wasn’t an option because once you join a proper job, then you don’t get back to studying. I thought let me just try these acting offers which I was getting thanks to a modelling stint that I had done during college. I ended up signing two films. I googled all the names from the offers I got. And I chose the ones I felt were most credible.

WHICH WERE THE TWO FILMS?

Aadukalam in Tamil and in Telugu it was *Jhummandi Naadam*. Raghavendra Rao launched me in Telugu and Vetrimaran in Tamil. I started getting good offers. I signed a film with Prabhas. I signed two

MY FANS HAVE NOT SEEN ME IN BIKINIS BECAUSE I DON'T POST SUCH OVERTLY GLAM PHOTOS ON SOCIAL MEDIA. APART FROM JUDWAA 2, I NEVER HAD THE CHANCE TO SHOW MY BODY OFF. PEOPLE, IN THEIR HEAD, JUST NEVER IMAGINED ME TO BE IN A BIKINI


films in Telugu and one film in Tamil even before my first film was released. The year passed, the films released and they turned out to be big hits. Then, there was no turning back.

YOU SAID YOU DIDN'T GET 90 PERCENTILE, EVEN THOUGH YOU SCORED 88. ARE YOU GENERALLY HARD ON YOURSELF?

With a few things I am. Like now, I know I have this one chance of getting



Oversized jacket: Swapnil Shinde



Ruffled gown: Gauri & Nainika
Bracelet: Her Story

WHO DOESN'T WANT TO ROMANCE SHAH RUKH KHAN? HE WAS MY PRODUCER FOR BADLA. HE'S THE MOST CHARMING MAN I'VE EVER COME ACROSS. EVEN THOUGH I HAD VERY LIMITED INTERACTIONS WITH HIM ON VERY LIMITED OCCASIONS BUT SOME PEOPLE JUST HAVE THAT CHARISMA AND CHARM. HE HAS THAT

the best body possible, I'm really hard on myself right now. But when I don't want something, no matter how tempting, I will not care.

WHAT IS YOUR TAKE ON ROMANCE? WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST ROMANCE LIKE?

It happened when I was in the ninth standard. However, this guy broke off as he wanted to concentrate on his tenth. There were no mobile phones back then. I called him from a PCO and cried my heart out.

I was devastated. Maybe because it was my first relationship and first relationships are always special. But after that, I was like I can't let this affect me so much. Now I make sure the ending is mutual and amicable. Even if I'm calling it off, it's a logical calling off. I might have had many relationships back to back but they were all committed relationships.

WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON A LIVE-IN RELATIONSHIP? DO YOU FEEL IT'S A FOOLPROOF

WAY OF KNOWING IF IT'LL WORK OUT?

I don't think it's a foolproof way. I don't think anything is. I've seen people who've lived in or have dated for a long time, but are still not 100 per cent sure that they'll remain in a relationship. Live-in relationships work when you know the person from morning to night. Some people who like adventures in life, jump into it without a clue. They have this, let's-just-get-into-it- and- we'll-sail-through-the-

times philosophy. There's nothing wrong with any of it. I reckon with so much adventure happening in my professional life, I'd want to keep it safe in my personal life.

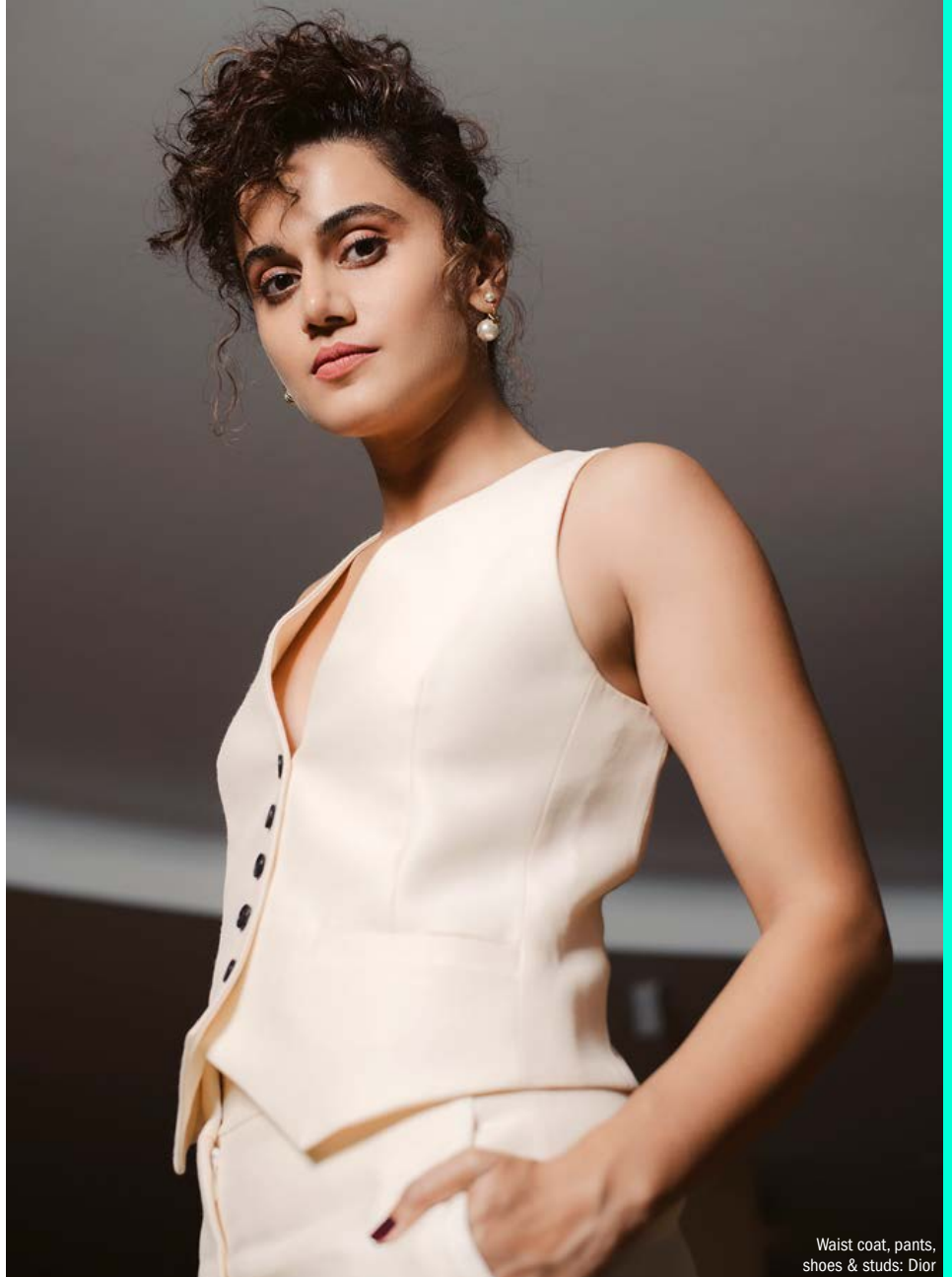
DO FIRANG BOYFRIENDS MAKE FOR BETTER LOVERS? ARE THEY MORE EVOLVED THAN INDIAN MEN?

Obviously, they are culturally different. Things like being answerable to and expectations are different... it's not the same when you're with an Indian guy. And another

thing that matters, in my case particularly, is the age. The age difference also decides how mature the other person is. I feel that women are more mature compared to guys their age. You need someone to be an anchor. A guy needs to be a man to be with me, he can't be a boy. A man who is matured, who's travelled the world and who's lived and made his life himself can handle me well.

YOU ARE PRETTY OPEN ABOUT YOUR RELATIONSHIP, WHICH IS HEALTHY...

I've never been in denial. But, I've not gone out and talked about him (Mathias Boe). Because I've noticed that whenever I've spoken about him the headlines become more about him than me and that overrides my professional life. I've been pretty much open. The families know about it as well. I met him during one of the badminton matches. I was a spectator, he was a player there. We ended up chatting on Twitter a little bit and then we met each other. Since then, it's



Waist coat, pants, shoes & studs: Dior

I HAD THESE BIG ARTICLES WRITTEN ABOUT ME SAYING HOW I'M A BAD LUCK CHARM. I JUST KEPT THINKING THAT THIS IS NOT THE END OF MY LIFE. I'M AN ENGINEER, AND I CAN STILL DO MY MBA. HOPE GETS KILLED NOT JUST BY YOUR OWN SADNESS, BUT ALSO BY THE HATE YOU ARE SURROUNDED BY AND GIVE IN TO

been stable, nice, happy, calm. No baggage, no burden relationship.

DO LONG-DISTANCE RELATIONSHIPS COME WITH THEIR OWN SET OF PROBLEMS?

I don't think long distance is a problem. If you have a life where you're constantly hopping from one place to another then what's the point of even staying next door. If I work normally throughout the year, I'm probably at home for 60 days in total.

WHAT ARE THE DO'S AND DON'TS IN A RELATIONSHIP?

Infidelity is something that I've been very honest about. That doesn't work. If you're feeling the urge to go somewhere else that means something is not perfect here and you're more than happy to walk off. But don't be dishonest. You shouldn't be scared of telling the other person something just because you fear you'll lose them. A lot of people ask me that you're

in a profession where there are a lot of good-looking men around, don't you feel the need or the temptation to give in?

ARE THERE GOOD-LOOKING GUYS AROUND?

Well, let's just say good looks are a subjective thing so we can always debate on that. But, you should always realise what is at stake. Is that worth losing for this? I always weigh the stakes and so far, I've never had an experience where I found it was worth it.

IT'S BEEN ALMOST A DECADE FOR YOU IN THE MOVIES. HOW HAVE YOU COPED WITH THE SEXISM, MISOGYNY AND ALL OF THAT?

I faced some really weird things in the beginning like she isn't pretty enough. I've been replaced because the hero's wife didn't want me to be part of the film. I was dubbing for one of my films and I was told that the hero didn't like my dialogue so I should change it. When I refused to change it, they got a dubbing artiste to do it behind my back. There was a time when I was told the hero's previous film didn't work, so you slash your price because we need to control the budget. There was some hero who wanted my introduction scene changed because he felt it would overpower his introduction scene. These are the things that have happened in front of me, I don't know what's happened behind my back. I decided that from now on, I will only take up films that will make me genuinely happy to go to work. People advised

me against it because there might be a point of no return. Whenever a girl has tried to do women-driven films there's a tag that's attached to her and male stars are then hesitant to take her as their leading lady. It might be a little harder, longer journey but it's going to be one that I'm going to enjoy each day. It has worked out till now.

I'VE SEEN PEOPLE WHO'VE LIVED IN OR HAVE DATED FOR A LONG TIME, BUT ARE STILL NOT 100 PER CENT SURE THAT THEY'LL REMAIN IN A RELATIONSHIP. LIVE-IN RELATIONSHIPS WORK WHEN YOU KNOW THE PERSON FROM MORNING TO NIGHT

Crop top & slit skirt:
The Label Jenn
Earrings: Metallurgy
by Adveita Mathur



YOU'VE BEEN ACTIVE ON SOCIAL MEDIA IN TERMS OF SAYING SOMETHING YOU REALLY BELIEVE IN. SOMETIMES, DO YOU FEEL IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER IF THERE WERE NO SOCIAL MEDIA?

I like to see the brighter side of things. But, obviously, there are moments where I'm frustrated and irritated thinking why the hell do we have to be here? But because of a few bad things that come on social media, I'm not going to give up on the good.

EVERY ONE OF US IS DEPRESSED OR LOW AT SOME POINT. HAVE YOU EVER GONE THROUGH SOMETHING WHERE YOU HAD TO SEEK THERAPY OR MEET A COUNSELLOR?

I had these articles written about me saying how I'm a bad luck charm. I just kept thinking that this is not the end of my life. So what if this didn't work? I'm an engineer, and I can still do my MBA. The problem is that hope gets killed not just by your own sadness, but also by the hate you are surrounded by and give in to. Social media has generated so much hate, I call it illusional hate. Illusional because it is virtual. When I had gone to the Maldives, it was after six-seven months of sitting at home, where your only medium of talking to people was social media and you saw so much hate day in day out that you started believing there's so much hatred everywhere. But I almost teared up with the kind of love those people showered over me in Maldives, It made me realise the difference between virtual and real.

I LOVED GOING TO SCHOOL. I MIGHT NOT HAVE THE BEST ATTENDANCE IN THE LAST FEW YEARS BECAUSE I STARTED PARTICIPATING IN A LOT OF EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES LIKE DANCING AND PUBLIC SPEAKING. BUT, WHEN I WAS IN MY CLASS, I WAS THERE

HOW DOES THIS SEVEN MONTH FORCED SABBATICAL FEEL TO YOU? DO YOU FEEL THIS IS LIKE A SECOND COMING FOR ALL OF US?

I hope it is. I don't know the elasticity of the human mind if it'll instantly snap back to how it was or it'll learn and change from whatever it has experienced. I just know that nothing lasts forever and no plan is foolproof. It already feels like it was a weird dream



Ruffled jumpsuit: Antithesis
Earrings: Saba Designs



Ruffled gown: Gauri & Nainika
Bracelet: Her Story

SPORTS GAVE ME WHATEVER COMPETITIVE SPIRIT AND SPORTSMANSHIP I HAVE AS A PERSON TODAY. I BECAME GOOD AT HANDLING A TEAM AND AT BEING PART OF A TEAM. IT REALLY CHANGED ME AS A PERSON AND ADDED A LOT TO MY PERSONALITY AND CONFIDENCE

or sleep paralysis that I was in for those five-six months. I want to move beyond it. I still have the notes of my recipes. I still have the YouTube links of those recipes which keep reminding me that it happened for real, where I was standing in the kitchen for like 5-6 hours everyday cooking all the three meals.

WHEN YOU WENT ON THE SETS FOR THE FIRST TIME AFTER THE PANDEMIC, WERE YOU

WORRIED THAT YOU MIGHT CONTRACT THE ILLNESS?

I was worried if I could still act. You know because it's like a muscle. You don't exercise the muscle, it rusts. I chose a Tamil film to get back with. I didn't speak Tamil for like the longest time ever. So, I was worried. But then it went fine. That was the only worry, not the illness.

