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September, 2020

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**PARINEETI
CHOPRA'S
BIG GAME
PLAN**

**ANUSHKA
SHARMA
PREGNANT**

***Bhumi
Pednekar's
cool quotient***

Take that!

**VIDYA BALAN SLAYS WITH
HER ACT AGAIN**

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PHOTOGRAPH: PAVITR SAITH
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MAKE UP: HARSHAL UMESH JARIWALA
STYLIST: PRANAY JAITLEY AND SHOUNAK AMONKAR
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Letter from the Editor

Amazing grace!

Back when I was in school, we were asked to read Shakuntala Devi's books, which promised you that you could have fun with math. Of course, most of us steered clear of them as we clearly thought it was a misinformation campaign. Math was something to be endured, because it was compulsory. Those good at it were subject to both envy and loathing.

I never believed one could have fun with numbers till I saw Vidya Balan acting as Shakuntala Devi in the latter's biopic. The way Vidya's face lit up while doing difficult sums, like she was eyeing an all-you-can-eat Onam *sadhya* instead of a ginormous set of numbers, made me aware that the human mind is capable of finding joy in anything. Vidya is no mathematician but she caught the spirit of her character admirably. *Shakuntala Devi* isn't just a film that captured the genius of the protagonist, it also gave us a glimpse into her private life. It talked about the fractured relationship she had with her daughter. With her husband. And talked about the nature of love, of forgiveness, of redemption. And Vidya, as usual, excelled in bringing to life each facet of the character she essayed.

Over the years, we have come to count on Vidya to make difficult roles look easy. Whether it's *The Dirty Picture*, where she played Silk Smitha, or *Kahaani*, where she played a woman bent on revenge or even *Mission Mangal*, where she played a scientist with her heart set to make the Mars mission a success, she has given us living, breathing women who are more than mere characters in a movie. Her characters reach out to you and make you root for them. The connection is almost palpable.

Shakuntala Devi had no answer when asked how she performed her magic and likewise, Vidya too doesn't have a clue how she seeps into her characters with effortless ease. She's not a trained actor who follows a method. Whatever she has learnt has been on the job. Some are born to act and perhaps she possesses an inherent instinct to just be the character she essays.

Even after achieving so much, there's a childlike innocence about her. She's still as passionate about the movies as she was at the start of her career. She hasn't let success get to her head, in fact, her accomplishments have made her more humble. She's wise enough to know one shouldn't live in the past but in the present and hence is always raring to raise the bar even higher with each release. The lockdown has brought her closer to her husband. And to her own self as well. She's on our cover this month, so read on to savour her forthright answers and some excellent photos shot exclusively at her home...

Jitesh Pillai

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

masala fix



SAFETY FIRST

The government has lifted curbs on travel and our stars are slowing venturing out. **Deepika Padukone**, along with hubby **Ranveer Singh** travelled to Bangalore sometimes back to meet her parents. We can understand the concern as everyone was cooped up in their homes for so long. And it's good to see them cover their faces in public places, setting a good example for everyone.



Anushka Sharma is pregnant *pg 06*

Ajay Devgn bags his first YRF film? *pg 08*

PHOTOGRAPH: YOGEN SHAH

VIRAT KOHLI AND ANUSHKA SHARMA CONFIRM THEY'RE EXPECTING A BABY

OMG! This is the best news you'll hear in a while. **Anushka Sharma** and **Virat Kohli** are expecting their first child. Isn't that awesome news? The couple took to social media today and made the announcement that they have a baby on the way. For the announcement, Virat and Anushka shared a picture of themselves with Anushka's baby bump showing. The caption read, "And then, we were three! Arriving Jan 2021". As soon as the picture went online, the comment section of their Instagram accounts was flooded with well wishers congratulating the couple. **Preity Zinta, Varun Dhawan, Kiara Advani, Vaani Kapoor, Parineeti Chopra, Dia Mirza, Saniya Malhotra, Jassie Gill, Neil Nitin Mukesh** and many others sent in their wishes. We congratulate the couple too.



Sanjay Dutt diagnosed with Lung Cancer

Sanjay Dutt was taken to a hospital when he complained of breathing problem. He was tested for coronavirus but it was negative. However, a few days later the actor took to Instagram to announce that he would be taking a break from work and hoped to return post the treatment. Later, it was revealed that the actor is suffering from stage four lung cancer. The actor, who is being treated at a Mumbai hospital, will fly to the US for further treatment. He has acquired a five-year US visa on medical grounds. Initially, it was difficult to get the visa as his name is involved in the 1993 Mumbai blasts. But a close friend intervened and helped him get the visa. Sanjay Dutt will be admitted to the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Centre. Incidentally, his mom **Nargis Dutt** too was admitted to the same hospital in 1980. She too was suffering from cancer. Our prayers are with Sanjay. He's a warrior and we know he'll overcome this hurdle as well.

KAREENA KAPOOR KHAN AND SAIF ALI KHAN ANNOUNCE THEIR SECOND CHILD

Here's more good news. **Saif Ali Khan** and **Kareena Kapoor Khan** are going to become proud parents once again. The couple is gearing up for their baby number two after **Taimur**. They recently released an official statement about it. The statement read, "We are very pleased to announce that we are expecting an addition to our family !! Thank you to all our well wishers for all their love and support. -Saif and Kareena" We congratulate the couple on the happy news.



NEETU KAPOOR BACK ON THE SILVER SCREEN

Neetu Kapoor's cameo in *Love Aaj Kal* or her role as the middle-class wife in *Do Dooni Chaar*, both were a delightful watch. Now we hear that the actress is ready to face the screen again after almost five years. Neetu Kapoor who was last seen in *Besharam* with her son **Ranbir Kapoor** has now signed **Raj Mehta's** next film. According to reports, the film stars **Varun Dhawan** and **Kiara Advani**. Neetu Kapoor and **Anil Kapoor** will play Varun's parents. Just like Mehta's earlier *Good Newwz*, this film too will be high on humour and drama. The film will probably go on floors by November first week. Neetu Kapoor is such a natural actress and this is a welcome step indeed.



JOHN ABRAHAM TO JOIN SHAH RUKH KHAN IN PATHAN?

Yash Raj Films is pulling all strings to make their next big announcements even bigger. There is a new story out almost every day about the studio's new ventures. **Shah Rukh Khan** who has been missing from the big screen post the release of *Zero* (2018), is said to be the male lead of YRF's next *Pathan* helmed by Siddharth Anand. However, reports suggest that **John Abraham** might also be part of the film. While nothing has been confirmed it is said that John




Abraham and Shah Rukh Khan will lock horns if this casting is finalised. This will be the first time that the two actors will work together. YRF has other big releases involving projects with **Salman Khan, Hrithik Roshan, Ajay Devgn, Ranveer Singh, Ranbir Kapoor** and **Deepika Padukone** in the pipeline. Let's just hope the coronavirus goes away soon for the fun to begin.

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VARUN-SARA'S COOLIE NO 1 TO HAVE AN OTT RELEASE



Varun Dhawan and **Sara Ali Khan's** fresh pairing is set to impress the audience in **David Dhawan's Coolie No. 1**. If the on-set pictures and first look of the film are anything to go by, both Sara and Varun have their game on fleek. The film was supposed to be one of the biggest releases of 2020. But the pandemic played spoilsport. Considering the theatres have been shut for an indefinite period, the makers of *Coolie No.1* are now considering a digital release. As per reports, this Varun Dhawan and Sara Ali Khan starrer is going to have an OTT release. The film has been sold to a popular OTT platform for approximately 90 crores.



LOOKS LIKE HRITHIK ROSHAN'S NEXT WILL BE A THRILLER PRODUCED BY YASH RAJ FILMS AND DIRECTED BY SIDDHARTH P MALHOTRA. THOUGH NOTHING IS OFFICIAL YET, WE HEAR THE FILM IS BASED ON A TRUE STORY AND WILL HAVE HRITHIK PLAY A WHISTLE BLOWER. WE ALSO HEAR THAT YRF WILL ANNOUNCE THE FILM ON ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY ON SEPTEMBER 27.

Ajay Devgn bags his first YRF film?

It's often said that there are no permanent friends and no permanent enemies in the industry. Everything just boils down to business and the industry will entertain anyone who sells. It's not surprising then that **Ajay Devgn** has signed his first film with Yash Raj Films. According to reports, it's an action-comedy to be directed by **Shiv Rawail**. Readers will remember that in 2012, **Aditya Chopra** and Ajay Devgn had a major fallout when their respective movies – *Jab Tak Hai Jaan* and *Son Of Sardaar* had locked horns at the box-office. The confrontation was over some distribution issues. So much that it had even affected **Kajol** and Aditya Chopra's friendship. But it looks like they have decided to bury the



hatchet and start everything afresh. Guess it makes sense to sign Ajay on, considering he's had the biggest hit this year in *Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior*. The makers will announce this film on their banner's 50th anniversary on September 27.



ABHISHEK BACHCHAN ALL SET TO RESUME WORK ON BIG BULL POST HIS COVID RECOVERY

Abhishek Bachchan surely had a critical time in the last few weeks. He and his entire family were diagnosed with COVID-19. Fortunately, **Amitabh Bachchan**, **Aishwarya Rai Bachchan** and **Aaradhya** healed soon. It was Abhishek who was hospitalised for the longest time. Now that he has been discharged from the hospital, we hear that the actor will resume work soon on *Big Bull*. The film which is based on the life of stockbroker **Harshad Mehta**, who orchestrated the 1992 securities scandal, has Abhishek Bachchan playing the titular role. In a statement to the press, Daanish Gandhi from Ajay Devgn Films said, "I'm glad that Abhishek and his family have recovered. Our first priority is to set up a safe and sanitised facility for him and the rest of the cast where we can film the remaining portions. We've chosen a minimal crew of trusted individuals who will follow all the necessary steps to ensure everyone's safety." Can't wait to see Abhishek bring Harshad Mehta alive through his performance.

NO BIOPIC ON SONU SOOD'S LIFE

Sonu Sood's heroic act during the coronavirus pandemic has made him an icon. Wanting to cash in on his popularity, filmmakers are constantly approaching him to make a biopic on his life. The actor dismissed all speculations saying it was too early to do a biopic. He's however penning down the experiences for his biography. Talking about it, he said, "I want to thank God for making me a catalyst in helping the migrants. While my heart beats for Mumbai, after this movement I feel a part of me lives in the villages of UP, Bihar, Jharkhand, Assam, Uttarakhand and various other states, where I have now found new friends and made deep connections. I have decided to put these experiences, stories that are embedded in my soul forever, in a book." It'll make for an interesting read, alright.





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KANGANA RANAUT JOINS TWITTER

Kangana Ranaut always maintained her distance from social media. But recently she changed her stance after seeing the love and support for the late **Sushant Singh Rajput**. The actress has finally joined Twitter. Explaining her decision to join the social media, she said, "Hello friends, I have been working in films from almost the last 15 years, and during all this time... I was pressured many times to join social media and I have declined a lot many deals wherein the only clause was to join social media, and I had let them go. People have been saying things about me because I wasn't there on social media... even then I didn't join it..." She added, "This year, I have seen the power of social media, and I observed how the whole world has come together in the fight for Sushant, and we have gained success... All this has given me a lot of hope, and I have an aspiration that through this we can launch reforms for new India... and that is the reason for the first time I have come on Twitter...". Interesting much.



Amitabh Bachchan sends hand-written note to Kunal Kemmu

Amitabh Bachchan is known for his sweet gestures and always encouraging good work. The veteran actor sends hand-written notes to actors whose works he likes. And actors have come to covet this note. The latest actor to make the cut is **Kunal Kemmu**. His latest offering *Lootcase* was released on an OTT platform a few weeks back. While the actor's performance was praised by the critics, he didn't expect Amitabh Bachchan's words of praise. The veteran sent him a hand-written note and Kunal Kemmu couldn't contain his excitement. He soon shared the priceless letter on his social media saying, "Whatt! This is just the most awesome thing ever. I have often read or heard about this happening and always wished that one day I would also be deserving of one myself... Thank you so much Amitabh Bachchan Sir. This means so much to me. I'm doing backflips in my head and my heart." Cloud nine vibes for sure.

PRABHAS TO PLAY RAM IN OM RAUT'S ADIPURUSH



Bhushan Kumar, the head honcho of T-series, **Om Raut** and superstar **Prabhas** have come together to make a 3D film - *Adipurush*. It's a screen adaptation of the Indian epic Ramayan that revolves around the triumph of good over evil. Prabhas took to his Instagram account to announce his new project by sharing the logo-look of *Adipurush*. The logo has a golden A and we can see visuals from the epic. The Om Raut directorial is going to be bilingual in Hindi and Telugu. The 3D extravaganza will also be dubbed in Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada and some foreign languages as well. Talking about *Adipurush*, Prabhas shared his excitement saying, "Every role and every character comes with its own challenges, but portraying a character like this comes with tremendous responsibility and pride. I am very excited to portray this character of our Epic especially the way Om has designed it. I am sure the youth of our country will shower all their love on our film."

SAIF ALI KHAN TO PLAY RAAVAN IN PRABHAS' STARRER ADIPURUSH?

After **Om Raut** gave a blockbuster hit in *Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior*, all eyes are on him for his next project. His next, *Adipurush*, has Prabhas playing Lord Ram. And now we hear **Saif Ali Khan** will play Raavan in the film. Earlier too, Saif played the antagonist in *Tanhaji*. Looks like the filmmaker considers Saif a lucky mascot and wants to cast him again. It's said that the makers are going to spend 250 crores on the VFX of the film. *Adipurush* will go on floors next year and will release in 2022. Meanwhile, Saif is excited about becoming a parent once again. This is his fourth time. Quadfather as his sister Soha Ali Khan calls him.



PRIYANKA CHOPRA JONAS RECENTLY ANNOUNCED THAT SHE'D COMPLETED HER MEMOIR *UNFINISHED*. SHE TOOK TO SOCIAL MEDIA TO SHARE A PICTURE OF THE FIRST PRINTED COPY. HER CAPTION READ, "FINISHED. WHAT AN AMAZING FEELING SEEING THESE PAGES PRINTED ON PAPER FOR THE FIRST TIME! #UNFINISHED... COMING SOON!" CAN'T WAIT TO LAY OUR HANDS ON THE COPY.



preview

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



GROOVING TO LIFE

PRIYASHA BHARDWAJ

X FACTOR: HER GO-GETTER ATTITUDE

Priyasha Bhardwaj grew up in Guwahati, Assam before moving to New Delhi for her education. She's a trained Bharatnatyam and Kathak dancer and has also trained in several Western dance forms over the years. She wished to pursue dance as a profession. But the lack of support from her parents landed her in a bank job. A movie buff, Priyasha then tried her hand at theatre and went onto shoot commercials. Her first big break was in a biscuit commercial with Deepika Padukone. She then moved to Mumbai in 2018. Here she started out by doing small roles in Zoya Akhtar's *Made In Heaven*, Sonam Nair's *Kaafir* with Dia Mirza and was also seen in *Aarya*, where she played Sushmita Sen's adorable younger sister. She's keenly looking forward to *Mirzapur 2*, where she plays a character which is totally *hatke* from whatever she has done before.

Meet director Sharan
Sharma and actor
Shivaleeka Oberoi pg 12



Sky's the limit

RAGHUVENDRA SINGH CHATS UP WITH THE DIRECTOR OF *GUNJAN SAXENA: THE KARGIL GIRL*, SHARAN SHARMA

Gunjan Saxena: *The Kargil Girl* is based on the exploits of Flight Lieutenant Gunjan Saxena, the first woman Indian Air Force (IAF) pilot to fly in the combat zone. For a film of this kind, research is critical and director Sharan Sharma was lucky that the real-life Gunjan Saxena was there with him every step of the way. Detailing is critical in depicting the world of the IAF with authenticity and integrity. “Gunjan Ma’am

luckily gave us all the time and attention we needed to be able to tell the story with honesty and with attention to detail in terms of recreating the world of the IAF,” he gushes. When he first called up Gunjan, in February 2017, to broach the idea of making a film on her life, she thought someone was giving her a prank call. Says the director, “She was a bit sceptical and sounded uninterested in our first chat. When I

asked if I could meet her, she said I must carry a letter from Dharma Productions to prove my credentials.” Their first meeting was in Jamnagar. And once they met they kept talking like old friends for close to six hours.

Before they started writing the script, Sharan and his writer Nikhil Mehrotra spent a lot of time with Gunjan and her family, understanding her journey and her experiences. They built the story on

the basis of their interactions. He asserts he just didn’t stop there. He and his team spent months researching the finer nuances of how the IAF functions. Their aim was to recreate the dorms, the uniforms, the crew rooms, the body language of the officers. And Sharan proudly asserts it

was all there minus the smell. Sharan comments that the biggest challenge for a filmmaker when it comes to making a biopic is not just the detailing. One has to focus on the emotional journey of the person as well. And he feels he has done full justice to that aspect as well.