WHAT ARE YOUR BIGGEST POINTERS THAT MAKE YOU SAY YES TO A FILM?

Will I spend my hard-earned money and time in the theatre watching this film purely as an audience? Will I have a nice time on the set? Will I learn something new? Will I have fun with the character? With the people, I'm working with in the film? Will I be proud to show this film to my kids? All the films I've done in Hindi at least in the last three years fit into this criteria.

TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR UPCOMING FILMS - *RASHMI ROCKET* AND *HASEEN DILRUBA*.

Haseen Dilruba is a romantic thriller, Kanika Dhillon, who wrote *Manmarziyaan*, has written it, so you can expect a lot of crazy characters.

Rashmi Rocket is a film that is inspired by several true events which have happened in sports. I'm playing a sprinter so most of it is inspired from a sprinter's life. Someone wanted me to do this film in Tamil. I read the script and felt this is a story that should be told to the whole country. That's when I got a producer on board to pick up the script and then got it written as a pan-Indian film. Apart from that, I'm



INFIDELITY IS SOMETHING THAT I'VE BEEN VERY HONEST ABOUT. THAT DOESN'T WORK. IF YOU'RE FEELING THE URGE TO GO SOMEWHERE ELSE THAT MEANS SOMETHING IS NOT PERFECT HERE AND YOU'RE MORE THAN HAPPY TO WALK OFF

Thappad, I had so many women who were around but none of this ever happened.

TAKE A MANMARZIYAAN AND THAPPAD. THERE IS A BIG CHANGE IN YOUR BODY LANGUAGE. HOW DO YOU ACHIEVE THAT KIND OF METAMORPHOSIS?

Manmarziyaan required instability in the head, mind and body language. *Thappad* required an extremely stable mind and body to pull off the role. Obviously, it's the actor's job to deliver both the extremes. I've led a normal life in a regular household where I've seen these kinds of characters around in person. My upbringing has made it really easy for me to play these real characters.

THERE IS TALK THAT YOU'RE DOING A FILM WITH SHAH RUKH KHAN AND RAJKUMAR HIRANI DIRECTING IT.

The day I sign the film, I will be on my roof shouting and screaming. Who doesn't want to romance Shah Rukh Khan? He was my producer for *Badla*. He's the most charming man I've ever come across. Even though I had very

doing the Hollywood film *Run Lola Run*'s adaptation in Hindi which is called *Loop Lapeta*. It's a quirky modern-age thriller comedy.

WHEN YOU DID A TWO-HEROINE FILM, THERE WAS TALK YOU'D BE CLAWING EACH OTHER'S EYES OUT...

I have not seen anyone clawing at the other nor I have done it myself. In *Saand Ki Aankh*, it was a totally opposite

scenario especially for me. I remember writing a long mushy message to her (Bhumi Pednekar). Telling her that we both know what we're trying to attempt here is crazy. And from the looks of it not many would have had the courage to get into it because we knew how many people said no to our roles before we got into it. The kind of chemistry we had was not only visible on

the screen, but people also spoke about it to us off-screen as well. They had never seen two actresses promoting their film like we did. We both gave it all we had. All those things of fighting with each other, I don't know from where it started and what really gave them air. My personal experience of working with actress be it Bhumi or even Jacqueline Fernandez in *Judwaa 2* or even in

Waist coat, pants, shoes & studs: Dior

limited interactions with him on very limited occasions... but some people have that charm... he has that. I think if I get the chance to share the screen with him, I'll just be looking at him and admiring him in between shots... And Rajkumar Hirani... I will be shouting from my terrace the day I sign it. But until something is confirmed, I'm not going to talk about it.

**WHAT ABOUT MR BACHCHAN?
ARE YOU DOING A THIRD FILM
WITH HIM?**

I feel blessed that I've got the chance to work with him twice. When you think about an Amitabh Bachchan film early in your career, you think it'll be an Amitabh Bachchan film. To get some pretty substantial parts to play opposite or next to him is a big deal. I think the chemistry works best because I've switched off the button in my head that he is the Amitabh Bachchan. I treat him like any other young co-star, be it Vicky Kaushal or Varun Dhawan. I don't treat him like a demi-god, he doesn't



Ruffled jumpsuit: Antithesis
Earrings: Saba Designs

BEFORE PINK, I ALWAYS USED TO SAY I WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO CRY ON CAMERA. WHEN I STARTED WORKING FOR PINK, I DIDN'T USE GLYCERINE AT ALL. I JUST BRAINWASHED MYSELF INTO THINKING THAT THAT INCIDENT HAS HAPPENED TO ME

treat me like someone who isn't from his generation. We end up having a good conversation sitting next to each other. That really brings out the best in both of us. The most important thing I learnt was you're never too old to learn.

He just keeps evolving every year. His dedication towards trying to explore new kinds of stories and genres, at this age, when he could just relax is something that most of us in today's generation can learn from.

HAVE YOU HAD ANY OUT OF BODY EXPERIENCE WHILE ACTING? HAS IT CHANGED YOU SOMEWHERE?

I discovered a new side of me when I was doing *Pink*. Before *Pink*, I always used to say I will never be able to cry on camera. When I started working for *Pink*,

I didn't use glycerine at all. I just brainwashed myself into thinking that that incident has happened to me. Then, every scene came naturally. All that choking up was natural. I've been trying to push the envelope ever since. ■

SHOOTING ⚡ STRAIGHT

MANOJ BAJPAYEE GIVES SOME DIRECT ANSWERS

TO RAGHUVENDRA SINGH'S QUERIES



MANOJ BAJPAYEE is an unconventional star. He still retains the earthy fragrance of Bihar despite having spent half his life in Mumbai. He yearns to spend time in his native village, away from the madding city. Though he's candid enough to admit that even there, everyone is constantly on their phones these days. And ugly mobile towers have cropped up everywhere, killing the serenity of a village landscape. On the professional front, the actor was hugely appreciated for playing a counter-terrorism expert in *The Family Man*. His character leads a double life — a loving husband and a caring father while at home and an expert field officer trained to execute baddies, outside. He also released his first Bhojpuri rap single, *Bambai mein ka ba*, recently over the internet. The song talks about the hardships faced by the migrant workers and has become quite a rage. Another thing which hasn't changed with Manoj is his ability to call a spade a spade. Excerpts from a honest and candid interview...

How did the idea of doing a Bhojpuri rap take place?

The idea came from Anubhav Sinha. We were just talking about Bhojpuri songs and he sent me a poem written by Dr Sagar. I loved it and he asked me to sing it. Though I was a little hesitant at first, I agreed to give it a try. We did a rehearsal and the next day we recorded it. It gave me a lot of satisfaction to do something in Bhojpuri for the first time. We're both overwhelmed by the response.

Do you have any plans of doing a film with Anubhav Sinha?

Anubhav and I go back a long way. We've known each other since our theatre days when he left his engineering job and joined me for a play for Mandi House in Delhi. After that, he left for Mumbai to assist Pankaj Parashar. He



With Anubhav Sinha

then sent me a ticket for Mumbai because he was casting for a series with Parashar. That was the second time I sat in a plane. I was selected for that series but unfortunately, things didn't materialize. After that I never left Mumbai.

How did you shoot the rap song during the lockdown?

We shot for seven hours. Everyone was wearing masks and using sanitizers on the set. I was the only one without a mask since I was in front of the camera. Sometimes Anubhav would take off his mask because he had to instruct me. All

Rapping away



AFTER 26 YEARS, IF I'M BEING CAST IN BIG BANNER FILMS AND IF I'M ABLE TO DO JUSTICE TO MY ROLES, THEN WHY SHOULD MY SALARY NOT INCREASE? I WANT TO KNOW WHY OTHER ACTORS ARE NOT ASKED SUCH KINDS OF QUESTIONS

precautions were otherwise in place. If I saw anyone getting irritated by the mask and taking it off, I'd refuse to go in front of the camera until the mask was back on. All in all, everyone was concerned about one another

and that took care of everything.

We heard of so many heart-wrenching stories during the pandemic. People suffered a lot but Good Samaritans too came forward to help...

This has been a difficult time for the country, society and especially for the daily-wage workers. Many people have come forward and helped. Some needed a little prodding and others just kept at it from day one. I've nothing but praise for even the smallest amount of help given. We've got a long way to go still as this isn't going

stopping you from joining politics?

Stopping me from joining politics? Nothing. It has never occurred to me to get into politics. I have left everything, sacrificed everything to become an actor. Why should I leave it for anything? I will never leave it. I don't think I'm good at anything else.

What's your take on the happenings in Bollywood? Do you feel the industry is being targeted for political purposes?

What's happening to the Hindi film industry is unfortunate. It's being targeted by various sources because it's a soft target. The manner in which the media has gone on attacking the industry is condemnable. Alleging that the entire film industry is into drugs, that has hurt me personally. This

to go away quickly. We need to hold hands and take care of one another and be ready for a long fight ahead.

Recently, you said that it's been twenty years since you've been getting invitations from political parties. What's

industry belongs to us too, people like me who have left their villages, their parents to make a name for themselves here. If a few people have gotten into drugs, it doesn't mean that everyone is an addict. I'll never participate in



AFTER SATYA, I INCURRED CONTINUOUS DIRECT OR INDIRECT ATTACKS ON MYSELF. BLIND ITEMS WERE A THING BACK THEN AS WELL. I HAVE FACED POLITICS ON MANY LEVELS WHICH I'VE EITHER IGNORED OR CONQUERED

conversations where you start attacking individuals without any proof or if you start painting the entire industry with the same brush. Hence, I've stayed away from such debates. The film industry has done so much for the country and is the true representative of India abroad and yet some people want to tarnish its reputation and bring it down.

Do you think it's a ploy to divert attention from the pandemic and the failing economy?

It's important to talk about things which matter to crores of people. And I'm sure there are other matters of concern



The Family Man



Bhonsle

bigger than what's going on in the industry.

You are one of the few actors who ask for a script in Hindi. What are the side effects of being a Hindi speaker in showbiz?

I have studied in Hindi medium. I like to express myself in it, I am proud of it. I work in the Hindi film industry. Shouldn't I count on my knowledge of Hindi

as my strength? I think everyone should learn a little bit of Hindi. This will make them navigate their work in a better way. But I do not blame them because if they have been raised in an English-speaking environment then they'll find reading and speaking Hindi a bit difficult. I don't want to engage in a language war here. To each his own. I'm proud of my

prowess over Hindi but I'm not alone in this. Actors like Ashutosh (Rana), Nawaz (Nawazuddin Siddiqui) and Pankaj (Tripathi), for example, are also well versed in both written and spoken Hindi.

Is there a scope for change in Hindi cinema? Also how can the Hindi belt contribute towards it? (Laughs) The Hindi film industry is

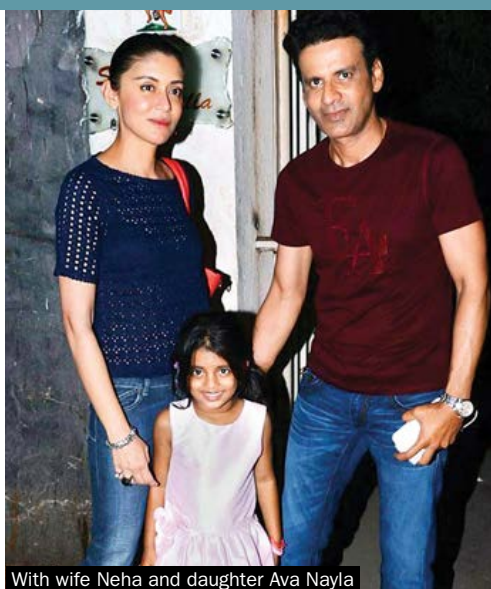
screaming out loud that it wants to become more professional and transparent. I'm for equal opportunities for all in terms of merit. The small-budget films too should get a good release. Every artiste, every filmmaker should be treated with respect. That'll be a true change alright. As far as the Hindi belt is concerned, the contribution of



the people belonging to that belt is invaluable. I'm sure newcomers from that belt will continue to make the industry a better place.

Which myth about the film industry did you believe in, when you started out?

I thought it was one big, happy family. But it's broken into groups. Sometimes, your relatives get envious of your success. That's what you see in your own families as well so it didn't shock me much. Might be right and that's true here as well. But one mustn't think



With wife Neha and daughter Ava Nayla

I NEVER BOWED DOWN TO POWER AND ALWAYS WORKED ON MY TERMS AND CONDITIONS. I THINK IT WAS SELF-ESTEEM AT PLAY BUT IF SOMEONE BRANDS IT AS EGO, THEN SO BE IT

of such things and concentrate on doing good work. Hard work, talent and luck can take you places.

If you were to give your younger self some advice, what would it be?

I give myself advice when I find out that I've made an avoidable mistake. After *Satya*, I incurred continuous direct or indirect attacks on myself. Blind items were a thing back then as well. I faced politics on many levels which I either ignored or conquered. I've always been a fighter and hence I sustained. Someone else would have been broken by now. I'm proud of my 'attitude' as having an attitude helps in this industry. And I'm grateful for the support of my audience who always stood by me through everything.

How true is the fact that in the early days of your career, you gave less importance to money. But now you don't compromise on your fees?

In the earlier times, I didn't see money as my motive since I was busy establishing myself. The kind of films I did simply didn't have mega budgets. And no one was casting me in big-banner films.

To be fair, back then I didn't even know how to act in such big-budget films. I thought I'd rather stick to the directors, to the cinema I'm comfortable with. Now after 26 years, if I'm being cast in big-banner films and if I'm able to do justice to my roles, then why should my salary not increase? I want to know why other actors are not asked such kinds of questions. If budgets have increased, the salaries of other stars have increased, then you can't expect me to work on the same money as I did when I started out. And I still look at a film's overall budget and then tell them about my remuneration. I've never been unfair to my producers.

Ego is said to be our biggest enemy. Did you ever see yourself falling prey to your ego?

It is not known when self-esteem changes into ego in this battle. There is a thin line between self-respect and ego. I'd like to believe I took care of that in time. Look, there was no one else to guide me and I did what I thought best. I never bowed down to power and always worked on my terms and conditions. I think it was self-esteem at play but if someone brands it as ego, then so be it. ■

They'll always have Paris

*IN A HEART-TO-HEART TALK WITH
VEDANSHI PATHAK, SANJANA SANGHI
SHARES HER MEMORIES OF THE LATE
SUSHANT SINGH RAJPUT*



The untimely demise of actor Sushant Singh Rajput left behind a stinging silence for days. What then erupted was a social media movement to seek justice for him and let truth triumph. Amidst the chaos, his last film *Dil Bechara* was released online. Breaking several records with its digital release, the film was received with a never-seen-before adulation. The film, an adaptation of the Hollywood hit *The Fault In Our Stars*, co-starred Sanjana Sanghi alongside Sushant. The young lass became an overnight sensation because of it.



set. So much that he used to send his spot boy over to her van to spy on her. If he felt that she was preparing for the scene more than him, he used to send over some exotic coffee or some book with a note that she should relax and take it easy for a while. She used to lock herself up initially so as to not get distracted but later took his pranks in her stride. She points out that your co-stars are your emotional support on the sets and with time become just like family. You learn to live with their quirks and appreciate them for the people they are. She remembers watching the galaxies with Sushant through his telescope in the night. The telescope used to be parked up on the terrace of their hotel and whenever they didn't



Dil Bechara

“I’m not interested in the galaxies as much as he (Sushant) was, he used to watch the stars twinkling and I remember his eyes twinkling and that’s what used to excite me”

While she does feel elated with the success, Sanjana has yet to come to terms with Sushant’s death. She tries to process it in words but fails. Her eyes mist over, her lips tremble as she reflects, “I’m trying to gain the strength to talk about him in the past tense. Somehow I’m not strong enough to go back to that dreadful Sunday, like I call it, because that’s what it was. My phone started blasting at like 100 calls a minute. It was one of the worst afternoons of my life,” she shudders,

reliving the tragic moments all over again.

At 23, she hasn’t yet faced the death of close ones. She doesn’t know what it feels like to lose someone permanently. Sushant is the first friend she has lost. Understandably, it feels like the end of the world to her right now. She hopes that God will one day balance it all out. Sushant was senior to her in the industry. But according to her, he never made her feel like a rookie on the sets. “He had way

too much humility in his own craft and way too much respect for other people’s craft to ever make it seem like hey, you are this novice and you don’t know your thing, instead it was that I am seeing you work so hard and I am so proud of you, I’m going to do everything I can to make your scene better,” she recalls.

She has lots of fun memories associated with the shoot of *Dil Bechara*. She mentions how both she and Sushant were super competitive on the

have night shoots, they’d go up to look at the stars. “I’m not interested in the galaxies as much as he was, but he used to watch the stars twinkling and I remember his eyes twinkling and that’s what used to excite me. I really cared about what he cared about...”

She asserts that they never had a difference of opinion on the sets. According to her, Sushant was an accommodating actor open to suggestions from everyone. She describes him as someone



she thought he was pulling her leg. She was bowled over by Rahman's dedication. He kept on polishing things over, adding little nuances, enriching the score with every addition he made. "He would make the background score, but he would be like I need two more months because I want to add to it. We were just the luckiest people in the world." She also finds parallels in her own life and the film's tracks. She explains that art is subjective and changes with context. Emotions gush out of her like a waterfall created by sudden showers. "The line '*maza hai ya saza hai ye*' today has a whole different meaning as opposed to when we were shooting the film. I want to ask lyricist Amitabh Bhattacharya about whether he has realised how the words he has written reflect the sheer



With Sushant and Mukesh Chhabra

who'd go so far deep into a character that he'd forget everything else. At the same time, there were times he'd end up doing something that wasn't required for the scene. And if Sanjana caught it, she'd tell him so because he didn't have an ego about it. "If I felt that in a scene he'd gone away

from Manny and become someone else, we'd reached a place where I didn't have to think twice before saying, 'Sushant I think you should tone it down' and he could tell me the same. We'd reached that place and once you reach that then regrets aren't a thing. You know that whatever

you're saying is in each other's best interest," she muses.

Being a newcomer, she was super excited to learn that AR Rahman was giving the music of her debut film. When director Mukesh Chhabra first told her about it,

"I'm trying to gain the strength to talk about Sushant in the past tense. Somehow I'm not strong enough to go back to that dreadful Sunday"

gutting irony of our lives today. I am dying to meet Mukesh sir and share these emotions with him. It's too weird and surreal," she adds, pouring out her wonder, her grief.

Actors are a strange lot. They get to experience weird things while on the sets. Sometimes, they're known to get sick while enacting a scene and it happened with her and Sushant as well. They would feel physically unwell before difficult scenes. She recalls how when they were shooting amidst biting cold in a cemetery in Paris, her nose started bleeding in the middle of an emotional scene. "Sushant, who was giving me my cues, noticed it and called for a cut. He gave me his handkerchief to wipe off the blood.

"I wanted to tell Sushant about how he helped me, how he has done well in the film, how I think it's his best work till now... I wish I hadn't waited for the release..."

I was so engrossed in the scene that I didn't even notice. He was so worried he made me lie down and called for an ice-pack. Odd things kept happening throughout the shooting but we held each other's hand throughout it all." Her eyes become moist again as she relives

those moments.

Sanjana has the habit of jotting down her memories in a diary. She felt awful when they couldn't release the film on May 8 as planned because of the pandemic. She took to penning her thoughts to come to terms with it. She wanted to say

so many things to Sushant but decided to save them for after the release. And sadly, he passed away before that could happen. But her interviews are giving her a chance to share what she felt about Sushant, and about his character, Manny. They provide her

with some sort of closure because through them, she feels she's telling him what she felt about him. "I wanted to tell him about how he helped me, how he has done well in the film, how I think it's his best work till now... I wish I hadn't waited for the release..." ■



TWILIGHT ZONE

VETERAN **SWATILEKHA SENGUPTA**
WILL SOON BE SEEN IN **BELA**
SHURU. RAGHUVENDRA SINGH
CHATS WITH THE TIMELESS ACTOR



Satyajit Ray aficionados would remember Swatilekha Sengupta as the comely wife caught in a love triangle between her rich husband (Victor Banerjee) and his freedom-fighter friend Soumitra Chatterjee in *Ghare Baire* (1985). The film showed her caught in a whirlwind of emotions as she had to choose between her sedate husband and the charismatic admirer. It was a sensitive performance and won her admiration on the festival circuit. Her lip-lock with Soumitra in the film did ruffle a few feathers. Negative reviews of her performance at home affected her strongly and she didn't sign a film for close to 30 years after that. She was recently seen in *Bela Seshe* (2015, The End) directed by Nandita Roy and Shiboprosad Mukherjee. In this she was reunited with Soumitra. The 70-year-old actor, who is known more for her plays than films, suffered a heart attack some time ago. The actress is better now. And she's excited about her upcoming movie *Bela Shuru* (The Beginning). Starring her and Soumitra Chatterjee once again, the film is a sort of spiritual successor to the team's earlier film. Excerpts from an interview with Swatilekha – a Sangeet Natak Akademi Award winner, who has lost none of her pizzazz to the passage of time.



With Soumitra Chatterjee in *Bela Seshe*

A GIRL FROM ALLAHABAD WOULD'VE TRAVELLED TO MUMBAI AND NOT KOLKATA TO BE AN ACTRESS. WHAT MADE YOU DO THE CONTRARY?

I came here in 1975-76 after completing my MA from Allahabad University. I was always interested in theatre. Eventually, I joined the Nandikar group (she worked under the direction of Rudraprasad Sengupta, one of the founders, whom she later married). Sombhu Mitra was an icon of the theatre world at that time. I did German dramatist Bertolt Brecht's *Galileo* with him. I hardly had any

role in the play. But Satyajit Ray watched it and he wanted me to play Bimala in *Ghare Baire* (1985).

DO YOU REMEMBER YOUR FIRST MEETING WITH SATYAJIT RAY?

I didn't want to take my final exams in school. So I'd written a letter to Ray saying, "Please take me in your film, I don't want to do this exam." But I didn't get any reply. Years later, I got a call from actor Rabi Ghosh saying Satyajit Ray wants to meet you. I didn't believe him. But eventually I agreed. There was a *bandh* the

“SATYAJIT RAY WAS TAGORE, PICASSO, BEETHOVEN, ALL ROLLED INTO ONE. HE WAS A FINE ARTIST TOO. HE USED TO PAINT ALL HIS SCENES BEFORE SHOOTING THEM. HE USED TO EVEN PAINT THE SAREES OF HIS FEMALE CHARACTERS”

day I was to meet Ray. I walked 14 kilometres to reach his place. When he opened the door, he looked like he'd seen a ghost. He said, "How could you come today? Everything is closed." I said, "Okay, I'll go back." He said, "No, no, sit." He started making my sketches and said, "You're my heroine." He gave me the script of *Ghare Baire*, which was based on Rabindranath Tagore's novel of the same name.

WHAT WAS SATYAJIT RAY LIKE AS A PERSON AND AS A FILMMAKER?

He was Tagore, Picasso, Beethoven, all rolled into one. He was a fine artist too. He used to paint all his scenes before shooting them. He used to even paint the blouse and sarees of his female characters. The fabric used

to be bought according to the painting. He himself searched for the Victoria brand cigarettes just for one shot in *Ghare Baire*. Also, there's a little box of jewels in the film. He hired that box for 8000 rupees for one day. But he never wasted money on taking retakes. He was *kanjoos*. He was a one-take director.

I was in touch with him even after the film. But I was shy about showing how important he was for me. I'd tell him, "Manikda please forgive me. But I can't do this, 'Dada, Dada' business all the time. Whatever there is for you, it's in my heart. I can't express it." He said, "But how will I know that you want to do another film." I said, "That's true. I want to do another film." But he passed away before that. It was sad.



With Soumitra Chatterjee in *Bela Shuru*

“MY HUSBAND (RUDRAPRASAD SENGUPTA, FOUNDER OF THEATRE GROUP NANDIKAR) IS ABSOLUTELY LIKE VISHWANATH, PLAYED BY SOUMITRADA (CHATTERJEE) IN *BELA SHURU*. HE'S THE GREATEST FEMINIST OF THE TEAM”

DIDN'T YOU HAVE ANY QUALMS ABOUT THE KISSING SCENE IN THE FILM?

Well, I just couldn't say no to Satyajit Ray.

ANY MEMORIES OF THE GHARE BAIRE PREMIERE AT CANNES?

American actor Bette Davis was travelling in the same plane with us. When we got down in Paris to change planes, we got served small cakes, which I relished. I knew I shouldn't be eating so many of them. But I couldn't control myself. Everything was new to me. The room I was staying in had a warm water bed. I was asked to wear a

Benarasi saree for the red carpet. I picked my best one. When the film started, it was the first time I was seeing myself on the big screen. I thought I was the ugliest woman around. But the audience loved the film. When we were leaving the theatre, several women hugged and kissed me.

THE PRESS IN KOLKATA WASN'T KIND TOWARDS YOUR PERFORMANCE...

They wrote any kind of rubbish they wanted to. Every time I got those nasty letters, Satyajit Ray would send me a personal letter saying, 'This happens with everyone, don't worry.

Just move ahead'. With stress, my skin turned bad. He took me to a lady (counsellor) for a sitting. He did everything possible to make me feel better. He told people she's my most intelligent actress till date.

CINEMA NEVER ATTRACTED YOU MUCH AFTERWARDS?

It attracted me. But I believed I didn't have the looks for cinema. Also, I guess people were afraid of my forthright ways and of my stature in theatre. Theatre is something I've done since the age of five. My mother, Roma Haldar, was a theatre personality

and a costume designer. She used to play the piano and sing beautifully. My guru, Anukul Chandra Banerjee from Allahabad, was like my second father. He introduced me to theatre. My mother was more interested in me doing theatre than in me taking exams. I had a unique childhood.

YOU NEVER AIMED FOR HINDI CINEMA?

It just didn't happen. Also, I'm not that kind of a person, who'd thrust myself on people.

HINDI FILM ACTORS YOU ADMIRE...

Most of them. Starting



With directors Shiboprosad Mukherjee and Nandita Roy on the set of *Bela Shuru*

“WHEN I SAW MYSELF ON THE BIG SCREEN AT THE PREMIERE OF *GHARE BAIRE* AT CANNES, I THOUGHT I WAS THE UGLIEST WOMAN AROUND. BUT THE AUDIENCE LOVED THE FILM. WHEN WE WERE LEAVING THE THEATRE, SEVERAL WOMEN HUGGED AND KISSED ME”

from Amitabh Bachchan to Shah Rukh Khan and Aamir Khan. Amitabh Bachchan liked *Bela Seshe* and he sent me a letter, which I’ve preserved. I always wanted to meet Mr Bachchan. Unfortunately, I haven’t been able to yet.

HOW WAS THE EXPERIENCE OF WORKING WITH NANDITA ROY AND SHIBOPROSAD MUKHERJEE AGAIN IN *BELA SHURU* AFTER *BELA SESHE*?

I love them. Nandita is extremely loving. She takes care of me. She promised me saying, “This will be a cakewalk for you. You just concentrate on your part. Leave the rest to me.”

BELA SHURU IS YOUR THIRD FILM WITH SOUMITRA CHATTERJEE...

When we did *Ghare Baire*, Soumitra was a great name. I was nothing. I felt proud acting with him. After *Bela Seshe*, he asked people why I wasn’t being offered



Ghare Baire

films. I’m happy working with him again.

WHAT WAS YOUR PROCESS TO GET INTO THE CHARACTER OF AN ALZHEIMER’S PATIENT IN *BELA SHURU*?

Attending workshops was the main thing. Shibo is also from theatre. So he understands the importance of a workshop. Shibo makes us read the script over and over and over again. He’s never satisfied until we grasp the right attitude.

BELA SESHE AND *BELA SHURU* BOTH TALK

ABOUT CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHANGING TIMES...

Love is forever. These days, of course, the meaning of love has changed. Love’s a personal and deep emotion. It differs from person to person. My husband is absolutely like Vishwanath, the character from *Bela Shuru*, which Soumitra is playing. He’s the greatest feminist of our team in Nandikar. He has written several feminist plays. He even has a cameo in *Bela Shuru*. I’ve also learnt a lot from my daughter,

Sohini Sen Gupta. Previously, I used to be a little racist. But she’s changed me.