Janhvi Kapoor

“Gunjan Ma’am was a bit sceptical and sounded uninterested in our first chat. When I asked if I could meet her, she said I must carry a letter from Dharma Productions to prove my credentials”



At Gunjan Saxena's home with Janhvi Kapoor

"MS Dhoni always says to respect the process, control the controllable, work with honesty, and not to worry about the results. If you respect the process, the result will take care of itself"

joined the project in August 2018. On their first meeting, Sharan could sense that she was going through a phase where she was more comfortable working with a veteran director, than with a newbie. He frankly told her that he couldn't promise her a 'good' film but he could promise to give his best to the project. Once she was convinced of the script's potential, Janhvi gave her heart to the project.

Sharan was always drawn to films. He studied Business and Film at the University of Southern California, in Los Angeles. Initially, he thought he should work in the business aspect of films. But after a few internships in marketing divisions in film companies in India

and America, he felt more drawn to the storytelling aspect of filmmaking. "I remember watching *Wake Up Sid* in LA with my college friends and being totally blown away by the film," he reminisces. "The film spoke to me in a very personal way. He got Ayan Mukerji's email ID from somewhere and wrote to him about how he loved *Wake Up Sid* and asked him for career advice. Ayan responded a few months later and Sharan landed up as an assistant director on *Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani* and started his journey in the movies. "I then worked with Karan (Johar) sir on *Ae Dil Hai Mushkil* and *Lust Stories*. Actually it was Karan sir who encouraged me to research Gunjan Ma'am's story. His trust, confidence

and belief in me made me believe in myself as a filmmaker," gushes Sharan.

He did possess a fabulous script. But what's written on paper sometimes gets lost in translation when it's transferred on celluloid. And that's where the right casting plays an important role. Sharan believes he's been lucky in his choice of actors and thanks everyone be it Pankaj Tripathy, Angad Bedi, Vineet Kumar Singh or Manav Vij who came to the sets with an open mind and became the air beneath the newcomer's wings. Sharan adds that Janhvi was his only choice for the role, though if he'd made the film ten years ago, then he would've chosen Anushka Sharma. He's worked with Anushka as an AD



With Angad Bedi and Janhvi

and longs to direct her in a film in future.

The director loves to watch cricket-based documentaries and feels there are many cricket-based biopics that can be made in India. He states, "Be it the story of Yuvraj Singh, Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi, Sourav Ganguly or the journey of the Women's Cricket Team. I would love to eventually see a biopic on Virat Kohli too. That would be quite an inspiring story. Currently, I've been reading a lot about Raj Kapoor and watching his films, I think his life will also make for an interesting biopic."

He idolises Dhoni and like his

idol he believes in the purity of the process. "MS Dhoni always says to respect the process, control the controllable, work with honesty, and not to worry about the results. If you respect the process, the result will take care of itself."

It was a mantra he followed diligently throughout the making of *Gunjan Saxena*. He asked his team not to chase the result but to enjoy the process of making the film. Says he, "I am more than happy with the love that the film and the entire team has got. It feels great to see how people have connected with the motivating and inspiring story of Gunjan Ma'am." ■

DARING TO DREAM

RAGHUVENDRA SINGH
CHATS UP WITH
SHIVALEEKA OBEROI
OF *YEH SAALI AASHIQUI*
AND *KHUDA HAAFIZ* FAME

Actors lead an extraordinary life. They have to look good all the time. Every Friday seems to be a litmus test. Like gladiators, they enter the arena with a smile which never wavers even if they lose. Like Olympic athletes, they have to keep striving to go higher, swifter, ahead of the rat pack. But their childhood is just like that of the mango people – big dreams in their eyes, dancing in front of the mirror and mimicking their favourite stars. That's exactly how Shivaleeka Oberoi spent her growing up days. The actress who surprised the audience in her debut film *Yeh Saali Aashiqui* (2019) and later in the OTT release *Khuda Haafiz* (2020), has always been a Hindi film buff. Just like millions of millennial girls, she too idolized Poo from *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* and acted like the ultimate diva while in school. And when her parents asked her to replicate the Kareena act in front of relatives, she would put on the whole diva act without any hesitation. In fact, watching her *bindaas* moves, her mother predicted she was going to become



With Vidyut Jammwal in *Khuda Haafiz*

“Last year there was such a long list of debutantes. I even told mom that this is my debut year with so many new faces. But no complaints, competition is great...”



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an actor. And years later, the prediction has come through. Shivaleeka's grandfather Mahavir Oberoi had produced an action film called *Sheba And Hercules* (1967), starring Randhawa and Vijay Chowdhary. However, he passed away soon after. "My father was barely 17 when my granddad passed away, whatever connections he had went away with him. So there was no one to help my father establish himself in Bollywood. The entire process was the same for me. I had to pave my own path," asserts the self-made actress.

Keeping her Kareena fixation alive, she auditioned as Geet from *Jab We Met* to get admission in Anupam Kher's acting course. While the three-month course was an eye-opener, Shivaleeka decided to further hone her skills by being on a film set. "I kept doing photoshoots and commercials but then somehow after a point, I felt that I had to know more about the process of filmmaking. I discussed it with my family and they too agreed I was on the right track," says the confident actress. Shivaleeka then assisted Sajid Nadiadwala in his debut film as a director - *Kick* (2014). Right from being the clap girl to calling Salman Khan for his take, the actress says it was a wholesome experience for her. "I was pleasantly surprised working with Salman Khan. He was very kind. He had no idea that I wanted to be an actor at first but later told me to follow my heart and just be myself in front of the camera. He was very encouraging," says she, praising the star. She was an assistant on *Housefull 3* (2016) as well.

Her diligence bore fruit and she was soon offered the suspense thriller *Yeh Saali Aashiqui* (2019), where she played a multi-layered character. Shivaleeka credits her director Cherag Ruparel for guiding her through the difficult role. She was nominated in the Filmfare Best Debut (Female) category. Ask her how she felt about it and she points to an interesting fact about her debut year. Says she, "Last year there was such a long list of debutantes. I even told mom that this is my debut year with so many new faces. But no complaints, competition is great, I am lucky that I chose a film that made me stand out."

Ask the actress if she is disappointed about missing a theatrical release for her second film *Khuda Haafiz*, and she says that somehow both her films have got her recognition because of OTT platforms, "The kind of response I'd expected from YSA, did not



“**Whatever Salman Khan did on screen he did it with a lot of dedication. The smallest thing he did in front of the camera actually changed the entire scene**”

come through when the film was in theatre. It came through when it was on OTT. Like people really appreciated each and everything about the film. And I was recognized for my role.” She says it was fun to work in *Khuda Haafiz* with Vidyut Jammwal, who has also made it on his own in Bollywood. Says she, “He is humble and I have never seen him having a bad day on the set. Never seen him getting angry with somebody. His discipline is something that has inspired me.”

The actress has heard about *Kick 2* being made and wishes to be in front of the camera this time. She's a big fan of Salman Khan and after working with him as an AD, she wishes to be his co-star some day. “Whatever he did on screen he did it with a lot of dedication. The smallest thing he did in front of the camera actually changed the entire scene,” she gushes. The actress also wishes to work with youth icons like Kartik Aaryan, Vicky Kaushal and Ayushmann Khurrana. And she hasn't given up her dream of meeting Kareena Kapoor Khan one day. She saw Kareena at the Filmfare Curtain Raiser this year but couldn't meet her idol as there were too many people around. We promise to introduce her to Poo at the next Filmfare gathering... ■



Kareena Kapoor Khan

F&B

fashion and beauty

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

“MAKE-UP IS AN EXTENSION OF ONESELF”

Savleen Manchanda spills some beauty hacks that will make everyone fall in love with make-up all over again...



Sonakshi Sinha



Savleen Manchanda



Masaba Gupta



Vaani Kapoor



Kriti Sanon



Sonam Kapoor Ahuja



Kareena Kapoor Khan



Jaqueline Fernandez



Savleen Manchanda

"The future of make-up is minimalism. The idea is to have good skin that looks fresh and dewy. These things will never go out of style"

MIRROR MAGIC

ANALITA SETH INTERVIEWS MAKE-UP ARTIST SAVLEEN MANCHANDA WHO BELIEVES IN KEEPING IT SIMPLE

A dash of highlighter, a pop of glossy tint, a stroke of perfect liner and your face is transformed. Make-up is nothing short of art. From the exaggerated pancake look of the '70s to the minimalism of the current decade, make-up is more than just some brush strokes and concealers hiding your blemishes. It's a form of expression which helps you flaunt what you've got. Sharing her expertise on the craft, celebrity make-up artist Savleen Manchanda reveals the secrets behind the fairytale world of glamour and beauty...

WHEN DID YOU REALISE YOU WANTED TO BE A MAKE-UP ARTIST?

I was in the eleventh standard and we took an aptitude test. I wanted to be a lawyer but my father asked me to weigh out the pros and cons. He told me that since I loved to dress up and do my make-up, I should

consider my options. He told me to pick a life that I enjoyed. I have no clue how I became a make-up artist. I started eighteen years ago. At that time this profession wasn't so big. There were only two famous names, Mickey Contractor and Ambika Pillai.

DID YOU HAVE

ANY GUIDANCE OR INSPIRATION WHILE GROWING UP?

Mickey Contractor is one of the artists I look upto. When I was a child, I'd travelled to London with my mother. My mother was buying MAC make-up. And I found it curious that there were these beautiful girls who were

helping her out. It looked like a fairyland. I asked my mother about the girls, I even referred to them as fairies. She told me they were make-up artists and were there to help her choose products. I remember telling her then that I want to be like them when I grow up.

HOW IMPORTANT IS MAKE-UP IN CULTIVATING THE ENTIRE LOOK?

Make-up can change an entire look. It, of course, depend on one's personality and is also very personal. For one person, a red lip is an everyday look while for another, it's something they rarely try. Make-up is an extension of oneself and you have to be comfortable with it. I even consider a person's mood when I plan their make-up. For instance, some brides love the fresh make-up look, like Anushka Sharma. On the other hand, there are brides who prefer a

glam look with smokey eyes and soft lips. All this depends on what the person wants and what they're comfortable with.

HOW DIFFERENT IS EDITORIAL MAKE-UP FROM RED CARPET MAKE-UP?

It's different. With editorial, you can push your creative boundaries. It's like selling a fantasy. With red carpet, it's all about glamour. It is dreamy but more relatable than editorial. When I do promotions and events, the make-up is fresh. You don't want the celebrities to look unapproachable.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MAKE-UP TRENDS YOU THINK WILL NEVER GO OUT OF STYLE?

A red lip and winged liner and smokey eyes with nude lip. These are classics. But the future of make-up is minimalism. The idea is to have good skin that looks fresh and dewy. These things will never go out of style. Make-up

is evolving. It's becoming more natural and achievable.

ONE MAKE-UP TREND YOU DON'T LIKE...

I'm not a big fan of baking. I do not like the use of too much powder. I want the skin to look like you're not wearing make-up. The idea is to have someone compliment you and not say that your make-up looks gorgeous.

A MAKE-UP MYTH YOU WISH TO BUST...

Please love your colour. You can look brighter with highlighters. Do not change the foundation colour. Respect your colour and let your skin breathe. Don't layer it up with too much foundation.

ONE LOOK YOU LOVE THE MOST FROM YOUR OWN LOOKBOOK...

Call me narcissistic but I love all my looks. I've been blessed to have worked with people with beautiful skin and features. I love doing a smokey eye on Kareena Kapoor Khan, I love

ONE BEAUTY HACK YOU LEARNT ON THE JOB...

★ Prep your skin well so you only have to conceal wherever necessary. This way you can avoid heavy usage of foundation.

★ Whenever doing your eye make-up, clear up under the eye with a wipe after it's done. Moisturise it and then do the base. This way you can avoid powdering your face.



Sonakshi Sinha



Yami Gautam



Chitrangda Singh



Sonam Kapoor Ahuja

"Make-up is an extension of oneself and you have to be comfortable with it. I even consider a person's mood when I plan their make-up"



FIVE MAKE-UP ESSENTIALS FOR ALL SEASONS...

- ★ CONCEALER
- ★ BROW PENCIL
- ★ TINT, IT'S MULTIPURPOSE
- ★ MASCARA
- ★ CONTOUR PALETTE



doing cut-crease and eyeliners on Rhea Kapoor and Sonakshi Sinha. So I can't pick one I love the most.

WHO ARE THE OTHER MAKE-UP ARTISTS YOU LIKE RIGHT NOW?

As I said, Mickey Contractor is like a guru. I love Anil Chinnappa. I'm also obsessed with Pat McGrath. I think she is the best. I also like Nikki Makeup and Terry.

ONE CELEBRITY, ACROSS THE GLOBE THAT YOU'D LOVE TO WORK WITH?
Rihanna. I'm obsessed with her.

HOW ACCORDING TO YOU HAS THE PROCESS CHANGED SINCE THE LOCKDOWN?

Everyone has become more safety-conscious. You have to clean and disinfect more cautiously. On the set, you have alcohol sprays to clean your products. Everyone on the set is more cautious. There are people who remind you to sanitise every twenty minutes. It was definitely a little uncomfortable initially, with the mask and PPE kit. But I've missed work so much that I'm happy to be back. ■



Deepika Padukone



Kiara Advani



Esha Gupta

"Mickey Contractor is like a guru. I love Anil Chinnappa. I'm also obsessed with Pat McGrath. I think she is the best. I also like Nikki Makeup and Terry"



Kriti Sanon

exclusives

what's on their mind?

SOARING HIGH!

It was only a few years ago that I started seeing my mother as a woman. There was in some way an acceptance of her as a person, as an individual, as a human being... one who has likes and desires

Vidya Balan on relationships and more...

PHOTOGRAPH: PAVITR SAITH






THE QUEEN RETURNS

She slays with every evocative performance of hers. From the sublime to the risqué, from the empathetic to the burlesque, is there anything VIDYA BALAN can't do? ANURADHA CHOUDHARY probes into the mind of an A-list empress

If there's one thing she knows for sure, it's how to galvanise the screen. And very few do it better than Vidya Balan. Whether it's playing the risqué role of Silk Smitha in The Dirty Picture, a late night radio DJ with a suggestive overtone in Tumhari Sulu, a woman scientist in Mission Mangal to the sublime sorcerer of numbers in Shakuntala Devi... it's all in a day's work for the actress. She does it all with supreme ease. Just like that. And it begs the question. Is there anything she can't do? Not much. She's fast becoming, if she hasn't already, a one woman show. In an industry, which puts its money where its hero is, Vidya Balan has shown that she doesn't need a male star to get going. She's a force unto herself, who's more than capable of setting the cash registers a ringing. In fact, she has cocked a snook at all the stereotypes the industry holds close to its heart. They said actresses had to have svelte figures for the screen...Really? They said actresses couldn't carry a film on their shoulder... come again? They said actresses need male stars to give a fillip to their careers...now, now. And she does it just like that, making everything look so easy on screen. Her latest Shakuntala Devi is a celebration of this ingenious woman. It's a celebration of her unconventional ways, her free-spiritedness and her magic on screen... it shows how lucky we are to be living in the era of Vidya Balan. We catch up with the actress post the release of Shakuntala Devi. And this is what she had to say...

PHOTOGRAPHS:
PAVITR SAITH
HAIR: SHALAKA
BHOSLE
MAKE UP:
HARSHAL UMESH
JARIWALA
STYLIST: PRANAY
JAITLEY AND
SHOUNAK AMONKAR



“
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SHE WAS ACTUALLY JUST
BEING PROTECTIVE. FOR
EXAMPLE, WHEN
I WANTED TO JOIN FILMS
SHE WAS SO SCARED
”

Outfit: SVA Couture

Belt: Topshop

Bracelets: Deepa Gurnani,
Radhika Agrawal & Ayana Silver Jewellery

Rings: Vandals at Mahesh Notandass

Shoes: Melissa



THERE WAS SO MUCH JOY SHAKUNTALA DEVI DERIVED FROM NUMBERS. I HAD TO BE AS EASY AND AS FRIENDLY WITH NUMBERS... BECAUSE SHE DID IT WITH A CERTAIN FLAIR, FLAMBOYANCE, EXUBERANCE... IT WAS ALMOST LIKE SHE'D SAY ABRACADABRA AND THE ANSWER WOULD APPEAR

Outfit: Sva Couture
Belt: Topshop
Bracelets: Deepa Gurnani, Radhika Agarwal & Ayana Silver Jewellery
Rings: Vandals at Mahesh Notandass
Shoes: Melissa

How happy are you with the reaction to *Shakuntala Devi*?