DO RELATIONSHIPS LACK DEPTH TODAY?

People today live only for themselves. They don’t have time for others. The world has changed for better or for worse. I’ve lived in a better world.

YOU HAVE DONE SEVERAL PLAYS WITH YOUR DAUGHTER, SOHINI. WHAT ABOUT FILMS?

She’s a good actress. I’d love to do a film with her. My only hope is Shibo. Except him, no one will think of casting a 70-year-old like me. What Shibo has done for artistes like me, I’ll never forget.

THEATRE SEEMS TO BE YOUR FIRST AND LAST LOVE...

When I suffered a heart attack, all my students, my seniors, came to see me. But no one turned up from the cinema world. Theatre feels like family. ■



ONE DIRECTION

DIRECTOR **FARUK KABIR** IS ON A HIGH AFTER THE SUCCESS OF *KHUDA HAAFIZ*.
SUMAN SHARMA ENGAGES HIM IN A FREEWHEELING CONVERSATION

Director and actor Faruk Kabir is an industry kid. His maternal grandfather, Murad, was a well-known character actor. His uncle, Raza Murad, too is an actor and so is his sister, Sanobar Kabir. His mother Sabhia is a costume designer. Faruk started his career at a young age

as an assistant director to Aziz Mirza in *Phir Bhi Dil Hai Hindustani* and then Santosh Sivan in *Asoka*. He made his directorial debut with a short film, *The Awakening*, in 2006 which starred Ajay Devgn. His debut as a feature film director was *Allah Ke Banday* (2010), which he directed and acted in as

“REJECTIONS
MOTIVATE YOU TO
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BY THEM”

well. Recently he was in news for his film *Khuda Haafiz* starring Vidhut Jammwal and Shivaaleeka Oberoi, which reportedly did well on the OTT circuit. He isn't new to the OTT space. In fact, he can be said to be one of the pioneers exploring this new platform. He came up with a horror web series

called *Shockers*, starring Dia Mirza, Kalki Koechlin, Rajat Barmecha, Amit Sadh, Prateik Babbar and Amyra Dastur for Hotstar in 2016. He also directed *AbNormal* for Zee5.

Faruk says he loves to make real-life stories. His first film *Allah Ke Bandy* was based on a newspaper report he read. *AbNormal* was based on the struggle of the LGBTQ activists. “I go forward with the belief that if a real-life story compels me to weave a film around it then it’s a story worth telling. And I incorporate my own feelings towards that story while making the film. The finished product is a mixture of fiction and reality mixed with my perceptions,” he explains. Interestingly, he decided to make a love story with Vidyut, who is a bonafide action star. Faruk says he saw something in Vidyut that went beyond the popular perception. Though the film had action, Faruk convinced Vidyut that the film won’t showcase his standard action moves. “My protagonist isn’t a trained killer. He takes to violence as a last resort. He goes berserk when pushed against the wall. I convinced Vidyut that I won’t be showing off his six-pack abs. He won’t be given an action-star entry. He’ll be emoting more and kicking and punching less in the film. Thankfully, he agreed.”

Faruk tragically lost his father just before he started shooting for *Khuda Haafiz*. He was constantly



With Vidyut Jammwal



in and out of the hospital during the pre-production of the film because of his father’s illness. In fact, he buried his father and was giving a reading to Aahana Kumra and Vidyut the next day. He was quite close to his father and it was tough for him to move on so soon. Vidyut and Aahana could sense his unease and spontaneously reached out to him. “They supported me when I needed it the most. We just talked that day about what matters the most to us and that conversation,

about family, about friends, about memories, acted as a catharsis. I was able to go back to the film after that,” he shares.

He’s also close to his mother, Sabiha, who inculcated strong work ethics in him. She used to work till two in the night at times to meet her deadline. Back then, a costume was made in different places. “The *zardosi* work was done somewhere else, cutting was done elsewhere and then my mother and her master tailor used to put it all together. Now she

“ADS HELP YOU BECOME BETTER STORYTELLERS AS YOU HAVE TO CONVEY THE MESSAGE IN A SHORT SPAN OF TIME. THEY HELP YOU PUSH THE ENVELOPE”

has stopped working and I have kept her table where the final stitching was done as a souvenir. “I use it to write my scripts,” he reveals. Faruk adds that his love for the Urdu literature, towards Urdu poetry, in particular, has sprung from his mother as she was interested in it and knows many couplets by heart.

Being a director wasn’t easy. He has gone through his share of rejections. Even *Khuda Haafiz*’s script took a long time to get greenlighted. Faruk doesn’t believe in seeking



outside validation. He says one should stick to one's beliefs and not lose hope and one day your convictions and hard work will shine through. That's the reason he hasn't gone through the big banner route either. "Rejections motivate you to do better, work harder. One shouldn't get disheartened by them," he muses. He says being a creative person, his only goal is that he should get the means to express his creativity. The form doesn't matter. "I've been an ad filmmaker also, and have created commercials



“RUKHSAR AND I WORK IN CREATIVE SPACES SO WE UNDERSTAND THE PRESSURES. WE SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER IN OUR RESPECTIVE VENTURES. HALF THE BATTLE IS WON IF YOU HAVE A SUPPORTIVE PARTNER”

with Madhuri Dixit and Virat Kohli and many other celebs. Ads help you become better storytellers as you have to convey the message in a short span of time. They help you push the envelope.”

Faruk is a huge admirer of perhaps the greatest storyteller of them all, William Shakespeare. He goes back to reading the Bard whenever he hits the writing block. Faruk is awed by the sense of drama Shakespeare created in his plays. He also loves the emotional undercurrent between characters and psychological profiling, which has proven to be so apt. “The more we read Shakespeare, the better we understand the art of writing. I’ll even go out on a limb and say that it helps you understand the world better,” he gushes. His passion for writing took him to New York, where he learnt screenwriting professionally. He mentions that there are a lot of processes involved in converting an idea into a screenplay. “Structure is important. Once you know how to structure your thoughts the rest falls into place. My New York sojourn opened my eyes to new possibilities. I benefited a lot from the experience.”

There are those who say that one learns better on the job than in a classroom. Kabir has worked as an assistant to both Aziz Mirza and Santosh Sivan and values that experience as well. He used to be amazed by

how much Aziz wrote and rewrote the screenplay. Like any youngster, he was awed by the presence of Shah Rukh Khan on the sets at first but later started taking his duties seriously. “I started taking notes on Aziz Mirza’s ideas. They helped me understand how the mind of a director works. From Santosh, on the other hand, I picked up the technical aspects of filmmaking. Like how lighting is important, and so on. You can say that I had the best of both the worlds, during my journeyman days.” The other directors he admires are Sanjay Leela Bhansali, Sriram Raghavan, Meghna Gulzar and Zoya Akhtar from Bollywood, and Alfonso Cuarón and Christopher Nolan from Hollywood.

Apart from his late father and his mother, the other person whom he considers his pillar of support is his wife Rukhsar. It’s her second marriage with him. They were seeing each other for six years before tying the knot in 2010. Faruk says they’ve had a blissful decade together. He jokes that she kills all his demons. “She wasn’t very impressed by me ever since our courtship days,” he laughs. “And remains both my staunchest supporter and my harshest critic.” Rukhsar is busy doing ads and serials and has learnt to balance her career and life. “We both work in creative spaces so we understand the pressures. We support and encourage each other in



our respective ventures. Half the battle is won if you have a supportive partner,” he comments. He has no regrets about taking the path he has chosen. He has taken both the bouquets and the brickbats in his stride. One lesson he’s learnt is to

“**I LIVE FOR THE HIGH OF SEEING A PROJECT THROUGH. IT’S THE BEST FEELING IN THE WORLD**”

always stay grounded and focus on getting better. “I think the challenge really is to become better than your last attempt. That’s what I’ve always aimed at.” He looks at direction as something that allows him to indulge in his creativity. A director has to take ownership of his actions and has to make his whole team believe in his vision and invest in it. Says he, “I live for the high of seeing a project through. It’s the best feeling in the world.” ■





PILGRIM ON A MOUNTAIN

SHEKHAR KAPUR IN CONVERSATION WITH JITESH PILLAI

It's hard to define Shekhar Kapur. He's the hesitant actor from *Toote Khilone* (1978), he's also the immaculately dressed model from the Digjam suitings ad, the sensitive director who made *Masoom* (1982), and the maverick filmmaker who probably has left more projects unfinished than anyone else. He refuses to let his work define him, claiming he's much more than the sum of his films. He can veer off in different directions if the whim takes him – like he directed a stage musical in German without knowing the language. When you chat with him, he flits from topic to topic like a butterfly. Perhaps, he's so consumed by being in the moment that he forgets about everything else...

SO WHAT WERE YOU UPTO IN THE LOCKDOWN?

I was actually at the foothills of the Himalayas. Where you can see several mountains and beyond these mountains is the plateau of Tibet. Pilgrims in the ancient times used to go to Kailash and Mansarovar from here. I'm interested in water issues. There are some

DURING THE LOCKDOWN?

When I woke up in the morning and looked out as the sun rose, I could see the farmers already ploughing, the women going out to collect firewood because during the lockdown there's no gas. And I thought how do you lock down farmers? How do you stop them from ploughing their fields? How

It's coming down which is tough. I used to come down like a goat and I tried coming down like a goat this time too. And I went for a toss. My balance wasn't good.

YOUR MOTHER WAS DEV ANAND'S SISTER, SO DID THE MOVIES IMPACT YOU A LOT IN YOUR CHILDHOOD?

It was exciting. Dev uncle used

get really jealous, because she used to go for hours to some photographer's studio. Thus I decided that I would take her pictures. I started going to film festivals in London and I realised that I was attracted to storytelling on moving pictures. I dropped the word called career from my life. So along the adventure of life,

casting to Vienna, I found all the actors singing in German. And I asked them why is everyone singing in German and they said, because the musical is in German. And I don't speak German, I was like, here's another challenge, here's another adventure. So it really went well.

GURU DUTT'S BROTHER



"ELIZABETH WOULDN'T BE THE SAME WITHOUT CATE BLANCHETT, FOUR FEATHERS WOULDN'T BE THE SAME WITHOUT HEATH LEDGER. BOTH OF THEM WERE NEW, NOBODY KNEW CATE BLANCHETT OR HEATH LEDGER WHEN I WORKED WITH THEM"

glaciers that are active and provide water to the valley here. I wanted to photograph them because when you see pictures of glaciers 10 or 20 years later, it'll be a big call to say what we've done to the greatest resource of water on the whole planet. I wanted to go and photograph those glaciers but then I got locked down there.

WHAT WAS YOUR ROUTINE

do you stop them from grazing their goats? How do you stop them from taking their cows to pastures? I also rediscovered my climbing skills. I had to be a bit slow and watch my steps. Your sense of balance has to be there. Climbing a mountain is easy. It really depends on your heart rate and your breathing rate and I am quite happy with that.

to come to Delhi. And suddenly there would be a thousand people outside our house. I guess your question is why I left being a Chartered Accountant to become a filmmaker? While I was an accountant in London, I turned my whole apartment into a dark room and I would experiment with pictures. Then I fell in love with a girl who was a model. I used to

I made films because it seemed like such an interesting thing to do. And I guess when people ask me between say *Masoom* and *Mr. India* and *Bandit Queen* and all the other films I have made, they don't find the same director, it's because I don't take it as a career. I went off to Europe and I did a musical (*Matterhorn*). When I went for the

DEVI DUTT WAS THE PRODUCER OF MASOOM. HOW DID THAT HAPPEN?

Devi Dutt had made a film called *Aakrosh*, I watched it and loved the film. I was in Delhi. One day I stopped at the petrol pump and met a school friend who turned out to be a film distributor. I recommended *Aakrosh* to him. Devi Dutt was so grateful to me, he said, why don't you be the director of my next? And that's



Mr India



Masoom



Bandit Queen



"I DROPPED THE WORD CAREER FROM MY LIFE... AND I GUESS WHEN PEOPLE ASK ME BETWEEN SAY MASOOM AND MR INDIA AND BANDIT QUEEN AND ALL THE OTHER FILMS I HAVE MADE, THEY DON'T FIND THE SAME DIRECTOR - IT'S BECAUSE I DON'T TAKE IT AS A CAREER"

how it all started. I had a film called *Bardaasht* which I wanted to make with Naseeruddin Shah. So he took me to a financier who looked bored with my narrative. I saw a lot of pictures of children on his desk, so I quickly retold the story and he was like this is good, let's make this and that's how *Masoom* was made.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR COLLABORATION WITH RD BURMAN AND GULZAR

During those days I had just come from London and couldn't speak Hindi properly. So they were wondering who the f**k is this guy who is making this film. I still say that naivety is the greatest

weapon when you are being a creator. I was naïve enough to tell Gulzar that he was wrong, I was naïve enough to tell Pancham that I don't like this note. I could see them kind of smiling at me and I mistook that smile for agreement, whereas they were probably thinking who the hell is this kid. It was my naivete that probably warmed them to me. Because I was naïve I wouldn't budge, they'd try to persuade me and treated me like a child. I got sick when *Lakdi ki kathi* was being done, so we did it over the phone. I'd made a compilation of all the Hindi nursery rhymes that

I remembered from my school and gave it to Gulzar *saab* and said, let's make a song on this. And he just looked at me and said, *koi baat nahi kal milte hain* (no problem, let's meet tomorrow). And then he wrote his own nursery rhyme and that's how *Lakdi ki kathi* was born.

HOW DID TUJHSE NARAAZ COME ABOUT?

Singer Anup Ghoshal was Devi Dutt's friend. And he said, *iske saath ek gaana toh banana hi hoga* (We have to make a song with Anup). I think it was his voice also that provoked the song. If you take that voice away, I don't think that the song would have the

same meaning.

HOW WAS IT DIRECTING STALWARTS LIKE NASEERUDDIN SHAH AND SHABANA AZMI?

Every one treated me like Shabana's boyfriend back then. You know I'd never been inside an editing room, I'd never assisted anybody. I did not know that there was a sound positive and a sound negative and a picture positive... I knew nothing. I had gone through lots of relationships, so I drew characters from the people I knew. The two daughters were based on my nieces. I used the food they ate, on screen. I used their language, I used the uniform of

Modern School, the school that I went to. Saeed Jaffrey's character was based on the people I had seen. So all the characters were based on someone I knew or some relationship that I had seen. Naseer asked me to tell him about his character. I said look, he's a human being and in that one line, it was understood that we cannot cage characters into one perspective. Naseer would come to my house and meet my father, he wore my clothes, he walked like me. He started to speak like me because he said, if Shekhar doesn't want to define the character, obviously it is somewhere in his subconscious.

"I WAS NAÏVE ENOUGH TO TELL GULZAR THAT HE WAS WRONG, I WAS NAÏVE ENOUGH TO TELL PANCHAM THAT I DON'T LIKE THIS NOTE. I COULD SEE THEM KIND OF SMILING AT ME AND I MISTOOK THAT SMILE FOR AGREEMENT, WHEREAS THEY WERE PROBABLY THINKING WHO THE HELL IS THIS KID"



With Gulzar



With daughter Kaveri



And if you look back at *Masoom* now, one of the best things about it is that Naseer is human. It's a completely human film, there was no attempt to make the actors very defined. We wove a plot around them. I think that is the beauty of *Masoom* and that is why it has lasted.

AND WHAT ABOUT BANDIT QUEEN AND MR INDIA? DO YOU REVISIT YOUR FILMS AT ALL?

I have seen *Bandit Queen* once, because I had to do a commentary on it. And when I saw it, I cried. Because I realised I'm never going to be able to make a film like this again. *Mr India*, I have seen in patches. It was so much fun making the film. Boney Kapoor was



On the sets of *Masoom*

like, I have never made a film like this before. I somehow invested in actors and they made the films for me. The rest is camera work, that's all lighting and technique. You create a sense of love, you create a sense of trust and then words become insignificant. I remember the Charlie Chaplin scene in *Mr India*, I just said, Sri you're going to look great with the moustache

and she went back and she did the perfect modern over-the-top rendition of Charlie Chaplin.

YOU'VE DEVELOPED THE REPUTATION OF STARTING A PROJECT AND LEAVING IT HALF-WAY. DID YOU BECOME MERCURIAL, DIFFICULT TO HANDLE?

Why did I go overseas after making *Bandit Queen*? I went because I wanted to play with the A-team. I wanted to test myself against

the A-team. I made *Elizabeth* in 60 days. *Elizabeth* wouldn't be the same without Cate Blanchett, *Four Feathers* wouldn't be the same without Heath Ledger. Both of them were new, nobody knew Cate Blanchett or Heath Ledger when I worked with them. I created magic with actors, pushed them, made them uncertain. When they are uncertain they are not defined and therefore their performance becomes subtextual. I'll tell you a little story about Seema Biswas from *Bandit Queen*. I remember Tigmanshu Dhulia was my casting director and we went to see her play at the National School of Drama in New Delhi. I thought she was

right for the part. She asked me about the graph of her character. I looked at her gravely and said Seema why don't you tell me. Go home and write a page or two about the character. So she went and came back with a graph which was quite brilliant. And I said to her that this is not right – can you contain yourself in two pages? Here's a woman who is alive and we are trying to contain her in two pages, we're obviously going to make something really stupid. I said let's open it out, let's talk about the scenes but never contain the scenes, you are who you are on the set, I am who I am on the set. Let's see what happens. That's how I made *Bandit Queen*. ■

A close-up, high-contrast portrait of Mithoon, a man with dark, slightly messy hair and a full beard. He is looking off-camera to the right with a serious expression. He is wearing a dark leather jacket over a black t-shirt. The background is dark and out of focus.

SONGS *of the* SOUL

MUSIC DIRECTOR MITHOON
BELIEVES IN A HOLISTIC
APPROACH TOWARDS MUSIC.
DEVESH SHARMA CUES IN

Mithoon is a total music composer. He can sing, he can play instruments and he writes lyrics as well. Out there in the West, this multi-talented lad would have been whamming out as an independent solo artiste or banging heads with his bros in a band, making the crowd run wild in a concert. In India, barring a few exceptions, most talented musicians take the Bollywood route to fame. It's a crowded highway, perpetually jammed, where emotions run riot and fellow commuters happily run you over in order to cut lanes and jump ahead. But if you don't mind the bumps and the road rage, you do get richly rewarded for your persistence. Mithoon, who has completed 15 years in the industry has been enjoying the journey. He asserts he believes in living in the moment. According to him, everything is a phase. One goes through different phases which help one grow. At the same time, he cautions that knowledge without application doesn't tantamount to anything. "I learnt something about myself during my lean phase and used it to make myself

better. What I'm saying is that learn to enjoy the moment but keep moving forward. That's the key to happiness."

If you feel Mithoon is going all Rumi on you, you've hit the philosophical jackpot because Sufi thought has been a big influence on his life and music. He's grown up reading books on Sufism and loves listening to Sufi music. "I'm like a butterfly who's exploring every area of the garden," he quips. He's not throwing a random quote at you but is someone who actually leads such a life. "People keep asking me how I survived during the lockdown. For me, it wasn't anything different from what I do. Even when things were normal, I was always inside my studio, creating, exploring stuff. Instead of a studio, I was in my house now doing the same thing. It didn't feel anything different." He says technological advances have helped people remain focussed in their disciplines. He's even heard of people editing shows right from their homes. "So if that can be done, music can certainly be made from home. And that's what I was doing. In fact, these months have been spent most creatively

as everyone was at home so we could all exchange ideas freely and collaborate."

He lives with his parents and even otherwise is a homebound lad, who loves spending time with his family rather than go out clubbing. So in a sense, he got to spend more time with them. "Some people may call my life boring. But I genuinely believe



in the comfort, the safety of the family. Your parents are the ones who love you the most and trust me, everyone realises it sooner or later. And this lockdown has helped people realise it better. It was something I've always believed in." Mithoon's father, Naresh Sharma, is the younger brother of Pyarelal of the Laxmikant-Pyarelal duo. His father was a famous arranger himself though he never branched out as an independent composer. Mithoon remembers his

father's pride and joy when he won the Filmfare Best Music Director trophy for *Aashiqui 2* (Along with Jeet Ganguly and Ankit Tiwari) in 2014. "My father is a musician's musician. Everybody in the industry knows him but he never won recognition among the masses. Never won an award for his contribution. So my award that night was his award."

He adds he doesn't have many friends. And his idea of spending time with the few friends he has, doesn't include

going on drinking binges with them. Whenever he meets them, they just yak till the cows come home. He stayed in touch with them over the phone. He's an old soul who still likes to call people. And isn't on Whatsapp even now. He misses writing letters, saying that we've lost the art of articulating our thoughts through pen and paper. "Earlier, people

- 1 Aashiqui 2
- 2 Kabir Singh
- 3 Khuda Haafiz



"DID YOU EVER FEEL THAT KABIR SINGH'S MUSIC WASN'T GIVEN BY ONE PERSON? AS LONG AS THE DIRECTOR HAS A SINGULARITY OF VISION, A MULTI-COMPOSER SET-UP WILL DELIVER THE GOODS, AS IT DID IN THE CASE OF KABIR SINGH"



✦ TERE BIN

Singer: Atif Aslam
Film: Bas Ek Pal
(2006)

✦ MAULA MERE MAULA

Singer: Roop
Kumar Rathod
Film: Anwar
(2007)

✦ MADHNO

Singer: Kshitij
Tarey, Chinmayi
Film: Lamhaa
(2010)

✦ PHIR MOHABBAT

Singer: Saim Bhat,
Mohammad Irfan
Ali & Arijit Singh
Film: Murder 2
(2011)

✦ TUM HI HO

Singer: Arijit Singh
Film: Aashiqui
(2013)

✦ BANJARA

Singer: Mohd. Irfan
Film: Ek Villain
(2014)

✦ HUMNAVA

Singer: Papon
Film: Hamari
Adhuri Kahani
(2015)

✦ SANAM RE

Singer: Arijit Singh
Film: Sanam Re
(2016)

✦ O SAATHI

Singer: Arijit Singh
Film: Shab (2017)

✦ TUJHE KITNA CHAHNE LAGE

Singer: Arijit Singh
Film: Kabir Singh
(2019)

used to cultivate friendships, even love affairs through letters. Nowadays, people are in a hurry to get a reply the next moment. I've even heard that it has led to divorces. It's crazy."

He reveals he composed the entire music of *Khuda Hafiz*, the Vidyut Jammwal actioner, which recently released on OTT, from home. He was able to compose tunes, interact with his session musicians and singers, as also his fellow lyricist Sayeed Quadri,

in much the same manner as earlier. Skype and email were a big help. "The only thing missing was sharing that cup of *chai* during breaks, where we get to bond a bit more. Nothing can replace human interaction. That warmth was certainly missing," he reflects. The film got appreciated for its music. Normally, action films don't need music per se. But the project was sold to him as a romantic love story where the music would be part of the narrative. That's the



With Sachet, Parampara, Daboo Malik and Vishal Mishra

"EARLIER, PEOPLE USED TO CULTIVATE FRIENDSHIPS, EVEN LOVE AFFAIRS THROUGH LETTERS. NOWADAYS, PEOPLE ARE IN A HURRY TO GET A REPLY THE NEXT MOMENT. I'VE EVEN HEARD THAT IT HAS LED TO DIVORCES. IT'S CRAZY"

reason he took up the project. Mithoon feels songs shouldn't serve as bathroom breaks. They should be there for a reason and claims that he's never taken a project where music acted as a filler. "The film's leads are normal middle-class people who get separated and have to experience all kinds of hardships in the course of their love. The songs reflect their journey," he assesses.

The project gave him the opportunity to work with Sonu Nigam, who has sung the song *Aakhri kadam tak*, in the film. Mithoon holds Sonu in high esteem and says he'd been waiting to come up with the right tune for the singer. His Sufi-consciousness again comes to play here as he reflects that it's the tune which chooses a singer. "This particular tune felt just right for Sonu's voice. And when I approached him, he too felt it was something special and immediately agreed. I've never approached him these past fifteen years and was waiting for the right moment." Inspiration aside, surely other forces are at play as well when it comes to deciding singers. The director, the

producer, even the music company might want to have a say in it. While Mithoon does agree that such pressures might exist, he says he's been fortunate enough to escape them so far. "All my directors, be it Faruk Kabir, who directed *Khuda Haafiz* or Mohit Suri, with whom I've worked the most, have never put any kind of pressure on me. In fact, they've given me extensive creative leeway."

He's a good enough singer to have sung all the songs he composed. Mithoon says he's not greedy for such things. He reiterates that he's committed to using the best

gone with my earlier choice," he insists.

He states that he never works with a set template and points out that he got many offers to recreate *Maula mere maula* from *Anwar* (2007) after the song became a hit but he rejected them all. He says there's no fun in repeating a tune. He understands that's how this industry works. That people want to replicate



1



2



3

voice for a tune and has always worked towards that. "I sang *Ji huzoori* from *Ki And Ka* on director Balki's insistence. He wanted to listen to the song and I just sang it for him. Balki liked it and said I should think about recording it in my voice. At that point of time, I didn't have a singer in mind, but if I had, I would have

something that has worked. He knows there are people who do it but so far he has avoided it. He's okay with the current wave of recreating tunes, as long as it's done creatively. He's remixed *Woh lamhe, woh baatein* from *Zeher* (2005) and *Aadat* from *Kalyug* (2005), which were much appreciated. More

recently, he was part of the reality show *Times Of Music*, where he recreated Viju Shah's *Tip tip barsa paani* from *Mohra* (1994) and Shah reciprocated by recreating Mithoon's *Tose naina lage* from *Anwar* (2007). "I enjoyed the process because I was working with someone who had originally created the

"I LEARNT SOMETHING ABOUT MYSELF DURING MY LEAN PHASE AND USED IT TO MAKE MYSELF BETTER. WHAT I'M SAYING IS THAT LEARN TO ENJOY THE MOMENT BUT KEEP MOVING FORWARD. THAT'S THE KEY TO HAPPINESS"

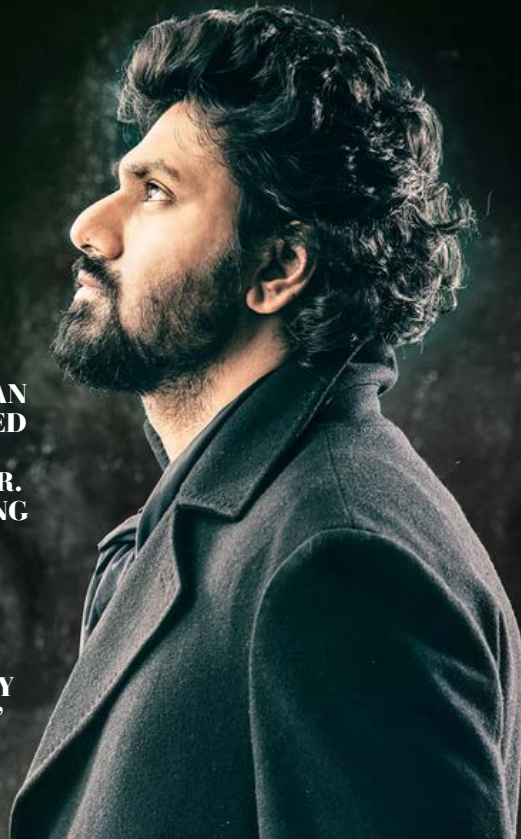
- 1 Ek Villain
- 2 Shivaay
- 3 Anwar

tune. I feel that's how it should be, ideally when it comes to song recreations," he points out.

Another trend which has the purists fuming is having a multi-composer, multi-lyricist film album. Mithoon surprisingly has no complaints with it. In fact, he was part of the successful soundtrack album of *Kabir Singh*, where he had written and composed *Tujhe kitna chahne lage*, sung by Arijit Singh. He even won the Filmfare Award (along with other composers Sachet Parampara, Vishal Mishra, Akhil Sachdeva and Amaal Mallik) for his efforts. Mithoon feels it's the director's call how well to use the talent

at his disposal. "Did you ever feel that *Kabir Singh's* music wasn't given by one person? As long as the director has a singularity of vision, a multi-composer set-up will deliver the goods, as it did in the case of *Kabir Singh*. Director Sandeep Reddy Vanga was able to extract our best and make it work as a whole," reveals Mithoon. He mentions that they all worked in isolation and came to know much later that other composers were involved. "We didn't brainstorm or anything but worked individually on our tunes. And it should be that way because everyone has their own unique style of working."