I'm over the moon. It's really better than I'd imagined or could hope for. When I watched the film, I was happy that we'd made the film we wanted to. We told the story exactly the way we wanted to. If I may say so, everyone on the team felt proud. Anu (Menon, director) pushed us to give our best. So, there was a lot of satisfaction but the cherry on the cake is the audience appreciation. Since the film was on Amazon Prime and not in theatres, I didn't know how the reactions would come in. You know people stayed up to watch the film because it released on July 31 at midnight. By the time I woke up the next day, people had started sending me messages. And I was like, "Oh my god!". The reactions have been overwhelming. The reviews were lovely. People are watching it repeatedly and every time they're watching it, they're reaching out. There are new things that have touched them in every viewing.

What attracted you to the film in the first place?

The fact that it was *Shakuntala Devi*. Of course, when Anu Menon came to me, all I knew about *Shakuntala Devi* was that she was a mathematical wizard, she was known as the human computer and that she's in the Guinness Book Of World Records. I thought that was a good enough reason to make a biopic on her. But I was fascinated by what Anu Menon told me. Her take on the story... how she wanted to tell *Shakuntala Devi*'s story through the eyes of her daughter, blew my mind. Also, I was getting to play her over a span of 40 years. For an actor that is exciting and challenging at the same time. I felt she was a woman way ahead of her time and she was



so much more than just a mathematician. So, I told her to start writing it. That took a lot of time because there was so much information. She worked on the script for three years. This was a passion project for her. With every draft that she brought to me, I felt even more strongly that I wanted to do this film.

How much did you prep for the film?

There was a lot of prep because she had a way with numbers. There was so much joy she derived from them. She saw math in everything. Though I am someone who enjoyed math at school, I had to exude that. I had to be as easy and

Outfit & Bag: Pero
Earrings: Radhika
Agrawal

I'M SURE THIS (LOCKDOWN) WAS THE TIME WHEN A LOT OF PEOPLE HAD TO CONFRONT THE TRUTH ABOUT THEIR RELATIONSHIPS. THANKFULLY, IT WAS ALL GOOD HERE... ABOUT MARRIAGE, I JUST THINK IF IT WORKS, IT WORKS AND IF IT DOESN'T, IT DOESN'T

as friendly with numbers. I remember having a lot of conversations with Anu Menon about that because my main concern was that the math should show. Because she did it with a certain flair, flamboyance, exuberance... it almost seemed like a magic show. It was almost like she'd say *Abracadabra* and the answer would appear. To capture that was most crucial

because math isn't something that gives most people joy. That required a lot of preparation. Of course, reading about her, watching her videos and also listening to all the anecdotes that her daughter and son-in-law, Anupama Banerjee and Ajay Abhaya Kumar, shared with Anu Menon helped a lot. Also the accent..., I trained a lot for that too with Vikas Kumar, who is the founder of 'Strictly

Speaking'. They train actors with their diction. As a South Indian, I was conscious not to speak Hindi like my parents. Most people of my generation don't. While growing up, we had North Indian neighbours, so I picked up the language. But then to bring the South Indian accent back, was interesting because this was like an unlearning of sorts. Small things like the way she would say, "Shuwer" not "Sure". Even when she goes to London and gets groomed by Javier, her English improves but you know when people have an accent, it still shows up. So there's a very fine balance. Your grammar may improve, but the accent is difficult to give up. I've met lots of people like that. So that fine balance also was a joy to crack.



Shakuntala Devi

When you see her videos, you see she's got this flourish, the hand gestures and all... And you weren't impersonating her but you still got it all alive. How did you work that out?

The attempt was to capture the essence of Shakuntala. There is no point impersonating someone. I'm Vidya Balan playing Shakuntala Devi. I just tried to capture her essence. That's all I focused on. I'm grateful to Anupama and Ajay for all that they shared with us about her as a person. In fact, today Youtube is filled with videos of her. I

Outfit: Vedika M
Jewellery: Shashi
NYC
Rings: Eurumme
Shoes: Inochhi by
Deepali Khanna

“YOU KNOW WHEN I'M IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA, NOTHING ELSE MATTERS BECAUSE THAT GIVES ME THE GREATEST JOY. IT'S IN BETWEEN, WHEN I'M NOT IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA, THAT THESE PROBLEMS TURN UP



was like, "Where were these videos when I was doing my research?" There's so much more information about her out there today, I'm happy about that.

Most critics felt that seeing the movie through her daughter's eyes wasn't being kind to Shakuntala Devi because she was more than just a mother. Do you think that?

Personally, this was the story we wanted to tell. I think it gave a more rounded perspective. It could have been boring to just talk about her

accomplishments. You needed to see her as a full-bodied person, who felt hurt, anger, possessive...Of course, everyone is entitled to their own opinion. I personally feel that this was the best way the story could have been told. Also, we've never seen such an explosive mother-daughter relationship on screen. You've seen father-son relationships, you've seen mother-son relationships, but you've never seen mother-daughter relationships. Of course, her accomplishments you'd have seen any way the film was made. But here, you're

seeing her as a mother, daughter and wife besides seeing her as a genius.

If you were asked to review the movie, what would it be like?

It's exactly the film we set out to make. I feel proud of that. Everything has worked out beautifully. You see her as a genius, you see her as a person through the eyes of her daughter alongside her personal accomplishments... and there's heart, there's humour. My review would be a 10/5. But you can't blame me because I'm extremely close to the film. You feel that about every film and I feel that much more about this.

This is the first time you were working with a female director. How was that experience? Does gender make any difference?

On the set, not at all. People ask me what's the difference between a male and a female director? I have to wrap my head around it. Maybe she's a lot more collaborative. Women generally tend to take everyone along, that's how we've been trained, that's how we've been conditioned... to keep it together. Ego can have negative connotations and I feel there's less of that. Otherwise, she just was a director on the set doing her job and doing a bloody good job. Where it made a difference, I feel, was a woman telling a woman's story through the eyes of another woman. It was Anu telling Shakuntala's story through the eyes of Anupama Banerjee... As a woman, you understand other women better just like men understand other men better. I've told a lot of women stories but they've all been told through a male lens. I think that was a definite advantage.



“PEOPLE ASK ME WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A MALE AND A FEMALE DIRECTOR? I HAVE TO WRAP MY HEAD AROUND IT. MAYBE ANU (MENON) WAS A LOT MORE COLLABORATIVE. WOMEN GENERALLY TEND TO TAKE EVERYONE ALONG... THAT'S HOW WE'RE CONDITIONED... TO KEEP IT TOGETHER”

Did you find any similarities between you and Shakuntala Devi?

Yeah. The easiest similarity is that both of us laugh a lot. I've been told after people watched the film that both of us have a wicked sense of humour. But she was a free spirit and I'm working towards being free-spirited.

Talking about mother-daughter relationships, what was your relationship with your mother like? Did you have these kinds of burst ups with her?

Lots of clashes. That's a given in any mother-daughter relationship. Of course, in the movie, it's a little more explosive. Ours wasn't like that. But there were moments of explosion. In fact, at one point in my life, I fought the most with my mother. Maybe my mother's protectiveness sometimes got to me because I was like, "Why can't you have more faith in me?" She was actually just being protective. For example, when I wanted to join films she was so scared. This was a world unknown to us. I remember she used to dissuade me and it used to make me feel that she doesn't have faith in me, my talent. Today with age, maturity and



“WHEN YOUR FILMS DON'T WORK, OR MAYBE BECAUSE I TAKE IT TOO PERSONALLY, I BEGAN TO QUESTION A LOT OF THINGS ABOUT MYSELF. IT'S BECAUSE LAGATAAR NAHI CHAL RAHI THI NA FILMS (FILM AFTER FILM WASN'T EARNING MONEY). I WAS THINKING WHAT AM I DOING WRONG? IT MAKES YOU CONFRONT YOUR WORST FEARS

experience, I can see that. That time I felt she thinks I'm not good enough. Initially, I felt she was standing in the way of my dreams. But after I went through a spate of rejections down south, she started praying more than anyone else that this dream of mine works out. She saw my passion and in the end, every parent wants their child

to be happy. So, even though she showed reluctance and did not want me to do this, in the end, she was praying the hardest. I went to my parents' house to watch the film on the day it was released. It was my parents, my sister and her family and Siddharth (Siddharth Roy Kapur) and me. At the end of the film, she

got up and I could see that she was holding back. I put my arm around her and she cried. She is a woman of very few words but she cried and I said, "This is my tribute to you." I just wanted to let her know that I realised she'd given up so much for us.

We often don't see our mothers as women...

Outfit: Torani
Earrings: Vandals at
Mahesh Notandass



“
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BUT I'VE TO SAY
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DETERRED ME FROM
MOVING AHEAD**
”

she's ever said this to anyone and she said, "No."

You've completed 15 years in showbiz. What has been your highest peak as an actor and your lowest ebb as a human being?

Highest peak as an actor... There have been quite a few times thankfully. Every time you think this is the ultimate, something changes. Sometimes you go a few steps down, sometimes you go even higher. That's just how it is. But as a human being, I see them as lessons. Maybe the time when after five back-to-back hits and a lot of critical appreciation, there were seven flops. That was a tough time.

As a person?

As a person also. When your films don't work, or maybe because I take it too personally, I began to question a lot of things about myself. It's because *lagataar nahi chal rahi thi* na films (Film after film wasn't earning money). I was thinking what am I doing wrong? It makes you confront your worst fears. Yes, if in that period you're able to confront your worst fears and insecurities, you come out on the other side stronger. I was also going through terrible health issues at the time. I don't know what came first, the chicken or the egg... whether it was all this stress that led to me going through ill health or it was my health that further compounded how I was feeling. It's tough to tell but that was probably when I felt my lowest.

Did you ever lose confidence in yourself at that time?

Yeah. I think I did. Thankfully, I've always been appreciated for my work. So that was something to hold on to. But in terms of commercial success, because it was evading me at

Yeah. It was only a few years ago that I started seeing my mother as a woman. There was in some way an acceptance of her as a person, as an individual, as a human being... one who has likes and desires. Less than a year ago, I asked her, "Did you have any dreams or ambitions? Did you want to do anything?" She said something that actually blew my mind. She wanted to be a singer. But there was no question about that then. Her father got her married and

I don't think she even expressed to anyone that she would like to be a singer. I don't think at that time, any woman in their circle had a career. She's learnt music throughout her life, even today she learns music. She's learnt classical Carnatic music, now she's learning Hindustani and light classical. You know I've spoken about my dreams, my sister has spoken about her dreams. We've spoken about our drive, ambitions and all that. It was only last year that I asked her this. I asked her if

Outfit: Falguni
Shane Peacock
Earrings: Swarovski
Rings: Ayana Silver
Jewellery



“**MOHIT SURI AND I DIDN'T REALLY SPEND THE KIND OF TIME TOGETHER THAT I'M USED TO SPENDING WITH MY DIRECTORS. THERE WAS NO DISAGREEMENT. BUT WE WERE SEEING THE FILM, THE CHARACTERS IN A DIFFERENT WAY**”

that point, I wondered what had changed. I wondered if it had anything to do with the size of my body? For someone who's grown up with being called fat, everything in life boils down to the size of your body. I was also the biggest I've been at that point. I definitely was thinking that everything is only about the body. That's when I began working with a healer, who I've been working with for a

while now. And I confronted my worst fears. That helped me accept myself even more than before. I finally stopped judging myself at the cost of my body. If *The Dirty Picture* liberated me and made me comfortable about my body, this phase made me realise that it's my body which is keeping me alive. If I'm going to hate it, then I might as well be dead. I think my body was reacting to the negative

thoughts by spiralling into a health issue.

Did your body ever deter you on the screen?

Thankfully not. You know when I'm in front of the camera, nothing else matters because that gives me the greatest joy. It's in between, when I'm not in front of the camera, that these problems turn up.

Looking back, is there any director you've disagreed the most with in your 15-year career?

Not disagreed but Mohit Suri is someone... We spoke very little to each other. We didn't really spend the kind of time that I'm used to spending with my directors. There was no disagreement. But we were seeing the film, the characters in a different way. I think we didn't get each other. I watched *Aashiqui 2* and I was like, "Wow!" But that kind of thing did not happen between me and him, which is fine.

You think that affected *Hamari Adhuri Kahani*?

I don't know. Obviously, there were things in the film that for some reason, people did not connect with that much. But it's amazing that people watch it on television and absolutely love it. So many people I've met tell me their favourite film of mine is *Hamari Adhuri Kahani*. Sometimes everything falls into place and sometimes things don't. Maybe this also must have contributed. I don't know.

Tell me what have the last few months taught you?

The last few months have taught me that I'm capable of a lot more than I think. I got into the kitchen for the first time. I tried my hand at cooking, which was a big deal for me. I hated even the thought of it before. But I

Outfit: Aarti Vijay Gupta
Bracelets: Ayana Silver Jewellery & Eurumme
Rings: Eurumme

actually tried my hand at it and realised that cooking is not that tough... *(laughs)* good cooking maybe. But cooking per se isn't. God forbid, if there's another situation like this, at least I know I won't feel helpless if there's no cook. It's not something I enjoy, but it is something I can do. Also, it was a new experience to share household chores with my husband. Life wouldn't have ever given us an experience like that. You take so much for granted in life, it made me realise the worth of those things. You also realise you can become self-reliant. I was doing all these self-shot videos. You learn that, if push comes to shove, you can set up the camera even if the camera is your phone, you can do whatever minimal stuff and get by. Previously, I wouldn't shoot a video if there wasn't someone to hold the camera. Even if it was a casual video in which I didn't have to get dressed. We underestimate ourselves. Also, I've got immense gratitude for the life I have.

What have you learnt about Siddharth in the last few months?

That he's a trooper, an absolute trooper. If there's a need, he'll do it. He did everything around the house. Also, both of us are finicky about cleanliness, so we're on the same page. Who would have imagined something like this? But I realised that both of us were just making do with whatever was possible. He's very easy to be around. I've known that from before but given these circumstances, I realised it all the more. It's been tough for people and like I said, I'm very grateful for the life I have, for the resources, for being in the comfort of my own home and having company. A lot of people got stuck at home alone.



“IT WAS GREAT TO BE AT HOME TOGETHER FOR SUCH A GREAT EXPANSE OF TIME. WE (SIDHARTH AND I) COULD ENJOY THE HOUSE, WE WERE ENJOYING BEING WITH EACH OTHER AND YET, WE WERE DOING OUR OWN THING. IT'S NOT LIKE WE WERE 24X7 TOGETHER. IT WAS A HEALTHY SPACE WHERE EACH ONE WAS DOING THEIR OWN THING AND ALSO SPENDING TIME TOGETHER”

I met a friend recently, who'd lost so much weight because she was working from home. So sometimes she was just having Maggi and sometimes boiled rice and dal. You realise there's so much to be grateful for.

Did you have any new insights into marriage?

I'm sure this was the time when a lot of people had to confront the truth about their relationship. Thankfully, it was all good here. It was great to be at home together for such a great expanse of time. We could enjoy the house, we were enjoying being with each other and yet, we were doing our own thing. It's not like we were 24x7 together. It was a healthy space where each one was doing their own thing and also spending time together. Sometimes, he would drive me to get groceries. About marriage, I just think that if it works, it works and if it doesn't, it doesn't.

As an outsider, what is your take on nepotism debate which is raging in the industry ...

Nepotism is a reality not just in the film industry, but everywhere. It happens in the music industry, it happens in business families, the medical profession, politics etc. We've had a dynastic government in India for the longest time. So nepotism is a reality. But, I have to say that it has never deterred me from moving forward. It's never come in my way, so my experience has been absolutely fine.



THE LAST FEW MONTHS HAVE TAUGHT ME THAT I'M CAPABLE OF A LOT MORE THAN I THINK. I GOT INTO THE KITCHEN FOR THE FIRST TIME. I TRIED MY HAND AT COOKING, WHICH WAS A BIG DEAL FOR ME... I REALISED THAT COOKING IS NOT THAT TOUGH... (LAUGHS) GOOD COOKING MAYBE. BUT COOKING PER SE ISN'T. GOD FORBID, IF THERE'S ANOTHER SITUATION LIKE THIS, AT LEAST I KNOW I WON'T FEEL HELPLESS IF THERE'S NO COOK AVAILABLE



“IN TERMS OF COMMERCIAL SUCCESS, BECAUSE IT WAS EVADING ME AT THAT POINT, I WONDERED WHAT HAD CHANGED. I WONDERED IF IT HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE SIZE OF MY BODY? FOR SOMEONE WHO’S GROWN UP WITH BEING CALLED FAT, EVERYTHING IN LIFE BOILS DOWN TO THE SIZE OF YOUR BODY”

So you’ve never been replaced with a star kid in a project?