True that.





— (APRIL 28, 1929-OCTOBER 15, 2020) —

REMEMBERING BHANU ATHAIYA

THE ICONIC COSTUME DESIGNER, WHOSE WORK SPANNED FROM *CID* (1956) TO *SWADES* (2004), PASSED AWAY RECENTLY.

DEVESH SHARMA PENS A BRIEF PROFILE

Celebrated costume designer Bhanu Athaiya, who made India proud by winning an Oscar for the costume design of *Gandhi* (1982), passed away early morning on October 15 in her sleep. She was 91 years of age. It's said that eight years ago, she was diagnosed with a tumour in her brain. For the last three years, she was bedridden because one side of her body was paralysed.

It must be noted that she never formally learnt fashion design but picked up the tricks of the trade on the job. She was

born as Bhanumati Annasaheb Rajopadhye in Kolhapur on April 28, 1929. She was the third of the seven children born to Annasaheb and Shantabai Rajopadhye. Athaiya's father, Annasaheb was a painter. He died when Athaiya was just nine years old. In one of her interviews, she had stated that when her father finished a project, he used to call her to clean his brush and palette. That's how she developed an interest in painting from a young age. Inspired by her father, Bhanu too started painting and later joined the JJ



With Ashutosh Gowariker and Aishwarya Rai Bachchan

It must be noted that Bhanu Athaiya never formally learnt fashion design but picked up the tricks of the trade on the job

School of Arts.

She graduated from the prestigious institute with top honours, winning a gold medal and a fellowship. She was a member of the Bombay Progressive Artists' Group, which included in its annals artists like FN Souza, KH Ara,

SH Raza, MF Husain, SK Bakre and HA Gade and was part of their much-admired exhibition in 1953. VS Gaitonde, another member of the Progressives, was one of her teachers at JJ. He had made a modernist portrait of hers, which depicted her as a woman, bird

in hand, emerging from geometric patterns. Fine Arts, however, wasn't known as a stable career and the need for lucre triumphed over the pursuit of arts. Bhanu became an illustrator in a women's magazine after graduation. It's said that one of her editors encouraged her to sketch dresses. When the editor opened a boutique, she took Athaiya along and that's when her fashion designing journey truly began. Her designs reportedly caught the attention of Kamini Kaushal, who was one of the foremost leading ladies of the '40s and the '50s. Soon,

The biggest challenge of her life came with *Gandhi*. It's said director Richard Attenborough took her on board after just a 15-minute meeting... Incidentally, she returned the Oscar that she won for *Gandhi* to the Academy for safe-keeping in 2012



With Ben Kingsley on the sets of *Gandhi*

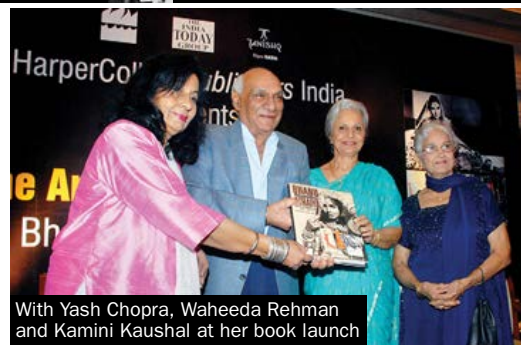


With her Oscar trophy after the event

it's said, she started designing Kaushal's personal wardrobe. That association led her to design for Kaushal in films like *Shahenshah* (1953) and *Chalis Baba Ek Chor* (1953). Nargis was said to be another admirer of her work.

It was Guru Dutt who gave her a proper break in the movies. She became a costume designer with the film *C.I.D.* in 1956 and followed it up with other Guru Dutt productions such as *Pyaasa* (1957), *Chaudhvin Ka Chand* (1960) and *Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam* (1962). Another filmmaker with whom Athaiya came to be closely associated with was Raj Kapoor. She designed the costumes for his *Sangam* (1964), *Mera Naam Joker* (1970), *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* (1978), *Prem Rog* (1982) and *Ram Teri Ganga Maili* (1985).

Bhanu was a trendsetter when it came to fashion. For example, her



With Yash Chopra, Waheeda Rehman and Kamini Kaushal at her book launch

tight-fitted *kurta* and *churidar* became a rage when she dressed up Sadhana and Sharmila Tagore in them in Yash Chopra's *Waqt* (1965). Likewise, the form-hugging orange 'Mumtaz sari' which the actress wore in the song *Aajkal tere mere pyar ke charche* song from *Brahmachari* (1968) became a rage. She took inspiration from ancient India for her creations. It's said she studied the Ajanta cave paintings to create costumes for Vyjayanthimala in *Amrapali* (1966). She won the National Film Award for Best Costume Design for *Lekin* (1991) and *Lagaan* (2001) and reportedly studied the Rajasthani and Kutchi folk art for her

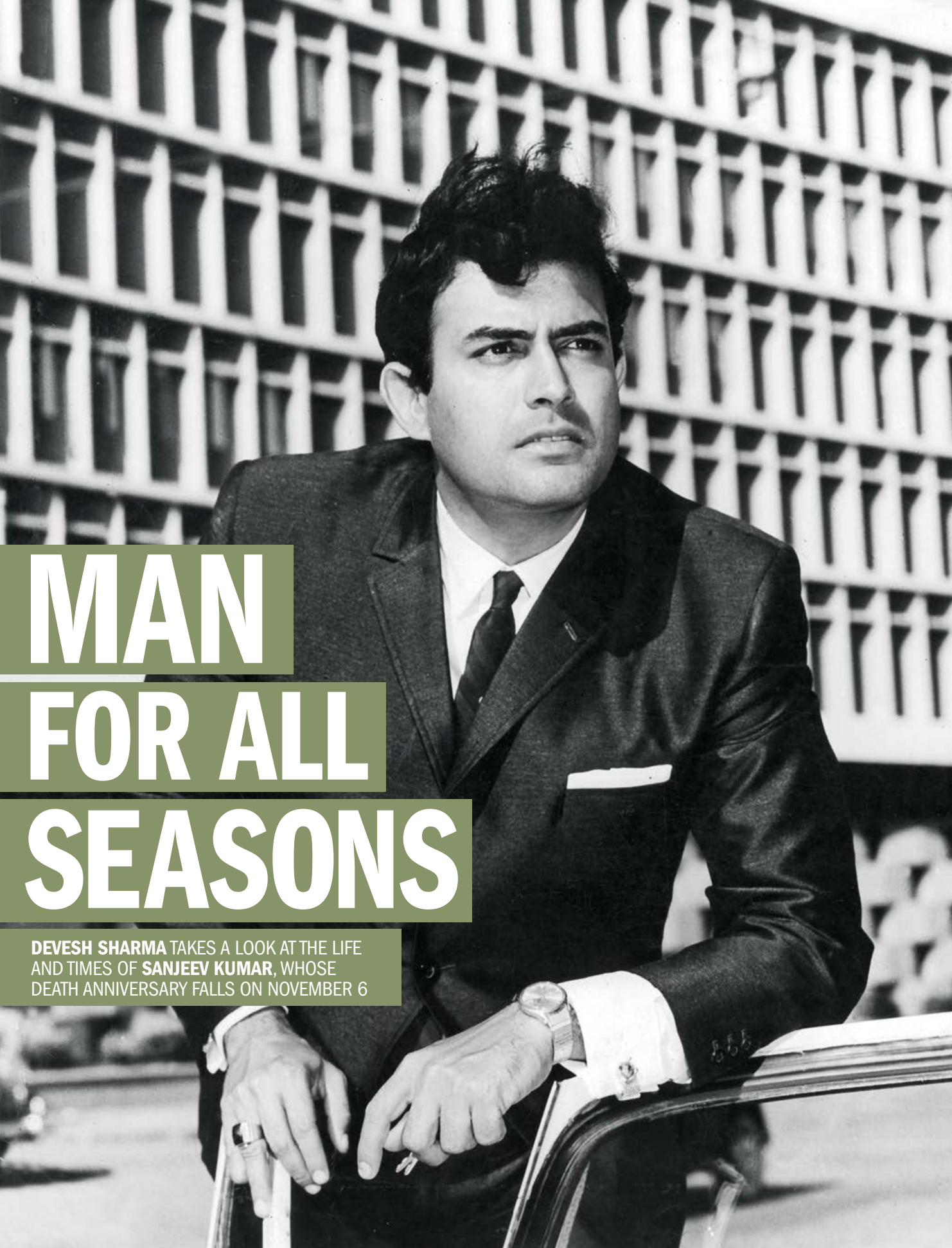
designs. For *Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam*, she visited Kolkata. She was said to be a hands-on designer and reportedly took measurements by hand to get the cut just right. She was also a winner of the Filmfare Lifetime Achievement Award in 2009.

The biggest challenge of her life came with *Gandhi*. It's said director Richard Attenborough took her on board after just a 15-minute meeting. She worked closely with the other costume designer on the film, John Mollo (She shared the Oscar with him), and handled all the Indian costumes.

Since *Gandhi*'s was a closely documented life, her sources of inspiration were found in various libraries and museums. She poured painstakingly over old photographs to get the look right. The film documented *Gandhi*'s progress from a barrister in South Africa to the messiah-like figure who spearheaded India's freedom struggle in later life and her costumes reflected that change. Her speech at the Oscars was short and to the point. "It's too good to believe. Thank you Academy and thank you, Richard Attenborough, for focusing world attention on India," she said.

She returned the Oscar that she won for *Gandhi* to the Academy for safekeeping in 2012. She was a woman of her word and never regretted the decision. In a press statement, she had explained her stance, "I do not trust anyone in India to keep it. If Tagore's Nobel medal could be stolen, what is the guarantee my trophy would be safe? In India, no one values such things and we lack a tradition of maintaining our heritage and things pertaining to our culture."

She was married to writer Satyendra Athaiya but later separated from him. Athaiya is survived by her daughter Radhika Gupta. ■



MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

DEVESH SHARMA TAKES A LOOK AT THE LIFE
AND TIMES OF **SANJEEV KUMAR**, WHOSE
DEATH ANNIVERSARY FALLS ON NOVEMBER 6

Some actors are born with the chameleon-like ability to become anyone they desire. Sanjeev Kumar was one such actor. In *Naya Din Nayi Raat* (1974) for instance, he played nine different characters. And he made sure each character looked different from the other. It wasn't just the change in the costume or wig that made the difference. He brought in different mannerisms, accents, quirks into play as well. You didn't get bored watching nine of him on screen. In an era where stars were dashing handsome and generally played heroic characters, Sanjeev Kumar stood out for his hunger to play as many different roles as he could. Not that he wasn't handsome. He could have gone through the staple 'hero' roles blindfolded. But he knew his acting itch wouldn't have been satisfied by that limited experience. He acted as Jaya Bachchan's beau in *Naya Din Nayi Raat*. The actor shared a fantastic camaraderie with her. He appeared as her father in *Parichay*, as her husband in *Koshish*, and as her father-in-law in *Sholay*. And it says much about

his versatility that he played each role with consummate ease.

Sanjeev Kumar was his screen name. He was born as Harihar Jethalal Jariwala and was known by his nickname Haribhai in the industry. It was filmmaker Saawan Kumar Tak, famous for his *Souten* films in the later years, who reportedly suggested a name change for the young actor. Saawan went on to make *Naunhilal* (1967) with Sanjeev Kumar. It was a film which depicted the horrors runaway kids were subjected to. The actor played a caring mentor to a young orphaned kid who doesn't have any relatives and hence he's told he's related to Chacha Nehru.

Sanjeev Kumar was born on July 9, 1938, in Surat to a Gujarati family. He came to Mumbai at a young age and studied here. He joined IPTA and didn't feel any qualms when it came to portraying elderly characters even during his salad days. His most famous play was Arthur Miller's *All My Sons* where he played the central character of a 60-year-old man having six children. He also played an old man in the AK



Sholay



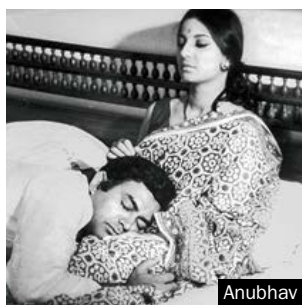
Naya Din Nayi Raat

Hangal directed *Damru* during that time. His first film was *Hum Hindustani* (1960), where he played a small role. The film's leads were Sunil Dutt and Joy Mukherjee and is today known for the song *Chhod kal ki baatein*, a song romanticising Nehruvian utopia. His first lead role came in 1965 with the Aspi Irani directed swashbuckling drama *Nishan*, where he played a double role. While the film didn't do wonders at the box office, it wasn't a total flop either and he was soon flooded with

costume dramas like *Alibaba Aur 40 Chor* (1966), an Arabian fantasy directed by Homi Wadia, *Kalapi* (1966), a Gujarati autobiographical film on a prince who was also a gifted poet and who died tragically young, and *Badal* (1966), another fantasy where he played a double role. Perhaps his most successful film of that era was *Raja Aur Rank* (1968), based on Mark Twain's celebrated novel, *The Prince And The Pauper*. Besides Kumar's acting, hit music by Laxmikant-Pyarelal too contributed to the film's success. This

IN NAYA DIN NAYI RAAT SANJEEV KUMAR PLAYED NINE DIFFERENT CHARACTERS. AND HE MADE SURE EACH CHARACTER LOOKED DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER. IT WASN'T JUST THE CHANGE IN THE COSTUME OR WIG THAT MADE THE DIFFERENCE. HE BROUGHT IN DIFFERENT MANNERISMS, ACCENTS, QUIRKS INTO PLAY AS WELL

practice of playing dual characters early in his career came in handy when it came to filming Gulzar's *Angeer* (1982). Both his characters (called Ashok) not only looked similar, but they also dressed in a similar fashion. The differences between them were subtle and yet distinct. But he managed to convey to the viewers that they were indeed seeing two people. It remains one of those feel-good dramas, which you can start



Anubhav



Koshish



Seeta Aur Geeta



Shikar



Shatranj Ke Khilari

SANJEEV KUMAR HAD THE PENCHANT OF GETTING UNDER THE SKIN OF MARRIED MEN DESPITE NEVER HAVING MARRIED HIMSELF... IN BR CHOPRA'S *PATI, PATNI AUR WO* (1978), HE PLAYED A HUSBAND SUFFERING FROM THE SEVEN-YEAR ITCH WITH MUCH PANACHE

watching from any point and instantly start laughing.