No, never. At least, not that I’m aware of. Once the film has come to me, it has stayed with me. But I do think that I’ve been fortunate.

What do you have to say to people who are actually going through all this?

It must be tough. I don’t come from a film family. I don’t know the workings of the film industry. When I used to ask my parents about what they think I should do, they’d say, “Do what your heart says.”

That was their advice because even they didn’t know how this place functions. When people leave their home and come here to make a career and then when they feel unsupported, I think that can be shattering.

According to my experiences, I’d say the world is what you make of it. You just have to keep moving forward with faith. It’s not like I’ve not faced rejections. I’ve had huge ups and downs. But, I’m someone who has faith in the goodness of people. That’s how I’ve been brought up. I feel the Universe has my back. I feel that it is a fair world. So, I think things have worked out for me.

Lastly, tell me what else is on your mind?

Now we’re just talking about how soon we can start shooting *Sherni*. I was shooting for it when the pandemic hit us all. So we’re all figuring things, keeping fingers crossed and saying let’s see if we’re able to resume it, post the rains. And then, of course, I’m reading scripts. So hopefully I can decide what I’m doing next. But I also feel you can’t decide until work actually starts, shoots start... I guess things will get clearer once we get back to work. ■

It's my life...

**JITESH PILLAI
TALKS TO THE FEISTY
BHUMI PEDNEKAR**



PHOTOGRAPHS: TARAS TARAPORVALA / FEMINA

Bhumi Pednekar.

Talk to her for ten minutes and you know she's a true-blue actor. And that's a good thing. Because filmmakers are increasingly turning away from subjects which portray leading women as dollyed up mannequins. And they are doing it because the audience is showing signs of being fed up of mere fluff and want a taste of something substantial. Normal and relatable is the order of the day and Bhumi fits right in the new order of things. We would even be bold enough to say that she has been one of the pioneers of this new normal. She started off by playing a sassy overweight wife in Dum Laga Ke Haisha. And had no qualms playing a sharpshooting grandmother in her last release Saand Ki Aankh. She's still in awe of movies, of movie-makers. Her replies are forthright, witty and introspective. She's both wise and foolish, content and hungry: Raring to run, and enjoying the serenity of the lockdown...

→ With Manoj Bajpayee and Sushant Singh Rajput in Sonchiriya

↓ With Taapsee Pannu in Saand Ki Aankh



WHAT'S YOUR LOCK DOWN ROUTINE LIKE?

Currently, I'm just spending a lot of time with my mom and my sister. Times like these make you realise that there is nothing above the safety of the people you love. I'm reading a lot. I'm going through my school history books. I'm

trying to understand programming because computers have always been so alien to me. I'm studying climate change because that's something dear to me. And I'm cooking. One day my mom and sister gave me so much attitude. I wanted banana bread and I was like

What I've achieved from Saand Ki Aankh, even a big-ticket film couldn't have done for me. I want to leave behind a legacy of good cinema. And I know Saand Ki Aankh is part of that list. I know Sonchiriya is part of that list. Yes they didn't make hundred crores. But I could never own a hundred-crore film, like I own these films

I'll do it myself. I'm not dependent on you guys anymore. I followed the recipe and I baked banana bread and since then I have not looked back. (Laughs) Now I'm Bhumi the baker. And I'm working out.

DO YOU FEEL THERE ARE TOO MANY DON'TS IN YOUR LIFE THAN DO'S AS AN ACTOR?

It's been four years and eight outstanding films.

And the reason I could make this space for me is because my first film was a big don't. No one could have imagined that there could be a film about a beautiful, overweight, firecracker of a girl. I just jumped into it. I was seventeen when I joined YRF. I don't come from a film family. Everyone thought I was crazy. My family couldn't help me. I just took my chances and look -- you and I are having this conversation right now...

IT'S INTERESTING THAT YOU ADDRESSED THE TOPIC OF BODY SHAMING

made me a confident person. Now I don't care if I'm a couple of kgs heavier. There was a phase when I was shooting for Sonchiriya and people were like, 'Oh my God, you look so thin, you look sick.' I was like it's my choice, I'll do what is right for my character.

LET'S TALK OF TWO ROLES YOU DID LAST YEAR, WHICH SHATTERED STEREOTYPES - SONCHIRIYA AND SAAND KI AANKH

My selfish motive of doing a film is personal growth as an actor, a great opportunity that is going to showcase another side of my

BECAUSE OUR MOVIES CONSTANTLY PLAY UP TO A STEREOTYPE OF A PRETTY, FAIR, PERFECT BODY. Not just the showbiz. It involves years and years of social conditioning. Luckily, when I joined cinema, there was a movement against stereotypes. I feel happy that I could be part of the revolution and now I feel good celebrating my flaws on celluloid. It has

talent, the greed to work in a good story and with good directors. And then comes all the other social fringes that are attached to that. Yes, I am a proud feminist and I'm trying to use my craft to bring about change. I'll start off with Sonchiriya. I am a huge Abhishek Chaubey fan. I have loved all his films especially Ishqiya and Udda Punjab.



self-centered person to somebody who actually cares about others happened because of that girl. I am a young woman, right? How did I develop such strong maternal instincts for someone? But that girl transformed me. She started living with me and brought such happiness in my life. I love her. I speak to these children every Sunday through a whatsapp video call. The experience that Khushi had while shooting for *Sonchiriya* has changed her life as well.

was turned into a village. There was a *chulha* and I would get the *upli*, I would go pick up dry sticks to make that fire. One day he got me fifteen kgs of *akkha Haldi* that I had to grind into powder. I'd use the *chakki* to make *aata* everyday. Then I'd cook for everyone on that *chulha*. And then I would go for my physical training. I learnt the Bundelkhandi language, it's very different from Hindi. Abhishek changed my craft. Usually they say that your eyes speak a lot but Abhishek said you are an

I met this girl Khushi, who plays Sonchiriya. She is like a younger sister, a daughter to me...I've been so fortunate that through her I made a family of 250-300 children in the ashram from where we cast her in Morena in Chambal. Those children have become part of my life. And that switch from being a self-centered person to somebody who actually cares about others happened because of this girl

He called me right after *Shubh Mangal Saavdhan*. That year was so amazing. I got calls from Zoya (Akhtar), Karan (Johar), Abhishek (Chaubey) and I was like wow, thank God. I met him and he gave me a story narration. I was like I have to do this. I had a few questions like at my age, do I want to play a mother to a fifteen year old? Everybody was like why go to small-town India again? But I knew in

a film like this and with a director like Abhishek Chaubey, he was going to keep at it till I sparked. It was a different world and what my character did, what she stood for, the kind of courage she had, I was blown away by her. And she barely speaks in the film. It was a challenge and he did tell me that it was going to be tough both emotionally and physically. *Sonchiriya* changed my life.

IT CHANGED YOU HOW?

I met this girl Khushi, who plays *Sonchiriya*. She is like a younger sister, a daughter to me. She comes on all my film sets. I've been so fortunate that through her I made a family of 250-300 children in the *ashram* from where we cast her in *Morena in Chambal*. Those children have become part of my life. And that switch from being a

TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR PREP WORK FOR THE ROLE.

My diet changed. I was on a carb-heavy diet. I completely stopped eating meat. I had to carry this kid and run throughout the film. My trainer would give me a backpack that was about thirty-thirty five kgs and I would run barefoot carrying that. I would go in the morning to Abhishek's office. The courtyard there

expressive person, just cut it down. We would wake up at 4 am and walk for kilometers. There were mosquitos and insects. There was nowhere to go to the bathroom, you had to hold it in, there was no option.

WAS IT A SURREAL MOMENT FOR YOU HOLDING THE FILMFARE TROPHY FOR SAAND KI AANKH?

You heard the three minute speech that



earlier, for purely selfish reasons, for my personal growth. And what I've achieved from *Saand Ki Aankh*, even a big-ticket film couldn't have done for me. I want to leave behind a legacy of good cinema and I know *Saand Ki Aankh* is part of that list. I know *Sonchiriya* is part of that list. Yes they didn't make hundred crores. But i could never own a hundred-crore film, like I own these films. It comes with a cost but it's ok.

ANY OF YOUR COLLEAGUES' ROLES THAT YOU'VE SEEN RECENTLY THAT YOU WISHED YOU'D DONE. Definitely *Gully Boy* and I'm not going to

say Alia's part. I'm going to say all of them from Ranveer Singh, Alia Bhatt, Siddhant Chaturvedi to Vijay Verma -- all of them. That film is outstanding! I loved *Kapoor & Sons*. I'm not going to pick one specific performance because I envy all good performers. I watched *Thappad* yesterday, all of them have done fantastic jobs. And I loved what Ayushmann did in *Article 15*. I would love to do a film like *Article 15*.

WHAT WOULD BE A GOOD PICKUP LINE AND A BAD PICKUP LINE TO WOO YOU?

Listen, people have stopped using pickup lines. The world has become very boring now.

YOU HAVE NOT BEEN IN A RELATIONSHIP FOR A LONG TIME?

Not in the last few years.

WHY IS THAT?

You've seen the films I'm doing. I'm in *Chambal*, Haryana. I don't have time.

YOU DON'T MIND DATING A CO-STAR OR DIRECTOR?

It's very simple. Firstly, it's me plus two other women in my life. So the man who can handle the madness that the Pednekar's come with, is more than welcome. But I don't think there's anyone so ballsy whom I've met yet. ■

It's special because I don't think I'll ever be part of a film like Saand Ki Aankh again, where I feel so happy sharing the stage with my sister-in-arms. You know that notion that two actors can't be friends is all bullshit because for a film like Saand Ki Aankh, it would have felt incomplete without Taapsee

I gave. I was so overwhelmed. It was special also because I don't think I'll ever be part of a film like *Saand Ki Aankh* again, where I feel so happy sharing the stage with my sister-in-arms. You know that notion that two actors can't be friends is all bullshit because for a film like *Saand Ki Aankh* it would have felt incomplete without Taapsee. A lot of people asked me why do you want to play an old woman on screen? Are you crazy? This is the

peak of your career. When I do a film like *Saand Ki Aankh*, it comes at a cost. Me saying no to many other bigger films.

DO YOU REGRET SAYING NO TO ANY FILM?

I get a mix bag of offers. I had a big-ticket film as well. But when I chose to do a film like *Saand Ki Aankh*, it's, as I said



At the Filmfare Awards with Taapsee Pannu

Flying Solo

PARINEETI CHOPRA CHATS
WITH JITESH PILLAAI ABOUT
THE LOCKDOWN, CAREER, AND
HER SINGLETON STATUS

Parineeti Chopra can talk nineteen-to-the dozen about any topic on earth. And most of her talk is unfiltered. Though she says she has learnt to mind her ps and qs now. But it's her frankness, her candid wit that makes her so interesting. She's like that when it comes to her roles as well.

On-screen too, her characters tend to come off as real. She puts so much conviction in her portrayals that one can't help but connect with them. They appear as real people, as raw flesh and blood creatures. Like everyone else, Parineeti too has been affected by the coronavirus pandemic but she refuses to let the fear and the anxiety get to her. She's aware of what's happening around her and isn't immune to the sufferings of the common man.

Excerpts from a talkathon held over a video call, where she airs her views about the pandemic, her career, love and life in general...



The Girl On The Train



Saina

HOW MANY OF YOUR FILMS ARE READY TO RELEASE?

Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar was ready to release, and then this lockdown happened. *The Girl On The Train* is not ready yet, they were in the process of editing and locking the final cut. Same with *Saina* (Saina Nehwal's biopic). Both these films are so important to me that I can bet my life on them. I've worked harder

I COME FROM AMBALA. WHERE WE DON'T HAVE A/C ROOMS WITH 24X7 ELECTRICITY, WATER, GAS AND WI-FI. I CANNOT TELL YOU WHAT THE SITUATION IS LIKE IN AND AROUND AMBALA. PEOPLE ARE LITERALLY BANKRUPT BECAUSE THEY WORK ON DAILY WAGES



on them compared to any other film before. We are still traditional and feel OTT is a compromised release. But how long can they wait? Because ultimately this is a business. I'm not going to sit in a theatre and watch a film, so how can I expect the audience to come in right now. Besides, no one has an active source of income. Let's see what happens.


NO ONE HAS BEEN IN SUCH A SITUATION BEFORE...

Even when the lockdown wasn't officially announced, I remember screaming at my parents saying, "You guys are not understanding what this virus is? Why can't you sit at home?" My dad and mom were refusing to understand what the big deal was. They were like, "Why should we lock ourselves in our house?

This is something that is happening in other countries." Five days later their thinking completely changed. My dad said that this reminded him of wartime. This lockdown doesn't seem to be ending.

CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT THE FARMERS AND DAILY WAGE WORKERS MUST BE GOING THROUGH?

I come from Ambala. Where we don't have A/C rooms with 24x7 electricity, water, gas and wi-fi. I cannot tell you what the situation is like in and around Ambala. People are literally bankrupt because they work on daily wages. We should be thankful that we have enough money in our bank accounts to

A woman with long, wavy brown hair is sitting on a wooden pier that extends over clear, turquoise water. She is wearing a white, form-fitting, one-piece swimsuit with a halter-style neckline and a gold-colored pendant. She is barefoot, with her legs crossed at the ankles. The pier is made of dark wood and has a metal railing. The water is very clear, showing the sandy bottom and some small fish. The sky is a pale blue.

**I'M NOT GOING TO SIT IN
A THEATRE AND WATCH
A FILM, SO HOW CAN I
EXPECT THE AUDIENCE
TO COME IN RIGHT NOW.
BESIDES, NO ONE HAS
AN ACTIVE SOURCE OF
INCOME. LET'S SEE
WHAT HAPPENS**



get through the next six months. It's eating into our savings but at least we are not fighting for survival. I hate people who are putting up selfies and saying, "I'm bored. Don't know what to do." I loved Farah Khan's video in which she asked actors to stop posting workout videos. I live alone, my staff is gone and I'm doing all the housework myself. I'm not complaining.

DO YOU HAVE ANY PROCESS AS AN ACTOR?

I was blindly doing films. I realised who I was as an actress while doing *The Girl On The Train* - Day one, scene one, shot one. I entered the set and my director (Ribhu Dasgupta) said, "*Achcha yeh sab jo tum karti aa rahi ho... yeh sab rubbish hai. Abhi hum log kaam shuru kartein hain*" (Whatever you've done upto now is rubbish. Now we shall start work). He said it so bluntly, and I was like, "What? Are you trying to say I've not done any good work in my life?"

He's like, "*Nahin, Nahin, sab achcha hai. Chalo shooting kartein hain* (No, no everything is good. Let's start shooting.)" He was like no *bakwaas* just get to work and I loved that. I'm used to the teacher-student relationship. Ribhu became my teacher and my mentor. I was so focused, for two months I forgot my family, my friends... I didn't even call anyone. *The Girl On The Train* and *Saina*, whatever their fate is, I will not regret anything

because they've sucked everything out of me, in terms of creativity. This is the first time I've had an awakening. Now, I feel like I will enjoy it more.

IT'S BEEN TWO YEARS SINCE YOUR COUSIN PRIYANKA CHOPRA'S MARRIAGE. IS THAT THE KIND OF MARRIAGE YOU WOULD LIKE TO HAVE SOMEDAY?

I can definitely say that she has lucked out with the best man possible. Nickster (Nick Jonas) is like the perfect guy. He understands her so well, he's successful, he's very family-oriented, he's honest and simple and he really cares. If you had to



Sandeep aur
Pinky Faraar

Kesari

I USED TO TREAT INTERVIEWS LIKE BEDROOM CONVERSATIONS. I HAVE THIS HUGE URGE TO MAKE PEOPLE LAUGH. EVERYTHING I SAY HAS TO BE LITTLE CHATPATA... I WAS JUST PUTTING OUT FIRES FOR THE FIRST THREE YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY WITH THINGS THAT I'D SAID

industry. Sometimes they have the worst baggage...

DO ACTORS HAVE A LOT OF BAGGAGE...

I cannot have a romantic relationship with another human being who has the same problems as me. I'm that girl who wants to come home and be in her night suit, just watch TV, be lazy and do nothing. I've had three long relationships. Now that I'm 31, I really wish I'd spent more time being single. I really think

it's the best way to improve yourself, it's the best way to have fun. In light of the things that have happened in the last three-four months, I'm even more convinced that life is too fickle. If I want to sleep all day, I will sleep all day. If I want to travel, I'll travel. If I want to work, I'll work. I'm solo in this journey of life and I really need to live it.

YOU AREN'T TIRED OF BEING SINGLE?

The only truth in our lives



I CAN DEFINITELY SAY PRIYANKA HAS LUCKED OUT WITH THE BEST MAN POSSIBLE. NICK JONAS IS LIKE THE PERFECT GUY. HE UNDERSTANDS HER SO WELL, HE'S SUCCESSFUL, HE'S VERY FAMILY-ORIENTED, HE'S HONEST AND SIMPLE AND HE REALLY CARES



With Nick Jonas and Priyanka

is that we're all going to go one day. Please do everything you want to do. You will regret it if you're 85 years old and you didn't travel to that place you wanted to see or you didn't say something to that person or you didn't make amends with someone. You should eat what you want to eat, you should do what you want to do, you want to love someone then love someone...just live your own f***ing life.

WHAT KIND OF A GIRLFRIEND ARE YOU?

I've had only three relationships. So hypothetically if you had to interview those three people, they would tell you that I was never the

problem. One of them was a very long relationship and we broke up, I was heartbroken for nine months. Like a character from a film, I've laid down on the ground and cried and not eaten food for three days at a stretch.

THIS IS AFTER YOU JOINED THE MOVIES?

Yes. I'm a late bloomer in all departments. I was so heartbroken that I felt I should just leave this world -- you know those kinds of vibes. And today, so many years later, I laugh at it. You realise that you grow every single day. And five years later, you feel so embarrassed about what you did.

TELL US ONE INCIDENT THAT YOU'RE MOST EMBARRASSED ABOUT?

I used to treat interviews like bedroom conversations. Also, I have this huge urge to make people laugh all the time. Everything I say has to be little *chatpata*. So, sometimes some journos would paste it as a headline. This led to so many problems with my friends and family. They've called me up at 6 am and asked, "There's this news article... how dare you say this about me?" I was just putting out fires for the first three years in the industry with things that I'd said.

WE LOST RISHI KAPOOR AND IRRFAN KHAN RECENTLY. DID YOU INTERACT WITH THEM OR KNOW THEM WELL?

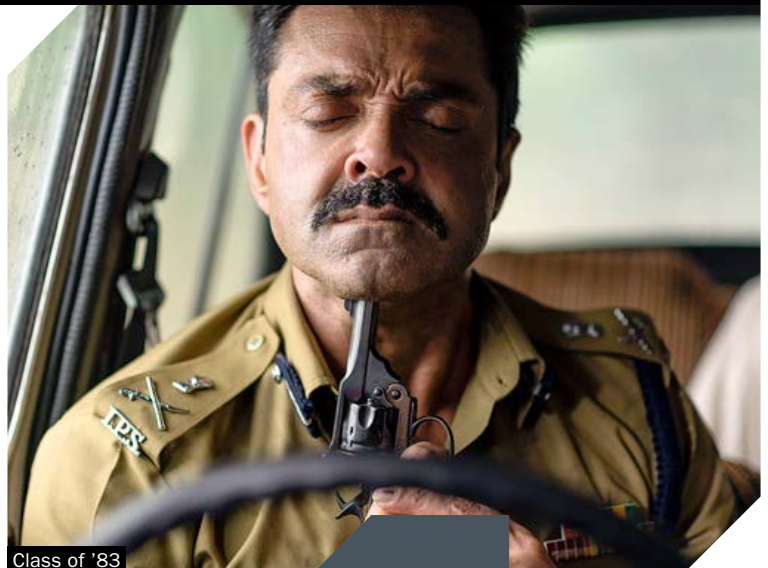
It took me three full days to come back to normal after I heard the news.

I knew Rishi ji a little more than I knew Irrfan because I'd done *Shuddh Desi Romance* (2013) with him. When I got my National Award, he was sitting right in front of me and was the first to congratulate me. We were in the hotel while Sushant (Singh Rajput) and Vaani (Kapoor) were shooting. We were sitting by the pool in the evening and I remember I got a call from Karan (Johar) saying, "*Mubarak ho! Aapko National Award mila hai.*" (Congratulations! You've won the National Award) I put down the phone and immediately told Rishi ji. I was gobsmacked when I heard about Irrfan. I couldn't believe it because I felt he had so much more to give. It makes you realise how fickle this life is. ■

SOUL SURVIVOR

SUMAN SHARMA CHATS WITH BOBBY DEOL, WHO'S HAVING A CAREER RESURRECTION OF SORTS OVER THE OTT PLATFORMS

With his long locks, drop dead good looks and lean, muscular frame, Bobby Deol looked like the perfect matinee star. And he did prove himself with films like *Soldier* and *Gupt*. But slowly, strangely, his aura faded. Producers started staying away and so did fans. Yes, the Deol charisma still kept him around but he wasn't considered a dependable box office draw any more. It seemed like Bobby himself had lost faith, in himself. There were reports of alcoholism, of bouts of depression. People loyal to him insisted it's just a phase. That he'll bounce back. And proving the naysayers wrong, he did. Deols are known for their physique and Bobby hit the gym with a vengeance, getting his body back in shape. Being part of talked-about films like *Race 3* and *Housefull 4* made the masses take notice of him once more. At 50, Bobby was ready to begin again. He rediscovered his love for acting. His performances in the gritty cop drama *Class Of '83* (Netflix) and the Prakash Jha directed series *Ashram* are proof of that. He's smiling more now, and these smiles are genuine, they are the smiles of a survivor who's having the last laugh...



Class of '83

Talking about your film *Class Of '83*, this is your most serious role ever. How challenging was it to play a role like that?

I was actually looking to playing a challenging character. I was searching for a change of image. Of course, I was nervous stepping out of my comfort zone, which is exactly what I liked about the character. The speciality of this film is that the characters of this film are not larger than life. They

are quite normal. There are moments of heroism in their lives but they aren't over the top. I enjoyed doing this role thoroughly.

What was the toughest part of playing a cop? Vijay Singh isn't your regular film cop. My priority was that I shouldn't come across as Bobby Deol in the film. Because when you are enacting a role, it is possible that some gestures or aspect of your personality

might seep into it. I found that the life journey of my character Vijay Singh is quite similar to my own life.

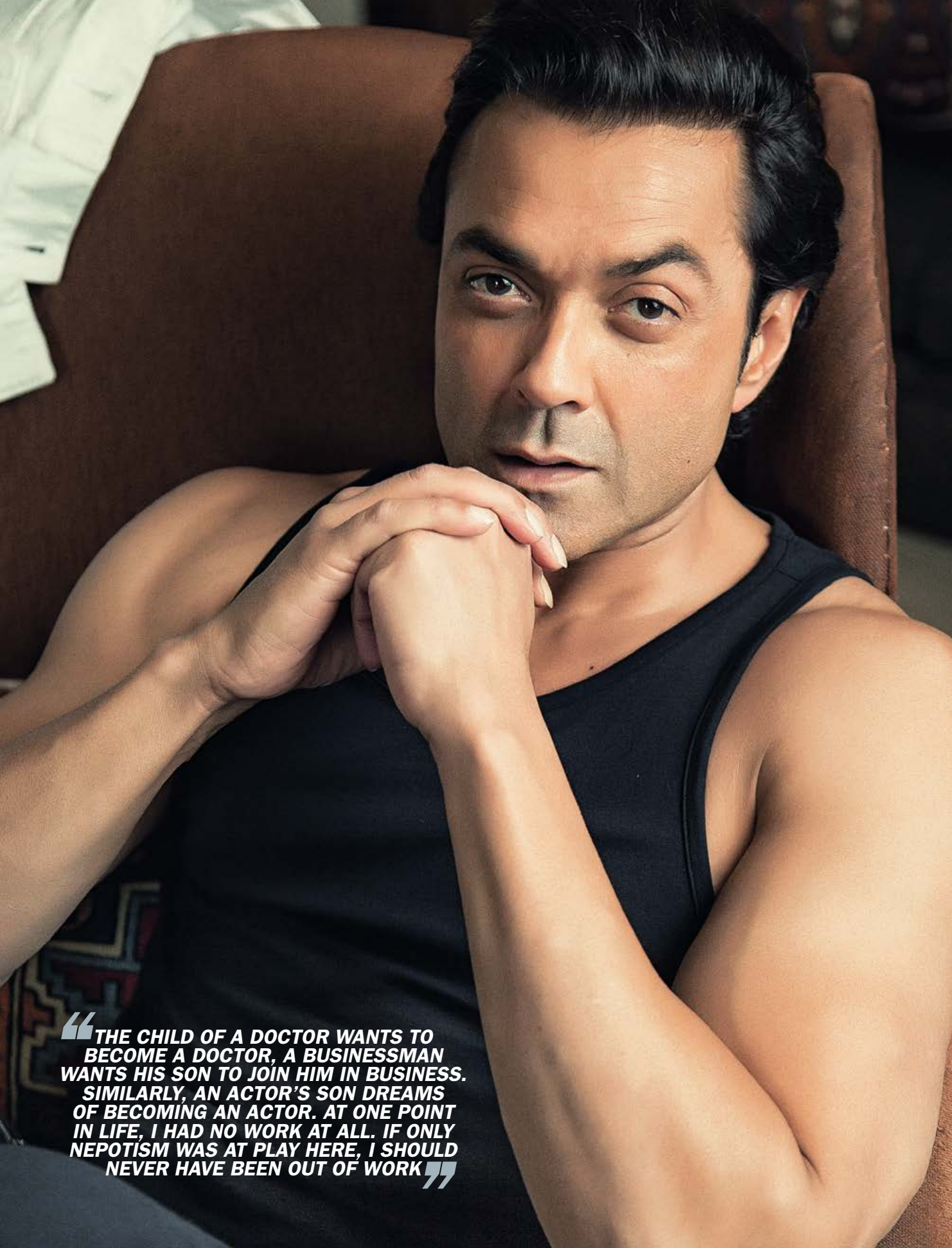
In what sense? You want to do something good in your life. But all of a sudden a bad phase comes in your life and your close ones get alienated from you. Vijay Singh faces that situation. His main regret is that he wasn't able to alter the situation. Something similar

“
VIJAY SINGH ISN'T YOUR REGULAR FILM COP. MY PRIORITY WAS THAT I SHOULDN'T COME ACROSS AS BOBBY DEOL IN THE FILM. BECAUSE WHEN YOU ARE ENACTING A ROLE IT IS POSSIBLE THAT SOME GESTURES OR ASPECT OF YOUR PERSONALITY MIGHT SEEP INTO IT
”

happened in my life as well.

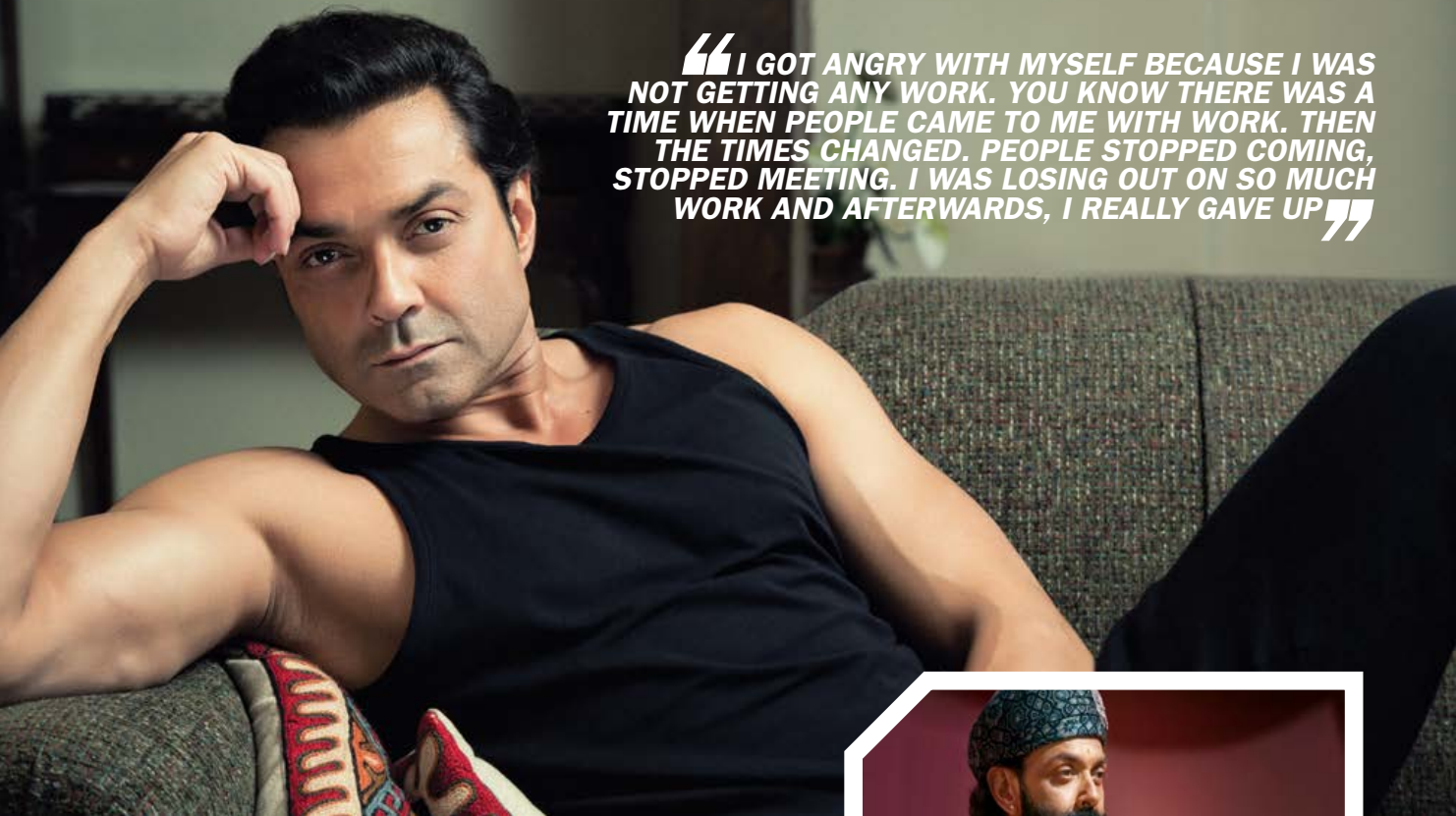
What went wrong in your life?

Main khud se naaraz ho gaya tha... I got angry with myself because I was not getting any work. You know there was a time when people came to me with work. Then the times changed. People stopped coming, stopped meeting. I was losing out on so much work and afterwards, I really gave up. I stopped



**“THE CHILD OF A DOCTOR WANTS TO
BECOME A DOCTOR, A BUSINESSMAN
WANTS HIS SON TO JOIN HIM IN BUSINESS.
SIMILARLY, AN ACTOR’S SON DREAMS
OF BECOMING AN ACTOR. AT ONE POINT
IN LIFE, I HAD NO WORK AT ALL. IF ONLY
NEPOTISM WAS AT PLAY HERE, I SHOULD
NEVER HAVE BEEN OUT OF WORK”**

“I GOT ANGRY WITH MYSELF BECAUSE I WAS NOT GETTING ANY WORK. YOU KNOW THERE WAS A TIME WHEN PEOPLE CAME TO ME WITH WORK. THEN THE TIMES CHANGED. PEOPLE STOPPED COMING, STOPPED MEETING. I WAS LOSING OUT ON SO MUCH WORK AND AFTERWARDS, I REALLY GAVE UP”



taking care of myself. I started drinking. I was lost somewhere and went adrift. It's so bad...seeing my children watching their father sitting at home. Then I realised I had to help myself because no one else could. I began looking after myself and kept myself ready for opportunities. I want to forget those days...

Who supported you during those dark days?

My family and my wife Tanya supported me a lot. The best thing to happen to me in my life is my wife. She's a very simple, strong lady. Only a wife can understand her husband's difficulties. She

knows me very well. She is very talented. She handles her own business. *(Laughs)* She looks after three children, me being the oldest.

Did the experience bring you closer to your kids?

My kids are happy to see me working. I tell them that life is not easy. But that does not mean that you should constantly be stressed. Enjoy your life. But remain focussed and disciplined. My life is an example for them. I tell them that they should pay attention to their studies. Become something then do whatever you want to do. When they decide on the future

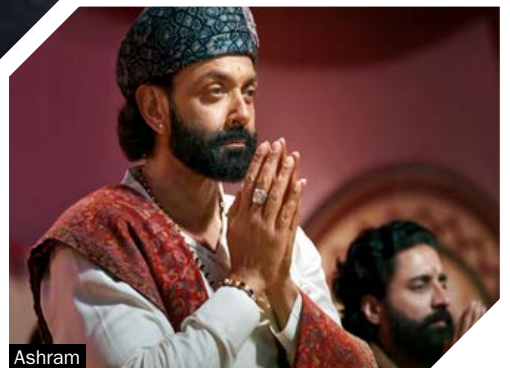
course of action, I will definitely help them.