He won his first Filmfare Award in 1969. It

was a trophy for the Best Actor In A Supporting role for *Shikar* (1968). Directed by Guru Dutt's younger brother Atma Ram, it starred Dharmendra and Asha Parekh, besides him. He played an inspector in this murder mystery. It's on the sets of this film that he formed a long-lasting friendship with Dharmendra. A friendship that was somewhat strained when Hema Malini's name started getting linked with Sanjeev. It's rumoured that Sanjeev Kumar was attracted to his *Seeta Aur Geeta* (1972) co-star and had even proposed marriage to her. Hema's

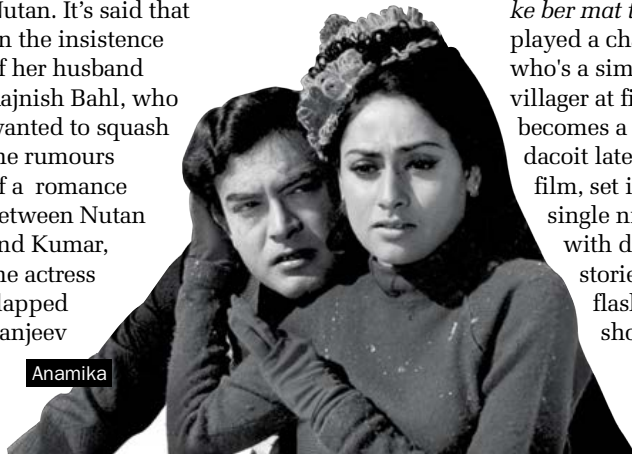
mother reportedly wanted a groom from the same caste as theirs and turned down the proposal. Apparently, while shooting for *Sholay* (1975), Dharmendra, who was seeing Hema at the time, in a fit of jealousy asked Ramesh Sippy to not shoot any scenes between Hema and Sanjeev Kumar. His name was also earlier linked with Nutan. It's said that on the insistence of her husband Rajnish Bahl, who wanted to squash the rumours of a romance between Nutan and Kumar, the actress slapped Sanjeev

Kumar on the sets of *Devi* (1969), in full view of the cast and crew. Later, the actor's name was associated with Sulakshana Pandit. They met on the sets of *Uljhan* (1975) and sparks flew. Though nothing came out of the romance. It's said that Sanjeev Kumar's untimely death in 1985 affected Sulakshana adversely. She

became a recluse and gave up her career completely after that.

He continued to do supporting roles in films like *Aashirwad* (1968), *Satyakam* (1969), and *Jeene Ki Raah* (1969) etc. In *Anokhi Raat* (1968), which became famous for its songs like *O re taal mile nadi ke jal mein*, *Mile na phool to kaanto se dosti kar li*, and *Meri beri ke ber mat todo*, he played a character who's a simple villager at first but becomes a dreaded dacoit later. The film, set in one single night with different stories told in flashback, showed

the world he could play negative characters as well. He got his due with *Khilona* (1970). It was a remake of the Telugu film *Punarjanma* (1963) and showcased him as a tormented man who is nursed back to his senses by a courtesan, only to have him shun her when he regains his mental equilibrium. It was a layered performance that showed both his range and depth as an actor. Mumtaz, who played the courtesan, was equally brilliant in the film. *Dastak*, directed by Rajinder Singh Bedi, which came the same year, further cemented his



Anamika



Angoor

credentials. The film was a psychological drama where a middle-class couple are conned into renting a flat in a red-light area. They live in a house whose last occupant was a courtesan and hence her former lovers keep trying to barge in at all times. The film, shot in black and white, allegedly to save money, won Sanjeev Kumar and Rehana Sultan, his co-star, National Awards for acting. Madan Mohan, the film's composer, too won the National Award for Best Music for his superlative tunes like *Baiyan na dharo*, *Mai ri main kase kahoon* and *Hum hain mata-e-koocha-o-bazar ki tarah*. Each tune was composed on a different *raga*.

He then forayed into parallel cinema with *Anubhav* (1971). Directed by Basu Bhattacharya, the film provided a realistic take on the dynamics of married life. A modern couple is rediscovering intimacy when the

arrival of the wife's old flame throws their world into a whirlwind. Both Sanjeev Kumar and Tanuja won our hearts with their serene portrayals. The film had music by Jaidev and had some of the last songs sung by Geeta Dutt. *Meri jaan, mujhe jaan na kaho meri jaan*, still sounds so haunting. Sanjeev Kumar had the penchant of getting under the skin of married men despite never having married himself. Years later, in BR Chopra's *Pati, Patni Aur Woh* (1978), he played a husband suffering from the seven-year itch with much panache. In Basu Bhattacharya's *Griha Pravesh* (1979), he played a middle-class man who is into a mundane marriage with Sharmila Tagore. Sarika walks into his life and it seems as if she's his soulmate. They plan to live together and the wife agrees, on the condition that the mistress spends a day with her. It was a mature take on extra-marital



Silsila



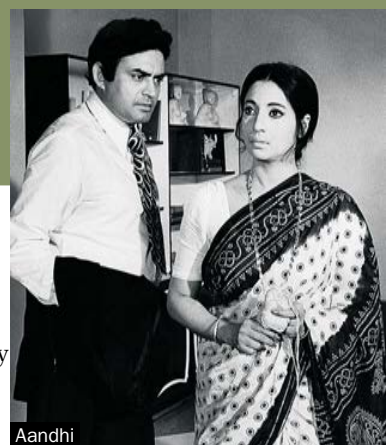
Mausam

affairs. Nothing Sanjeev Kumar did ever looked artificial on screen. In 1972, he acted in an Indo-Iranian production called *Subah-O-Shaam*, directed by Tapi Chanakya. The film was mostly shot in Iran. He played the younger brother to Iranian superstar Mohammad Ali Fardin. Waheeda Rehman played the heroine. It was a typical family drama set in exotic locations. He won his second National Award as an actor the same year with *Koshish*. Directed by Gulzar, it starred Sanjeev Kumar and Jaya Bhaduri as a deaf and mute couple who make their marriage work despite all odds. The

scene where they realise their son is normal brings on goosebumps. The film went a long way towards promoting Indian Sign Language as well.

It's not that he was only into serious cinema. The performer also did frothy comedies like *Manchali* (1973), *Anamika* (1973) and *Manoranjan* (1974). *Manoranjan* was a remake of the hit American comedy *Irma La Douce* (1963). Sanjeev Kumar, reprising Jack Lemmon's role, played a clueless

IT'S SAID THAT ON THE INSISTENCE OF HER HUSBAND RAJNISH BAHL, WHO WANTED TO SQUASH THE RUMOURS OF A ROMANCE BETWEEN NUTAN AND KUMAR, THE ACTRESS SLAPPED SANJEEV KUMAR ON THE SETS OF *DEVI* (1969), IN FULL VIEW OF THE CAST AND CREW

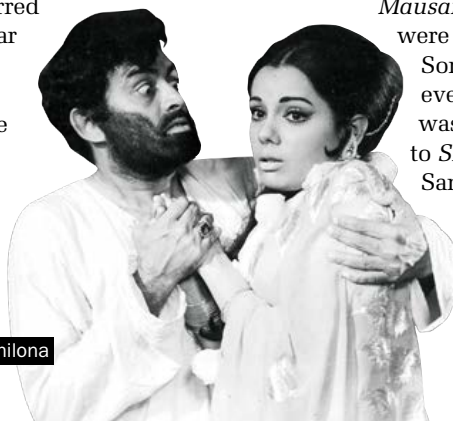


Aandhi

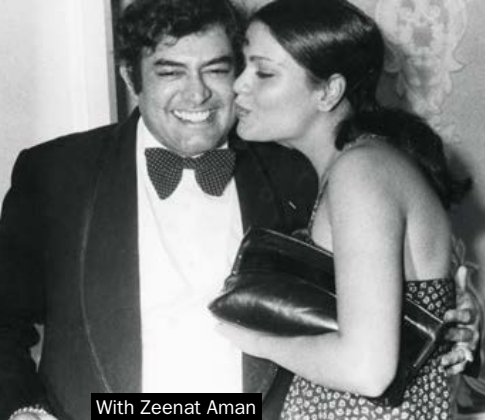
cop who is in love with a prostitute to perfection. The film has the supremely nonsensical song *Goyake chunanche*, sung by Kishore Kumar and Lata Mangeshkar and composed by RD Burman.

1975 can be said to be the best year of his career. That's when *Aandhi*, *Mausam* and *Sholay* were released.

Some say that everyone else was superfluous to *Sholay* except Sanjeev Kumar, who played Thakur and Amjad Khan, who



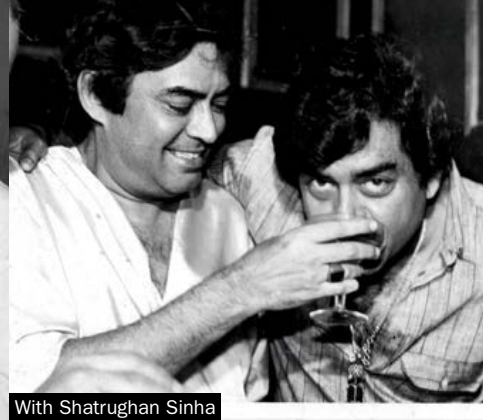
Khilona



With Zeenat Aman



With Gulzar and Moushumi Chatterjee

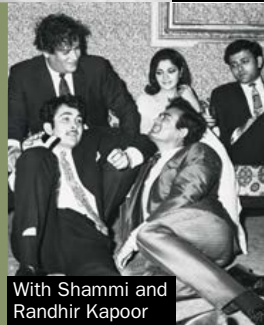


With Shatrughan Sinha

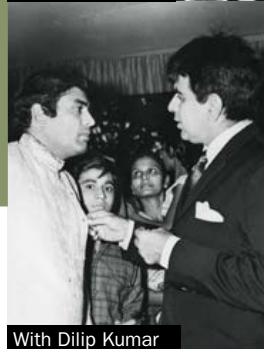
THE PRACTICE OF PLAYING DUAL CHARACTERS EARLY IN HIS CAREER CAME IN HANDY WHEN IT CAME TO FILMING GULZAR'S *ANGOOR* (1982). BOTH HIS CHARACTERS (CALLED ASHOK) NOT ONLY LOOKED SIMILAR, BUT THEY ALSO DRESSED IN A SIMILAR FASHION. THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THEM WERE SUBTLE AND YET DISTINCT



With Amitabh Bachchan



With Shammi and Randhir Kapoor



With Dilip Kumar

played the infamous Gabbar Singh.

The core of the film was the cycle of revenge that existed between the two. Gabbar was totally ruthless, totally inhuman while Thakur Baldev Singh was the complete opposite. He's reduced to being as ruthless to bring down his nemesis but retained enough of his humanity to stand back and let the law take its course. It was a classic good versus evil standoff and Kumar just towered above the rest through his masterful performance. In *Aandhi*, he played

the mild-mannered husband of an ambitious politician. He underplayed his character and let Suchitra Sen revel in the limelight. The couple found a second chance at love after a breakup. And the way hope and happiness danced in his eyes was something else indeed. The film won him his first Filmfare Award in the Best Actor category. In *Mausam*, directed by Gulzar, who had also directed *Aandhi*, Kumar played an old man who returns to the haunts of his youth and finds a girl who turns out to be his daughter from his first love. Circumstances forced

her to become a prostitute and the protagonist takes it upon himself to reform her. It was an unusual story and would have fallen flat in the hands of lesser actors than Kumar and Sharmila Tagore. The film featured music by Madan Mohan and was tragically his last film. It had soulful songs like *Dil dhoondta hai*, and *Ruke ruke se kadam*.

Sanjeev Kumar won his last Filmfare Best Actor Award for *Arjun Pandit* (1976), where the actor played a *goonda* who turns into a scholar. The film, directed by Hrishikesh

and Jaffrey loved squaring off each other in this absurd tale. *Trishul* (1978) is another example of two actors in their prime squaring off each other. Sanjeev Kumar played Amitabh Bachchan's *najayaz baap* in the film and their confrontational scenes remain central to the film's success. In *Silsila* (1981), he played the good-hearted husband who knew his wife, Rekha, was having an affair with Bachchan but is too much of a gentleman and too much in love with her to reprimand her.

He had suffered a heart attack in 1976 and had even gone to the US for treatment. After that, he'd cut short on his assignments. On November 6, 1985, he suffered another massive heart attack and passed away. He was just 48 at that time.

It's ironic that Sanjeev Kumar, who had made a career playing old-man roles, died much before he could reach old age in real life... ■

Mukherjee, remains a much-neglected gem today. The great Satyajit Ray made only one Hindi film called *Shatranj Ke Khilari* (1977). It says much about Sanjeev Kumar's calibre as an actor that Ray chose him as the protagonist. The film was a comedy of manners where Kumar and Saeed Jaffrey played debauched nobles who while away their time playing chess, even as India is undergoing an armed revolt against the British. One can see that Kumar

your say

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

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Medley of moments

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@radhikamadan:
Gangadhar hi
Shaktiman hai.
*Best caption
award goes to
Radhika Madan
for her cheeky take
on her superhero
landing pose.*



@priyankachopra: Alles wird gut.
Everything will be ok.
*Priyanka Chopra and her
furry friend Diana have
a special message to keep
everyone motivated.*



@rajkummar_rao: Don't work hard but work the hardest.
*Here's the secret to Rajkumar Rao's step-up to
success. Coffee, hard work and a sense of humour.*



@kareenakapoor Khan: Mask pehniye aur bahar
dekhiye 🤔🤔🤔🤔🤔🤔

*Just a picture of Kareena Kapoor Khan
casually enjoying the view on her way back
from Chandigarh. Her masked visage sends
across a subtle safety message as well.*



@taapsee: Looking
back at it with all the
love and joy. Getting
back to the grind with
rejuvenated energy,
exotic tan lines and
most importantly
covid negative report
#WorkCalls 🤖
#LightsCamera
ActionMode

*The Maldives seems to be the favourite destination
of the stars. Taapsee Pannu and her sister enjoyed
a little getaway to the island before heading back to
work and it's making us miss the sun and the beach.*



Readers send in their feedback pg 68

Shatrughan Sinha's racy rejoinders pg 70



IN THE MAIL

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

1st Prize
₹1500

↓ AAMIR'S LOVELY GESTURE

I've always been a major Aamir Khan fan. However, when I read Ronit Roy's article on your website where he revealed that he was Aamir Khan's bodyguard and how Aamir got the ball rolling for him, my respect for Aamir grew even further.