What was the worst thing about your dark episode?

That once in my life I almost gave up. I'll always regret that I stopped being positive about my career.

Are your children interested in acting?

I think every child wants to become a hero or a heroine. Both my kids are studying at the moment. My elder son Aryaman is studying business management. I've told him to keep his horizons open. Because if you cannot become an actor then what are the other options?



Ashram

You have to keep some realistic things open.

What have you discovered about yourself over the years?

This is an ongoing process. I'm discovering myself even now.

Which quality of Dharamji have you inherited? And which quality you wish you had?

I feel I should become a good person like him. I have not seen a good person like him till today. I feel

proud that I am Dharmendra's son.

What kind of relationship do you share with your children? Do they have the same bonding that you shared with your father?

When we were growing up, papa was working hard. So we didn't spend much time with him. I used to go with him for outdoor shootings. People thought and acted in a different way then. The relation between father and children wasn't as



smooth then as it's in today's generation. I made it a point to avoid that kind of a distance with my own kids. We have a friendly relationship. In earlier times, children respected their parents but didn't open their hearts to them. My father always complains that I don't open my heart to him. He often tells me to sit with him, talk to him and I reply that even today I'm afraid you'll start scolding me. I wanted to take that

fear away from my children and perhaps I've been successful in doing so.

Nepotism is a much-reviled topic currently. What are your thoughts on it?

I'm quite troubled as to why this topic should be blown up in such a manner. I know one thing, if you are a star son, you get the first chance easily. That's the easy part. After that, you're on your own. If you aren't good no one can build your career for

“
THE BEST THING TO HAPPEN TO ME IN MY LIFE IS MY WIFE. ONLY A WIFE CAN UNDERSTAND HER HUSBAND'S DIFFICULTIES. SHE KNOWS ME VERY WELL. SHE'S VERY TALENTED. SHE HANDLES HER OWN BUSINESS. SHE LOOKS AFTER THREE CHILDREN, ME BEING THE OLDEST
 ”

you. And nepotism can be seen in every field. The child of a doctor wants to become a doctor, a businessman wants his son to join him in business. Similarly, an actor's son dreams of becoming an actor. At one point in life, I had no work at all. If only nepotism was at play here, I should never have been out of work.

How are you coping up with the quarantine?

Papa, Sunny *Bhaiya*, his family, my family and kids -- we stay together. We have a

not met them for the last five months. Apart from that, I read scripts and watch movies. I shave every day. I maintain myself and try to be as positive as possible. And whenever I worry about the future, I remind myself that I've seen the worst. This too shall pass.

What has the lockdown taught you?

Stay focussed. You should never lose your focus. If you are focussed, you will stay disciplined. I have learnt this from my papa and Sunny *Bhaiya*.

OTT platforms have become quite popular nowadays...

I think that OTT platforms as well as the theatre, both will survive. Cinema will never



Housefull 4



Race 3

gym at home and I spend many hours in the gym as regular exercise improves your immunity. Corona has given everyone family time. I do miss my friends and have

die. We can order food sitting at home, but the fun in going out and eating is something else. The same thing applies to films. People will never stop going to the theatres. ■

BAD *is* GOOD

KUNAL KEMMU HAS FOUND A NEW LEASE OF LIFE
PLAYING NEGATIVE ROLES. **SUMAN SHARMA** MEETS
THE ACTOR IN REINVENTION MODE





**“FILMMAKERS, WHO
HADN'T WATCHED *TRAFFIC*
SIGNAL AND *KALYUG*, SAW ME
JUST AS A COMIC ACTOR. I HOPE
KALANK AND *MALANG* HAVE
CHANGED THAT. THEY HAVE
HELPED ME EXTEND MY LIMITS”**

How many of us remember the sharp-eyed kid in films like *Hum Hain Rahi Pyar Ke*, *Raja Hindustani* or *Zakhm* in the '90s? Well, that kid grew up into a strapping youngster and made a promising debut in the film *Kalyug* (2005), based on a pornography racket. His raw intensity appealed to the masses and the critics. Bigger successes were expected from him. He did have hits like *Golmaal 3* (2010) and *Go Goa Gone* (2013) but they were mostly multi-starrers. But of late, the talented Kunal Kemmu seems to have found his groove once more playing grey characters as in the recent *Kalank* and *Malang*.

For the unversed, Kunal plays the role of Michael, a cold-blooded psychopathic cop, who passes off as a gentleman, in Mohit Suri's *Malang*. In Abhishek Verma's *Kalank*, as Abdul, he's introduced as a righteous guy, who later shows a dark side. His latest *Lootcase*, a dark comedy directed by Rajesh Krishnan has touched a chord with the audience. Even Amitabh Bachchan sent him a hand-written note of appreciation.

A new phase has sort of begun for Kunal as he's tapping hitherto untouched facets of his range. He's both happy and humbled. "When people say that they liked my characters, it's a special feeling. It makes me hungry to do more and deliver better." In the past, doing comedies, slotted him as a comic actor. Scripts with textured roles grew scarce. *Superstar* was the first film that failed.



PHOTOGRAPH: ARJUN MARK/FEMINA

“WE ACTORS NEED THE PAPARAZZI. THEY NEED US. BUT KIDS DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT STARDOM IS... AS LONG AS THE PAPARAZZI RESPECTS THE CHILDREN'S PRIVACY, WE CAN STRIKE A BALANCE”

“Because my Friday report card wasn’t bright enough, people stayed away from my films. Filmmakers, who hadn’t watched *Traffic Signal* and *Kalyug*, saw me just as a comic actor. I hope *Kalank* and *Malang* have changed that. They have helped me extend my limits. They have helped people take notice of the performer in me.”

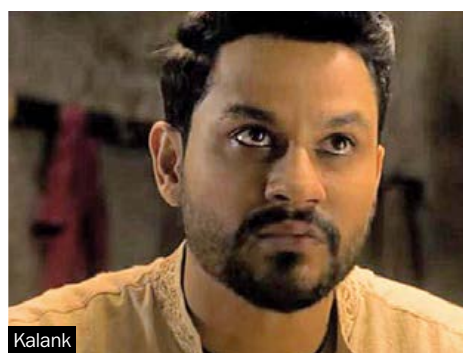
He’s said to be an underrated actor but Kunal denies that. Rather he calls himself an under-utilised actor. He reasons people saw him only in a certain mould and it has taken him long to break that. He mentions he’s always chosen quality over quantity. “I want to enjoy what I do. I’m proud of my choices and stand by them.” Multi-starrers have sort of become his comfort zone. In the pipeline is *Go Goa Gone 2*, a sequel to Raj Nidimoru and Krishna’s zombie comedy *Go Goa Gone*.

He points out that actors are actually a cog in a film’s wheel. But because they’re the face of a film the pressure to make the product a success falls heavily on them. “An actor should invest in a good banner as many a time a good project doesn’t get a good release. It isn’t enough for a film to be critically acclaimed. It has to earn money because huge budgets are involved. Hence working with an ensemble cast is better than taking on solo projects,” he explains why he takes on multi-starrers.

He makes sure not to bring a character home but sometimes things do spill over. “I may not notice it. But Soha (Ali



Malang



Kalank

“SOHA HAS BEEN AN INFLUENTIAL PART OF MY LIFE. THE BEST PART OF OUR MARRIAGE IS THAT WE RESPECT EACH OTHER’S SPACE AND PROFESSION”

Khan) may point out that I’m behaving like someone else. As actors, we’re taught to switch off and be ourselves after ‘cut’. That’s my goal too,” he shares. Expounding further, he believes that currently the audience is okay with heroes having negative shades, villains being more humane and heroines having more to do than being mere eye candy. He claims that exposure to worldwide content on OTT platforms has led to this evolution. “You’re no longer working in a restricted space, channelling stereotypes. You can dare to do something different because the audience is more accepting. All this makes for a more challenging work

environment for an actor,” he asserts.

He does seem to possess an eye for filmmaking, which could come handy while co-producing the biopic of the late legal luminary Ram Jethmalani, with wife Soha Ali Khan. Ask him to divulge more and he says he’s waiting for the right time to reveal all about the prestigious project.

Kunal and Soha lived-in for some time before they got married in a private ceremony in 2015. His has been an exemplary showbiz marriage so far. They’re said to be more like pals than husband and wife. He blushes when asked to describe her, saying she’s the best thing that has happened to him. “I’ve been with her for 11 years. Soha has been an influential part of my life. I like the whole package. The best part of our marriage is that we respect each other’s space and profession.”

The birth of daughter Inaaya Naumi, three years ago, has sort of perfected their equation. While he admits to changing her nappies only a few

times when she was a toddler, Kunal says he’s becoming a more hands-on dad as Inaaya is growing up. Describing himself as a ‘learning’ father, he admits he’s enjoying every minute of fatherhood. He adds that fatherhood does change you. “My whole outlook has changed because Inaaya has become my first priority. I think more about her than any other person in the world. I want to introduce her to everything, whether it’s travel, education, food. I want to give her a fulfilling experience. She can then have her own dreams,” says he.

Like most showbiz parents, he’s concerned about the effect the paparazzi might have on his child. Case in point being the frenzy that Inaaya’s cousin, Taimur Ali Khan, invites. Says he, “As actors, we understand that it works symbiotically for both sides. We need the paparazzi. They need us. But kids don’t understand what stardom is. Having said that, this is the life they have. It’s better they understand that soon. As long as the paparazzi respects the children’s privacy, we can strike a balance.” True that. ■



With wife Soha Ali Khan and daughter Inaaya Naumi Kemmu

HOME BUT NOT ALONE

SOHA ALI KHAN SAYS THE LOCKDOWN HAS BROUGHT ALONG LESSONS ABOUT LIFE AND LOVE. SUMAN SHARMA IS EAGER TO KNOW THEM

Soha Ali Khan, an Oxford graduate in Economics, understands the balance sheet of her life perfectly. That's why she invests the most in family bonds. She understands the huge dividends that love pays. Playing mom to daughter Inaaya Naumi Kemmu is her key role. Lockdown or otherwise. In fact, the home isolation has brought her undiluted time with husband Kunal Kemmu and Inaaya. Amidst playing the enthusiastic homemaker, Soha's also been involved gainfully on social media doing endorsements and podcasts. The best tribute to time is making the most of it. Soha seems to have understood that truth...

HOW HAS THE LOCKDOWN AFFECTED YOU?

I'm not someone who goes out a lot. But not being able to go out for work is extreme. I was about to start shooting a series in Rajasthan, which has got stalled. My daughter can't attend school. We don't have staff at home. Also, as a family we can't meet. But technology is wonderful. It keeps us connected though



With daughter
Inaaya Naumi Kemmu

“LIKE ANY OTHER COUPLE, KUNAL AND I ARGUE AND FIGHT. BUT AT THE END OF THE DAY I WANT TO SHARE EVERYTHING WITH HIM... IT'S NOT THAT HE DOESN'T GET ON MY NERVES. IT'S NOT THAT HE'S PERFECT. NOR AM I.”





nothing makes up for physical interaction.

WHAT'S YOUR DAILY ROUTINE LIKE?

I wake up around 7.30 am, when Inaaya comes into my room. Her nanny gives Inaaya her breakfast while I put together the things we need for virtual school. From 9 am onwards, I do school with her. The school sends us power-point presentations of stories, art activities and other things. At 10.30 am it's snack time for Inaaya. Then she goes off to play downstairs. I have a bath. I make the necessary calls regarding work. Kunal tries out new things in the kitchen. After lunch, Inaaya takes a nap. Between 4.30- 6.30 pm, it's work time for me. Then I do online yoga or exercise. We stay on the 15th floor. So I run up and down the stairs for 15 minutes. In the evening, Inaaya plays on the terrace. After that it's bath and dinner for her. Her bedtime is a long drawn one. We tell her stories. After she's asleep, I catch an OTT series. Kunal and I have dinner together. Then we're like husband and wife. Through the day, I'm predominantly a mother.

ARE YOU WORKING FROM HOME?

I'm foremost an actor. But now I'm doing one-minute videos, which promote a brand or an idea on social media. I've also been doing podcasts. We've been raising money for Goonj, which is working for migrant workers now. I'm also involved with The Mommy

I WANT TO POSSESS MY FATHER'S (THE LATE MANSOOR ALI KHAN PATAUDI) SENSE OF PATIENCE AND COMPOSURE. I NEVER SAW HIM LOSE HIS TEMPER... I DON'T WANT TO BE SOMEONE, WHO YELLS AND INSULTS PEOPLE. I WANT TO BEHAVE WITH DIGNITY

Network, a platform for mothers in the city. Social media keeps me fruitfully engaged.

TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT KUNAL'S COOKING.

I'm lucky. Kunal cooks all the time. He enjoys eating too. He cooks Rogan josh, Hyderabad eggs, Japanese soufflé... He keeps introducing Inaaya to new and healthy food. Like he made Japanese omelette without masala. So also, the light pulav.

WHAT'S THE SECRET OF YOUR HAPPY MARRIAGE?

The fact that we genuinely enjoy each other's company. There's a genuine connection and love there. Of course, like any other couple we argue and fight a lot. But

at the end of the day, I want to share everything with him – whether it's an amazing show I've watched, something to do with Inaaya or something yummy that I could be eating. My day's not complete, it doesn't feel right, if I've not shared it with him. It's not that he doesn't get on my nerves. It's not that he's perfect. Nor am I. The secret is, somewhere deep down, we want to be together more than we don't want to be.

HOW IS HE AS A FATHER?

He's extremely good with children. I take care of the discipline. He does the entertaining, which is also exhausting. He's spontaneous in creating stories, dancing, playing, doing gymnastics. He

does fun and crazy stuff with Inaaya. Also, he's a responsible parent. I can attend a Zoom call, shoot a video or do an interactive video because of Kunal. I lock myself in a room and do it because he's with her.

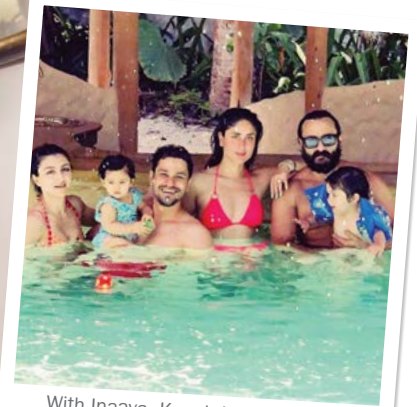
ARE YOU A STRICT PARENT?

I'm particular about bed time and nap time. No matter what, at 8 pm, the lights in Inaaya's room are off. She has to stop playing. We just tell her stories. I'm particular about her meals. Then she's not cranky. Now she's two-and-a-half-year-old and her own person.

IS SHE GIVEN THE PHONE?

Earlier, we'd come home and put our phones away. *Abhi sab kaam phone pe ho raha hai.* We need the phone all the time. I have





With Inaaya, Kunal, Kareena, Saif and Taimur



With Inaaya, Sara, Ibrahim, Saif and Taimur



With mom Sharmila Tagore and Kunal

to take photographs and videos for my work. Inaaya has a toy phone and an iPad. She's allowed to play with it for 20 minutes in the first half of the day and 20 minutes in the second half. There are some educational and interactive apps, which she enjoys.

ARE YOU PARTICULAR ABOUT NOT EXPOSING INAAYA TO THE PAPARAZZI?

I understand the paparazzi is part of our lives. People are interested in the children of actors. So when she goes out for a birthday party and especially when she's playing with Taimur, photographers do take their pictures. The worry is that we want them to have an innocent childhood and not a documented one with flashing cameras all the time. You want them to grow up normally. When they grow older, they may not want to share their friends and girlfriends/boyfriends with the world. It's not fair to them just because their parents chose to be public figures.

IS INAAYA MISSING TAIMUR?

She really is. She's missing all her friends. They chat on FaceTime. We put on music. Taimur dances in his house; she dances in hers. She knows there's a virus out there because of which people are falling ill. Hence, we can't go outside and meet Taimur. She calls him Taimur Bhai and she looks up to him.

WHAT QUALITIES OF YOUR PARENTS YOU WISH YOU'D POSSESS?

I want to possess my father's (the late Mansoor

Ali Khan Pataudi) sense of patience and composure. I never saw him lose his temper. When you lose your temper, it's loss of self-control. It reflects on you, no matter how much you're instigated by circumstance or people. I don't want to be someone, who yells and insults people. I want to behave with dignity. I want my mother's (Sharmila Tagore) sense of curiosity. She's interested in life, travel and reading. Even during the quarantine, she's

signed up for a course in Greek mythology.

FINALLY, WHAT HAS THE LOCKDOWN TAUGHT YOU?

Not to take things for granted and spend time with loved ones. We never know when time will run out or they'll be taken away from us. I want to convince my mother to move to Mumbai. Her living alone in Delhi is not right. It made me value my relationship with Kunal. There will be good days and bad days. This is a time to cut everyone slack and to focus on improving yourself. ■

“THE LOCKDOWN HAS TAUGHT ME TO NOT TAKE THINGS FOR GRANTED AND SPEND TIME WITH LOVED ONES. WE NEVER KNOW WHEN TIME WILL RUN OUT...THERE WILL BE GOOD DAYS AND BAD DAYS.THIS IS A TIME TO CUT EVERYONE SLACK AND TO FOCUS ON IMPROVING YOURSELF”

“I value sound sleep over stardom”

ASHWINI DESHMUKH MEETS THE EXCEPTIONALLY TALENTED **PANKAJ TRIPATHI**, WHO HAS YET TO COME TO TERMS WITH HIS SUCCESS

Last year, Pankaj Tripathi shifted to a sprawling sea-facing apartment in Mumbai's Madh Island. It's a far cry from the one-room shed he used to live in with his wife, Mridula, in Patna when they first got married. He'd be petrified of nature's moods, lest the tin roof gave way. Now, as he stares at the interplay of the sea waves from his balcony, he smiles at the memory. He hasn't left his bygone days behind. There's a wooden *charpai* kept in the balcony. We sit there eating *litti chokha*, a Bihari speciality. He credits Mridula for being his backbone through thick and

thin. She was a teacher and kept the kitchen fires burning, while he struggled. They had a love marriage after a decade-long romance. Interestingly, it's all straight out of a Hindi film. The two stayed connected and committed during an era when mobile phones weren't popular. And where you couldn't even write letters to each other for the fear of getting caught.

His house is huge but he's been living off a suitcase of late. He's been shooting in and out of Lucknow, Patna, Ranchi, Baroda... to name a few cities. "In the last six months I've shot four films and one web series. I come to Mumbai for a day,

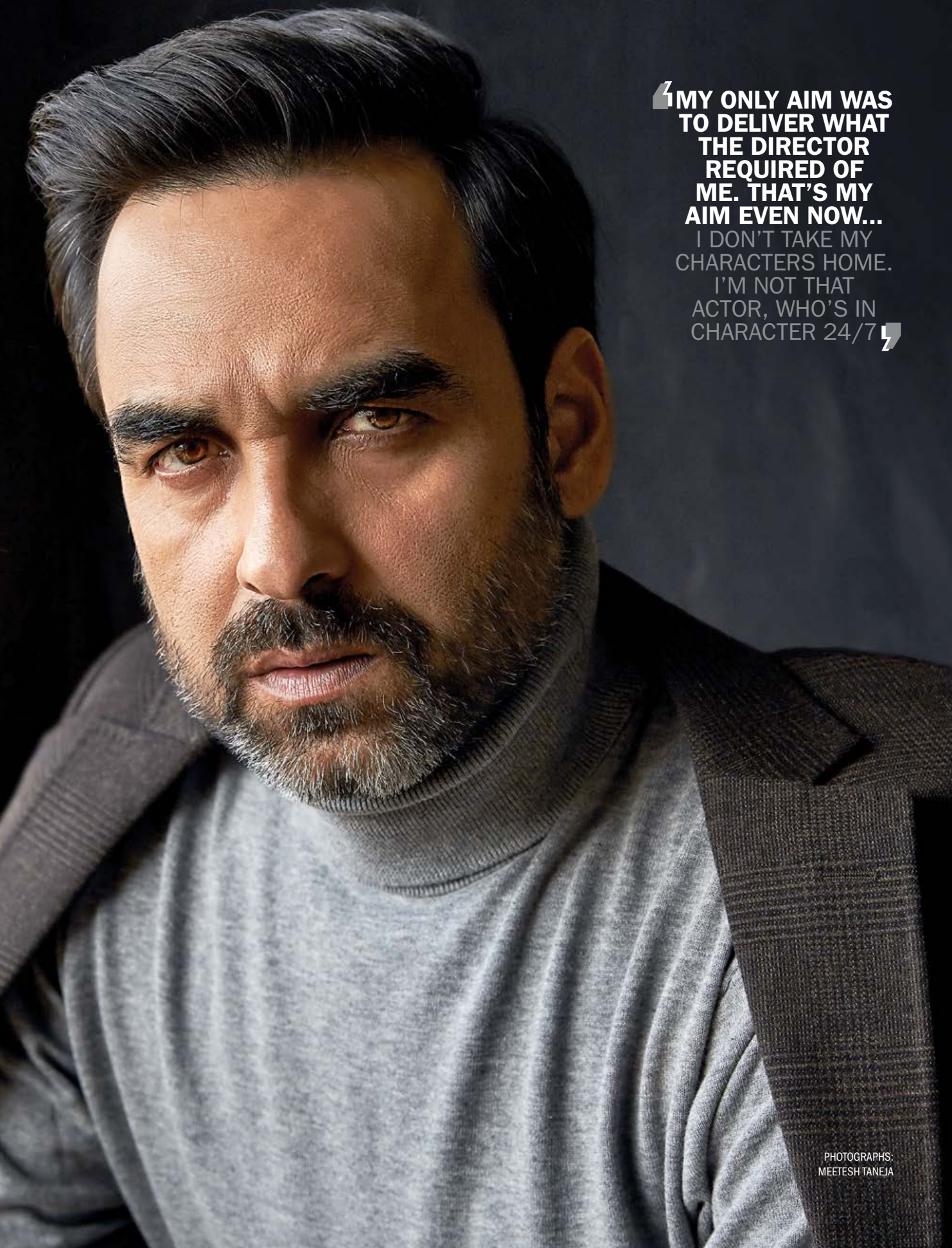
change my bag, and take a flight the next day to some other destination. I'm on autopilot mode," says the actor, who fortunately got time at home due to the lockdown.

He has films like '83, *Mumbai Saga*, *Mimi* and *Roohi Afzana* coming up. While playing Guruji in the web series, *Sacred Games Season 2* won him praise, *Extraction*, directed by Sam Hargrave with Chris Hemsworth in the lead, is also a film he's proud of. This success hasn't come overnight. Pankaj had to struggle long for it. He still remembers the date when he came to Mumbai to try his luck - October 6, 2004 - after



Sacred Games 2

“I NEVER HAD BIG AMBITIONS. SO, I NEVER FELT LIKE A LOSER. IT'S ONLY WHEN YOU REALISE THAT YOU'RE MISSING OUT ON SOMETHING THAT IT STARTS BOTHERING YOU. WHEN JOURNALISTS ASK ME TO NARRATE MY STRUGGLE, I REALISE I WAS UNSUCCESSFUL FOR SO MANY YEARS.”



**“MY ONLY AIM WAS
TO DELIVER WHAT
THE DIRECTOR
REQUIRED OF
ME. THAT’S MY
AIM EVEN NOW...**

**I DON’T TAKE MY
CHARACTERS HOME.**

**I’M NOT THAT
ACTOR, WHO’S IN
CHARACTER 24/7”**

PHOTOGRAPHS:
MEETESH TANEJA

his stint at the NSD. There was a time when he'd buy subsidised groceries from the defense canteen. "I never had big ambitions. So, I never felt like a loser. It's only when you realise that you're missing out on something that it starts bothering you. Now, when journalists ask me to narrate my struggle, I realise I was unsuccessful for so many years," he confides.

Though he debuted in 2004 in *Run* and *Omkara*, his breakthrough came in 2012 with the *Gangs Of Wasseypur* series. Since then, he's won acclaim for *Fukrey*, *Masaan*, *Nil Battey Sannata*, *Bareilly Ki Barfi*, *Newton*, *Fukrey Returns* and *Stree*. The simple Pankaj doesn't believe in EMIs, so he never bought a car till he could afford one outright. A quarter of Old Monk at the end of the day is something he still enjoys. Small joys are what matter to him. "I have control over my desires. I don't go overboard while spending. I still value sleeping soundly at night over stardom." Simply in love with his art he says, "My only aim was to deliver what the director required of me. And to do something different from my last release in my next. That's my aim even now." He's a method actor but is flexible in his approach. "The approach I used for *Gurgaon* wouldn't have worked for *Stree* and vice-versa," he reflects adding, "I don't take my characters home. I'm not that actor, who's in character 24/7." He credits experiences in life for teaching him the nuances of acting. "You must have ample balance in your account otherwise you won't be able to swipe your card," he says metaphorically. "I'm a farmer and also a priest, I've worked in a hotel, I've sold shoes, I've worked as an

I'M A FARMER AND ALSO A PRIEST. I'VE WORKED IN A HOTEL, I'VE SOLD SHOES, I'VE WORKED AS AN ESTATE AGENT AND HAVE TRAVELLED IN CROWDED TRAINS AND BUSES. I'VE IMBIBED SOMETHING FROM EVERY EXPERIENCE





TOP 5 ROLES OF PANKAJ TRIPATHI



SULTAN IN GANGS OF WASSEYPUR:

His brooding presence was menacing. His only agenda was revenge and he was consumed by it.



KEHRI SINGH IN GURGAON:

He played a ruthless crime lord and wowed us with his minimalistic approach.



NAROTTAM MISHRA IN BAREILLY KI BARFI:

Playing Bitti's (Kriti Sanon) liberal father, his tender bond with his daughter was heart-warming.



AATMA SINGH IN NEWTON:

The CRPF officer was an epitome of toxic masculinity and was the antithesis to Rajkumar Rao's character.



RUDRA IN STREE:

He played the librarian full of supernatural trivia and made us laugh with his one-liners.

estate agent and have travelled in crowded trains and buses. I've come into contact with a variety of people. I've imbibed something from every experience. That comes in handy while enacting different characters."

Story goes that when he was working in a hotel, he chanced upon Manoj Bajpayee's (also hails from Bihar) slippers and wore them to smithereens. He laughs at that and says he did it out of respect for Manoj. In fact, he even told Manoj about it while they were shooting *Gangs Of Wasseypur*. The other actor he admires is the late Om Puri. "You can't decipher his craft. He never let himself be typecast. That's something I aspire for as well. I have to live up to people's trust in me."

Literature has inspired him too. He's been an avid reader and has a collection of

ho gaya (Jaan Tere Naam)," as, "First time *dekha tujhe love ho gaya*, second time *mein sab ho gaya!*" in *Stree*, turning them into a critique on the hook-up generation. Similarly, *Dheere dheere pyaar ko badhana hai (Phool Aur Kaante)*, was used in *Super 30*. He admits being a fan of the '90s potboilers. "Films like *Saajan* were popular. I was a big fan of Sanjay Dutt back then. Also, of Mithun Chakraborty," he recalls.

He switched loyalty to world cinema when he started doing theatre. He rues the fact that our filmmakers haven't learnt to let go of the tropes of commercial cinema. "I watch world cinema regularly. The way they portray culture and human interaction is so impactful, so real." He believes cinema isn't just a means of entertainment but can also bring about change.

“WHEN I WAS IN JAIL FOR A STUDENT’S MOVEMENT, I’D GO TO THE PRISON LIBRARY AND READ BOOKS. WHEN YOU’RE DISTURBED, BOOKS GIVE YOU HOPE. AND WHEN YOU’RE IN A GOOD STATE OF MIND, BOOKS HELP YOU BECOME A BETTER PERSON.”

Indian, European and Russian literature. He thanks his Hindi professor, Ram Naresh Tripathi, for inculcating the love of books in him. "Also, when I was in jail for a student's movement, I'd go to the prison library and read books. When you're disturbed, books give you hope. And when you're in a good state of mind, books help you become a better person."

Surprisingly, he doesn't watch too many films. And yet, he's been known to incorporate lines from popular films in his characters. Like he tweaked the lines, "First time *dekha tumhein hum kho gaya*, second time *mein love*

"Commercial cinema portrays good triumphing over evil. But it isn't so in real life. Yet seeing that gives us hope, makes us optimistic." He's enjoying the journey yet there are times when ennui strikes. "But once I'm on the set all the boredom and stress vanishes. Once 'action' is announced, I get transformed into another world," he smiles.

He has learnt to say no now. "Earlier, I'd feel guilty about turning down work because that meant saying no to good money. But now I'm flooded with work. So, I can pick and choose. I'm blocked for the next ten months..."

Hello Brother!

SUNNY KAUSHAL SAYS THAT HIS BROTHER VICKY KAUSHAL INSPIRES HIM TO UP HIS ACT. **RAGHUVENDRA SINGH** CHATS WITH THE INDUSTRY KID

Sunny Kaushal's debut film, *Sunshine Music Tours And Travels* (2016), which revolved around the Sunburn Festival, may not have worked at the box-office. But that didn't cause a dent in his confidence. He moved to the web world with *Official Chukygiri* in the same year. Playing the character of Spandan Chukya, he won much popularity. Then Akshay Kumar's sports drama, *Gold* (2018), gave Sunny the exposure he deserved. The film was based on the real story of India's first Gold win at the Olympics. Kaushal played the character of Himmat Singh and emerged a winner.

He bagged his first lead role in *Bhangra Paa Le*, directed by Sneha Taurani. The actor played a dual role in the dance film opposite Shriya Pilgaonkar and Rukshar Dhillon. While the film was a dud, Kabir Khanna zeroed in on him to star in the hi-profile series, *The Forgotten Army: Azaadi Ke Liye* opposite Sharvari. It spotlighted Subhash Chandra Bose's *Azad Hind Fauj* or Indian

National Army (INA), which was instrumental in India's freedom struggle. The series won Sunny much applause.

His father, action-director Sham Kaushal, was part of the team too. He says his dad behaved formally with him on the set. He expected nothing less from the professional artiste. "I was an assistant (to Ali Abbas Zafar) on *Gunday* (2014), while dad was the action director. He was strict back then as well. He never went easy on us. In fact, you can check with Vicky (Kaushal) how dad was with him in *Zubaan*," smiles Sunny.

Having a National Award winning actor as an elder brother must be the cause of both envy and pride. Sunny says there's no hardcore rivalry as such. But he's vowed to up his acting game nevertheless. He says he's just a year and four months younger than Vicky. The brothers talk shop all the time. Sunny is in awe of Vicky's range. "His emotional quotient is staggering. He instinctively knows how

to get a scene right.

Many times, I've gone to him for advice. He has given me several options to do a scene."