Atif Hussain, Lucknow



Acting ace: Aamir Khan



Heartthrob: Akshay Kumar

2nd Prize
₹1000

A TRUE ROCKSTAR

Akshay Kumar led the way as usual, when he became the first actor to begin shooting post the lockdown. Now, the actor has already completed *Bell Bottom* and has begun work on his next one. How can you not love this man?

Rohini Iyengar, Chennai

→ SK WITH SK

The news of Shahid Kapoor collaborating with Shashank Khaitan (October) has surely got every Shahid Kapoor fan excited. Shashank has a history of making masala entertainers and I feel Shahid will be a good fit in his film.

Aarti Ghosh, Kolkata



Rock solid: Shahid Kapoor

NEW GIRL

I read your interview with Shivaleeka Oberoi (September) and was impressed by her attitude. She has dealt with her fair share of struggle but has maintained a positive outlook towards things. We really need more people like her in the industry.

Jatin Ganguly, Khandwa



Maverick: Anurag Kashyap

↑ BLAME GAME

2020 has been a year of controversies. While there are plenty of blame games going around on social media, I'm glad to see that the industry has taken a stand in favour of Anurag Kashyap. He's a reputed filmmaker and I feel one should be treated as innocent until they're proven guilty.

Karan Singh, Patiala

← KAREENA'S CUTE BABY BUMP

Kareena Kapoor Khan is a style icon from the start of her career. Even today she pulls off any look with utmost elegance. I've seen plenty of pictures of Bebo on social media and can safely say that she's been flaunting her baby bump with style.

Priya Tomar, Bareilly



Hot mamma: Kareena Kapoor

HONOURING WOMEN

I love that you guys dedicated your last issue (October) to women. I think it's high time that we give women the respect they deserve. If a brand like *Filmfare* sets an example for the same, I'm sure others will follow. Kudos to the entire team.

Rohit Nayyar, Chandigarh

KEEPING IT FRESH

Fresh pairings in films always get me excited, which is why I'm looking forward to watching Ranbir Kapoor and Shraddha Kapoor in Luv Ranjan's next. I read in your last issue (October) that they'll soon begin shooting for the film. I wish them all the best.

Tarannum Shah,
Ahmedabad

↓ SALMAN ALL SET TO ROCK

I can't wait for the third installment of the *Tiger* series. I thoroughly enjoyed watching the first two parts. After I read in your last issue (October) that the film will be shot in seven countries, my expectations have grown. I'm sure the scale of this one will be even bigger

Gautam Giri, Hyderabad



The champ: Salman Khan

FLYING HIGH

I came across the director of *Gunjan Saxena: The Kargil Girl*, Sharan Sharma's interview in your magazine (September). I must say that I loved the film and after reading his interview, I'm looking forward to his future work. The way he's managed to elegantly portray such a brilliant story is commendable.

Saakshi Narang, New Delhi



Masterclass: Amitabh Bachchan

↑ AB'S BIRTHDAY BUMPS

Things are a bit different this year. Amitabh Bachchan, who happens to be my favourite actor, could not celebrate his birthday with his fans, I thought I'll send some love to the actor by wishing him here.

Raaghav Singh, Azamgarh

→ VIDYA'S MASTERPIECE

While I thoroughly enjoyed watching Vidya Balan in *Shakuntala Devi*, her interview in your magazine (September) gave me a deeper insight regarding what went into preparing for the role. She really likes to immerse herself in each character.

Ramesh Pant,
Denhradun



Gold standard: Vidya Balan

THEATRES BACK IN BUSINESS

I was extremely glad when I read on your website that the theatres were opening up again. Our economy desperately needs Bollywood to be up on its feet again. And this step will play a big part in achieving that.

Sudarshan Gupta, Hyderabad



Fighter: Sanjay Dutt

BABA GET WELL SOON

I recently came across Sanjay Dutt's picture on your website where he stepped out in the city for a salon session. I was glad to see that he's looking healthier these days and I hope he does not face more hurdles on his road to recovery.

Hardi Pandya, Jamnagar

SUPPORTING NEW TALENT

I was pretty impressed with Ritwik Bhowmik's performance in the web series *Bandish Bandits*. So it came as a pleasant surprise to find his interview in your last issue (October). It's heartening to see youngsters being given their share of the spotlight on a prestigious platform such as *Filmfare*.

Pankaja Awasthi, Pune

Just one Point



Right choice: Shekhar Kapur

I have huge respect for filmmaker Shekhar Kapur and when I read on your website that he's been appointed the chief of the FTII, I was extremely happy.

Poulami Das, Kolkata

I loved designer Shehla Khan's interview (October). I constantly take fashion inspiration from Bollywood stars and it was good to know what goes on behind the scenes in getting the perfect look.

Shikha Rai, Rohtak

I want to thank the *Filmfare* team as you guys have also begun reviewing OTT content off late.

Darshan Ahluwalia,
New Delhi

Reading the editor's take on 50 years of YRF (October) brought back so many memories. The Chopra family will always be iconic for Bollywood fans.

Ranjit Deshmukh, Kolhapur

Your article on Jagjit Singh (October) and his work just made me realise why he's one of the biggest gems of Indian cinema. His music will live on forever.

Nirmala Jaiswal, Ranchi

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PHOTOGRAPH: MEETESH TANEJA

Shatrughan Sinha's Rapid fire

How important is the concept of religion in your life?

Dhawal Sahani, Bhilai

Religion has been and will remain important in everyone's life... I'm no different. But my dear, let me make it very clear that I'm secular, modern, understanding and a moderate person. I'm certainly not a fanatic. I follow religion with a practical and modern approach.

What are your realisations about global warming?

Daljit Kumar, Ropar

It could destroy us if we don't act on it quickly. The warning signs have been there since ages but unfortunately we humans have never taken them seriously. I hope, wish and

pray that we get to shed our ignorance and realise the urgency of such signs, the sooner the better. Time is running out.

What drives people to try drugs?

Divyasha, Bhubaneswar

I've no idea because I've never tried them. I've always strongly preached and practised an anti-tobacco, and an anti-drugs philosophy. Love life, shun tobacco, and always say no to drugs. However, according to some experts, there are several reasons. Depression, frustration, lack of confidence, bad company, and sheer stupidity are some of them.

The news channels are facing widespread criticism for their content. What are your views about the current state of Indian news channels?

Meena Pant, Dehradun

The media has the power to influence, move, involve, communicate, educate, inform, and enlighten

society. It shouldn't certainly cross the line to create an uncomfortable atmosphere just to gain TRPs. The shouting brigade has, by and large, turned the media into a '*shor sharaba*' factory these days.

Intoxication has always been cited as an excuse to bust the stress. But when the world was free of competition and stress, why do you think our ancestors still invented things like alcohol and narcotics?

B Ajit, New Delhi

Have you not heard of '*somras*' from our ancient times? They say it was utilised to relax people and help them enjoy life. I rather not comment anything more on this... except to say that we weren't ever free of stress and tension in any era.

Can rivalry and friendship walk hand in hand at the same time?

Md. Arif Khan, Kolkata

It can — if both parties are of a high moral character and stature. As these are



Screen gem: Devdas



Classic romance: Mughal-e-Azam

Why does Bollywood arrange success parties for movies which have been super flops?

Santosh Mohan Joshi, Miraj

Generally speaking, celebrations are happy moments created to distract your mind from failure, stress and unhappiness. So that can be a reason for such parties.



Agent of change : Sonu Sood

strong and deep emotions. One tends to follow one or the other.

Which is your favourite movie that doesn't have a happy ending?

Daljit Kumar, Ropar

Mughal-e-Azam, Devdas, Mother India, Gunga Jumna, Anarkali, Dil Ek Mandir, etc. Shall I name a few more?

What do you think is the best lesson our society has learnt from COVID-19 pandemic?

R Lester Makang, Imphal

Each one of us has learnt

our own private lesson — and it's the lesson of a lifetime. The main one is — don't mess with mother nature.

Sonu Sood has set an example to help poor students by offering scholarships recently? What do you think of it?

Syed Nisar Mehdi, Hyderabad

What Sony Sood is doing is indeed exemplary. May God give him the strength and courage to do this service to humanity for years and years to come. God bless.

1st Prize

Considering the recent events like the drugs scandal etc, is Bollywood's image getting a hit because of a few people?

Rohit Singhania, Kolkata

A certain amount of damage has definitely been done but then why is only the film industry being targeted. Every industry, right from politics, media to corporate sector too has negative and scandalous events happening in them. If a few wrong incidents have come to light, it doesn't mean that the entire film industry should be put under a scanner.

2nd Prize

You being a popular star and having a clean image, what is your opinion on the current Bollywood situation?

R Ramakrishnan, Dombivli

Well, times were different during my days. Today, in the era of social media and the troll army, your popularity walks on a thin tightrope. Even an innocent remark can start a wave of hatred. The current Bollywood situation is satisfactory in other aspects like money and projects but the stars have to be very careful about what they speak and do in public as everything is under constant scrutiny.

What advice would you give your daughter and the youth of the country to deal with online social media trolls?

Anamika Sud, Udaipur

Become thick-skinned if you want to be part of social media. Be strong. As you know what's being said isn't true. This too shall pass. And if you're hurt just inform the police and the cyber police.

Which question has no answer?

Bharat T Kajaria, Mumbai

Several, some pleasant, some unpleasant. Some memorable, some not so memorable. And many many more.

(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.

Win!
CASH PRIZES

1st prize

₹3000

2nd prize

₹2000

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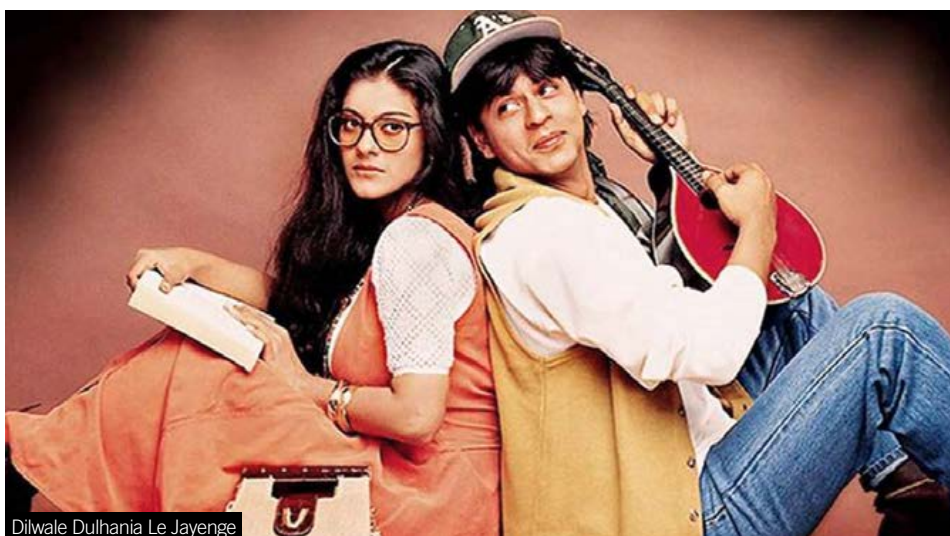


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YOUR QUESTIONS WILL BE FORWARDED TO: Shatrughan Sinha, who insists his answers do not reflect his political and social views.

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25 YEARS OF *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*

I was a cub reporter when *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* first hit the theatres 25 years ago. For that generation of cine-goers, it was something they'd never seen before. *DDLJ* was a beautiful marriage of the old and the new, ancient and modern. It showed an NRI father who has lived most of his adult life in the UK but pines for Indian ethos and wants his children to have a taste of that. Both his daughters haven't been affected by the NRI culture and he takes great pride in that. And the hero of the film, who is a brat brought up by a rich father who's catered to all his wishes, somehow understands that. And instead of rebelling against authority, tries to win over the orthodox father of the girl he loves. Our love stories often show youngsters in love rebelling against their parents but this film turned that around and told us we shouldn't ignore the love of our elders. That sat well with both the younger and the older generation and the film clicked

in a big way.

Shah Rukh Khan played Raj and Kajol played Simran in the film. Raj and Simran have become the bywords when it comes to screen lovers. Every screen *jodi* tries to match up to their intensity. Let's just say that none have come to surpass it. There was something so very innocent, so very fragile in their relationship that can't be defined. That gossamer web couldn't be replicated, not even by SRK and Kajol, who appeared in numerous films together afterwards. There was always an air of dependability in their films together after that though. They were so comfortable together that it never felt like they were acting. It's hard to find that kind of camaraderie among co-stars these days.

The film showcased Europe like never before or since. It made us all pine to take a European vacation. The picture-postcard locales weren't just randomly put in the narrative but actually took the story forward.

You look at the film again and the sharp cinematography never fails to take your breath away. Yash Chopra passed on the love of shooting in exotic locations to his son Aditya Chopra. And the prodigal son took it a notch higher. And Aditya's masterstroke was to juxtapose the earthy fragrance of Punjab with European delights. The film pulled in the NRIs by droves as they longed to catch a glimpse of their *pind*. In a way, *DDLJ* can be said to be a patriotic film in the sense that it carried forward the Manoj Kumar tradition of making India seem superior to the other nations of the world.

I must have seen the film 25 times when it was released and never fail to catch it even now, whenever it's shown on TV. If not for the pandemic, it would still have been running in Mumbai's Maratha Mandir. I have no doubt it'll still feel as good as new even at its 50th anniversary.

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