Sunny mentions they're distinct in their tastes and persona. He's envious of his brother's career choices. "When I saw him in *Sanju*, I felt insecure as an actor. My favourite performance

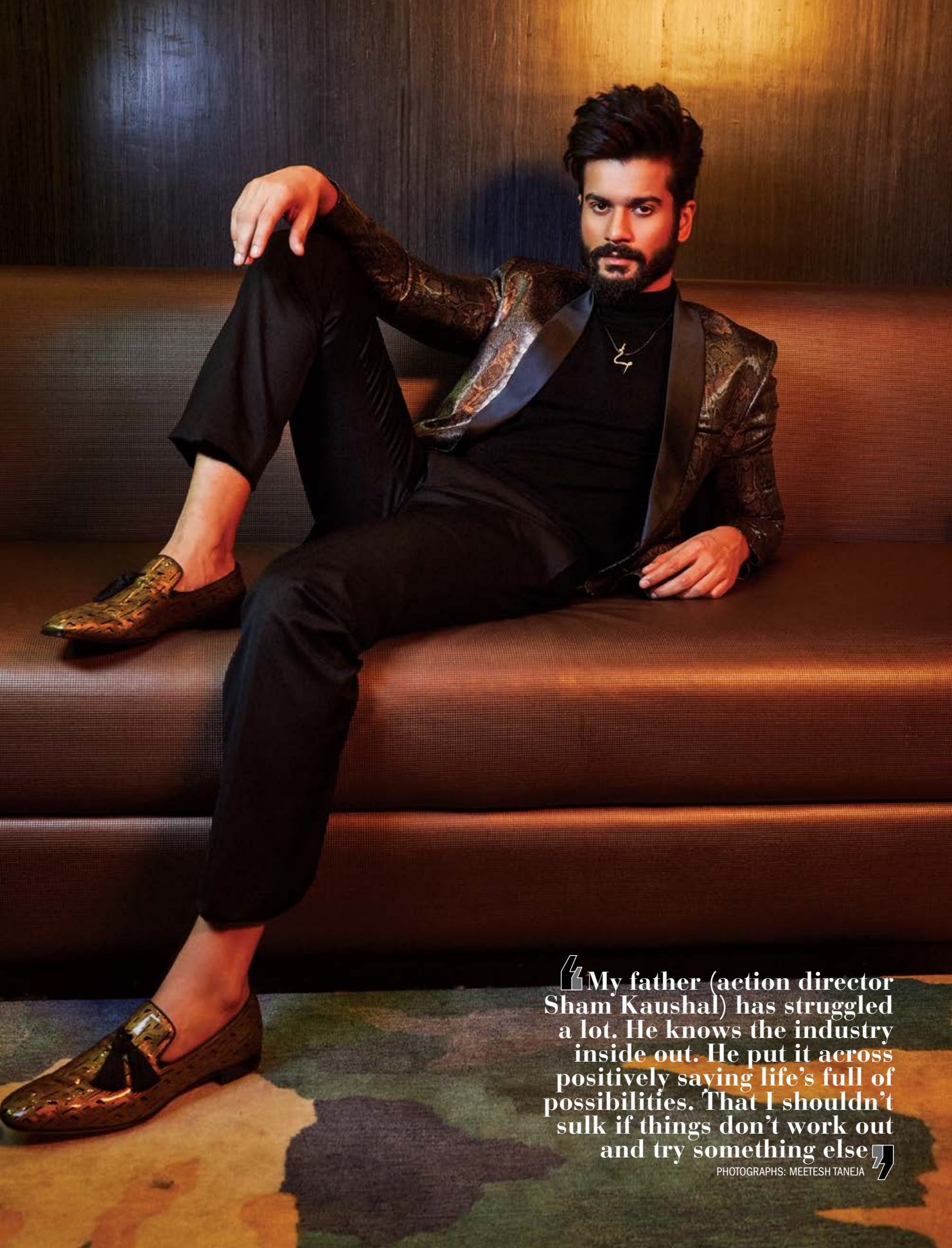
of Vicky is from *Masaan*. I don't believe he'll ever top that. He was good in *Raman Raghav 2.0* as well." Sunny mentions his brother had tears in his eyes after watching his performance in *Gold*. "Vicky said he was extremely proud of me. At that point of time, it felt as though he was my father



The Forgotten Army: Azaadi Ke Liye



Sunny with dad Sham Kaushal and brother Vicky Kaushal



“My father (action director Sham Kaushal) has struggled a lot. He knows the industry inside out. He put it across positively saying life’s full of possibilities. That I shouldn’t sulk if things don’t work out and try something else”

PHOTOGRAPHS: MEETESH TANEJA

⚡Vicky's (Kaushal) emotional quotient is staggering. He instinctively knows how to get a scene right. Many times, I've gone to him for advice. He has given me several options for a scene ⚡



and I was his son.”

Between the two of them, Sunny's more mischievous, though he has become sedate with age. As a child, he once got lost in a market. His mother almost had a heart attack searching for him. “I was found sitting on a staircase, like I owned the place. I used to fight all the time in school too. Vicky took care that I didn't get into trouble. He was strict with me. Growing up, I was more afraid of him than of my father.”

It's interesting that both Sunny and Vicky chose not to follow their father Sham Kaushal's footsteps. Sunny understands being a stunt director isn't easy. “You have to practise stunts for around 8-10 years to even qualify to be a stuntman. We've heard about some of dad's hair-raising exploits. But we never wanted to emulate him,” he reveals. Being an industry kid doesn't mean Sunny had it easy. He had to go through heartbreak and depression before tasting success. “I must have given a thousand auditions. I was broken when *Sunshine Music Tours And Travels* didn't click,” he recalls.

His father couldn't see his suffering either and asked him to quit. “My father has struggled a lot to be where he's today. He knows the industry inside out. He's aware how hard things can be. He put it across positively saying life's full of possibilities. That I shouldn't sulk if it doesn't work and try something else instead.” Luckily, his web series *Official Chukyagiri* worked. Then he got



Gold

selected for *Gold*.” People warned me I'd be wasting my time as it wasn't a lead role. But I was convinced that it was a great part,” he says.

Strangely, as a kid he never wanted to be an actor. He was interested in taking up archaeology as he's a history buff. Later, he had set his mind on becoming a CA but soon gave up that idea too.

His father took him on the sets of his forthcoming film during vacations. After observing the proceedings, Sunny got hooked onto showbiz. He started assisting Raaghav Dar on *My Friend Pinto* (2011) and even joined Barry John's acting school. He did theatre for two years with Makarand Deshpande.

He later assisted Abbas Ali Zafar on *Gunday* and terms it as a great learning experience. “I observed performers like Irrfan Khan, Priyanka Chopra, Ranveer Singh, Arjun Kapoor, Saurabh Shukla first hand. That's when I saw the difference between acting in a classroom and working your craft in



The Embrace

front of a camera.”

He's keen to explore newer facets of his skill too. His next, Nikhil Nagesh Bhatt's *Hurdang* with Nushrat Bharucha, is a love story, based on the Mandal Commission in Allahabad in 1990. Sunny plays a collegian, who carries a Mauser pistol because he believes it's cool. Sunny describes his character, Daddu Thakur, as someone who's too trusting of the people and that proves to be his undoing. He elaborates, “There's the Mandal Commission and there's a love story with Nushrat (Bharucha). There's a bromance with Vijay Maurya as well. It's a character with many layers. I had a great time essaying it.”

Also coming up is Kunal Deshmukh's *Shiddat*, a romance. Co-starring Radhika Madan, *Shiddat* is about the distance one travels for love. “It's a great

“After watching me in *Gold*, Vicky (Kaushal) said he was extremely proud of me. At that point, it felt as if he was my father and I was his son.”

rush for me to be able to do the things that I don't do in my real life. I'm exploring myself through the character,” he explains.

Apart from brother Vicky, Ranbir Kapoor is one actor he admires. Vicky believes Ranbir brings in a certain vulnerability to his performances. “After watching *Tamasha*, I wanted to hug him. I like Ranveer Singh's performances too. His energy levels are something else. I love Alia Bhatt for her emotional range.”

He wants to share screen space with brother Vicky and hopes that happens soon. He reveals that in the film *Love Per Square Foot* (2018), Vicky was seen carrying an ad cutting (from a newspaper) in his pocket. Interestingly, that ad featured Sunny. He guffaws, “So, in a way, we've already appeared in a film together.” ■

“I’ll be living a dual life”

MAKING MUSIC BOTH AT HOME AND ABROAD, ARMAAN MALIK SAYS HIS MELODY WILL CUT ACROSS CONTINENTS. ASHWINI DESHMUKH WANTS TO KNOW MORE ABOUT HIS ENGLISH SINGLE TITLED **CONTROL**

He grew up to the sounds of music that stirred a thousand melodies in him. Son of composer Daboo Malik and grandson of veteran musician Sardar Malik, Armaan Malik followed his genetic predilection.

A finalist on *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa L'il Champs*, Armaan also became the youngest coach/judge in the show *The Voice India*. At 18, he became Salman Khan's voice singing *Tumko to aana hi tha* in *Jai Ho*. Popular songs including *Naina (Khoobsurat)*, *Buddhu sa mann (Kapoor & Sons)*, *Besabriyaan (MS Dhoni: The Untold Story)*, among others, proved his is a voice that can't be ignored. But what's brought him closer to his dreams is featuring on the Times Square Billboard in New York City for his latest English debut, *Control*, promoted by Spotify. The single, inspired by relationships, has helped the singer-songwriter strike a chord with millennials forever grappling with the truth and illusion of love. Excerpts:

I AM THE FIRST INDIAN SINGER TO BE ON THE TIMES SQUARE BILLBOARD (FOR HIS SINGLE CONTROL). IT'S A HUGE HONOUR. MY DREAM HAS ALWAYS BEEN TO REPRESENT INDIA ON A GLOBAL PLATFORM. IT'S OUR TIME IN THE WORLD

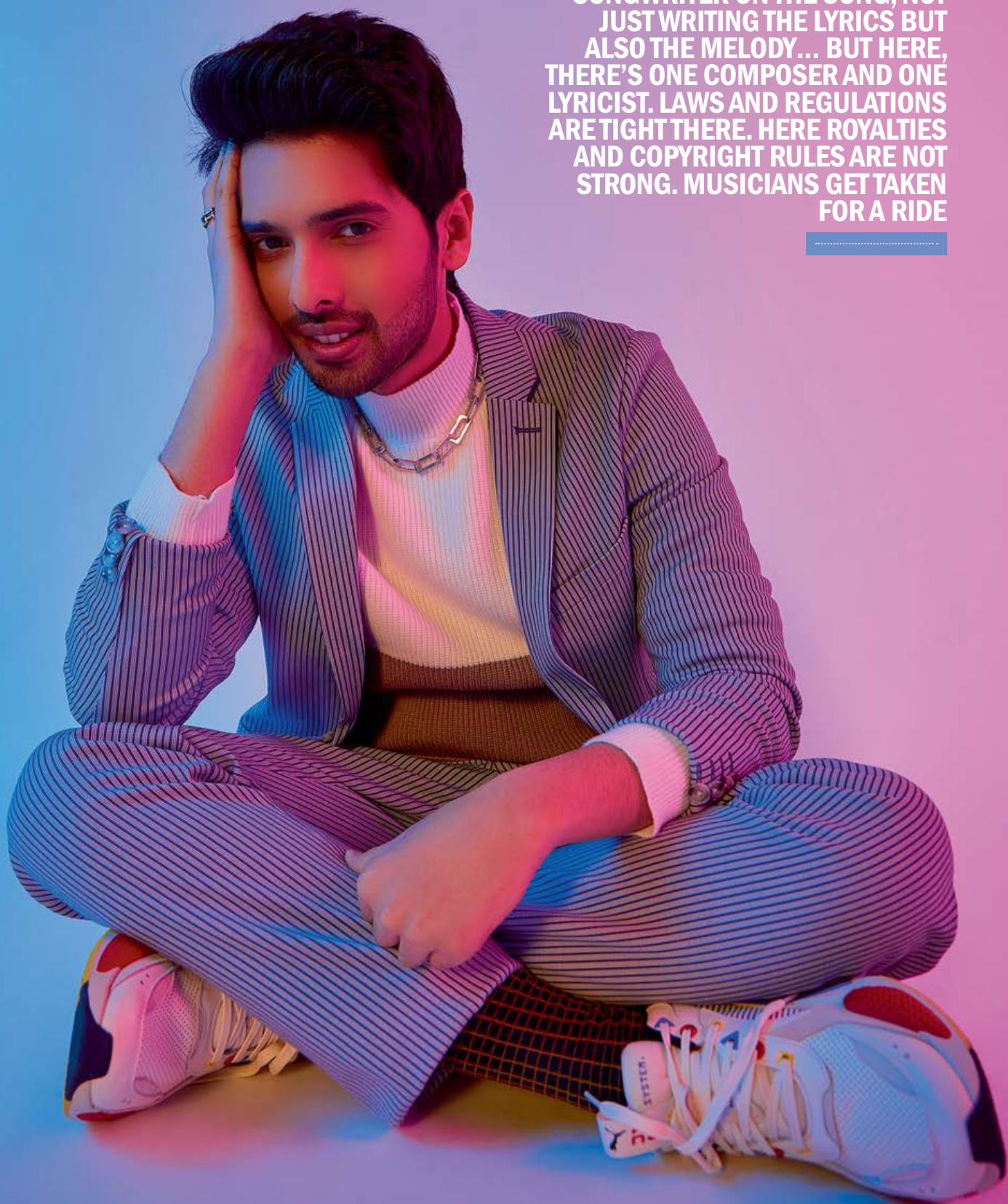


At Times Square

WHAT WAS THE HIGH LIKE FEATURING ON THE TIMES SQUARE BILLBOARD IN NEW YORK WITH YOUR SINGLE, CONTROL?

It hasn't sunk in yet. I am the first Indian singer to be on the Times Square Billboard. It's a huge honour. It would have been amazing if I could go there in person and click a picture. My dream has always been to represent India on a global platform. It's our time in the world. As music personalities, we've never been on the global map. Though we've been popular among the South Asian diaspora around the world. With *Control* and more songs that I'm going to be doing, as part of my deal, I wish to make that shift. All countries have their own pop stars. Like the US has Beyoncé, Canada has Justin Bieber. Korea has its own pop stars. India also must have its own.

THE MUSIC-MAKING PROCESS IS DIFFERENT IN THE US. I'M THE SONGWRITER ON THE SONG, NOT JUST WRITING THE LYRICS BUT ALSO THE MELODY... BUT HERE, THERE'S ONE COMPOSER AND ONE LYRICIST. LAWS AND REGULATIONS ARE TIGHT THERE. HERE ROYALTIES AND COPYRIGHT RULES ARE NOT STRONG. MUSICIANS GET TAKEN FOR A RIDE





At the recording studio

I'VE SUNG IN BENGALI, GUJARATI AND SOUTH INDIAN LANGUAGES. I'M AN INDIAN SINGER, NOT JUST A BOLLYWOOD SINGER. WHEN I HOLD A CONCERT IN SAN FRANCISCO, I SING IN TELUGU FOR A SECTION OF THE AUDIENCE. WHEN I GO TO BANGALORE, I SING IN KANNADA. FANS FEEL CLOSER TO YOU ONCE YOU SING IN THEIR LANGUAGE

MEMORABLE MOMENT

Receiving the Filmfare R. D. Burman Award for New Music Talent (2015) for *Main hoon hero tera (Hero)*, with dad (Daboo Malik) being present on stage, was memorable. Just to see the Black Lady in his hands was a big moment. He'd never attended the award function. My brother Amaal (Mallik), won the Filmfare Award for Best Music Director for *Sooraj dooba hai (Roy)*. Both of us winning the same night was huge.



HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

I envisioned this when I was in my teens. But dad said in India we live and breathe Bollywood. You've got to make a name for yourself here first. Hadn't I followed his advice; I wouldn't have been able to achieve this. I did playback singing for seven-eight years. But that inner desire was always there. Around 2018, I began visiting Los Angeles to meet songwriters and producers in Hollywood. I never imagined signing a deal with a big label there. I just thought I'll make some songs collaborating

with international people. Some of my songs were heard by big labels. One of them was David Massey from Arista Records. He's previously launched the careers of Canadian singer/songwriter Shawn Mendes and the Jonas Brothers. He was travelling to London and asked me if I'd like to meet him there. I took the flight to London. He said he hadn't heard this kind of music and voice before. He said, 'I believe in you as an artiste'. I signed with the label. That's how *Control* came about. This is a whole new journey for me. I will be living a dual

life; one in America and the other in India.

HOW DIFFERENT IS IT WORKING INTERNATIONALLY AS COMPARED TO WORKING IN INDIA?

The music-making process is different. I'm the songwriter on the song, not just writing the lyrics but also the melody. There it works differently like there are four-five people in a room, who collaborate on a song. But here there's one composer and one lyricist. Laws and regulations are tight and they work in a transparent way. Here royalties and copyright

rules are not strong. Often musicians get taken for a ride. Both have their pros and cons. I've evolved as an artiste by working in both the industries.

WOULD YOU HAVE BEEN A SINGER EVEN IF YOU WEREN'T BORN IN A MUSIC FAMILY?

I always aspired to be a singer. Belonging to a music family, I grew up with music. Music is in my DNA. At the age of four, I was singing more than I was talking. So, it was a natural progression to get into music and singing. By the age of eight, I'd told my family I wanted to become the biggest singer in the world. I participated in *Sa Re Ga Ma Little Champs* at the age of nine. I sang my first song, *Mere buddy*, at the age of 11 with Amitabh Bachchan in *Bhoothnath* (2008). There was no looking back. I have other passions as well. Someday, I'll start my own restaurant. I love food. I was almost going to take up hospitality management. But then Salman Khan's *Jai Ho* (2014, sang three songs including the title track) happened. That skyrocketed my journey into a different space.



YOU'VE SUNG IN SO MANY REGIONAL LANGUAGES APART FROM HINDI...

As a kid, when I sang jingles, the clients used to ask me if I mind trying something in Tamil or Telugu. I'd give it a shot. I began doing jingles and voiceovers in different languages. While doing playback, I began getting offers from other industries. I took them up. I sang *Butta Bomma* for Allu Arjun's *Ala Vaikunthapurramuloo*, which became a national hit. Over the years I've sung in Bengali, Gujarati, all the South Indian languages. I take pride in the fact that I'm an Indian singer and not just a Bollywood

HOW DO YOU BALANCE WORK AND PLAY?

I only work and play little. I've been disciplined all through. But now I've reached a stage where I'm relaxing a bit more. I've started maintaining a balance between my personal and professional life. Otherwise, you can go senile.

HAVE YOU FOUND LOVE YET?

(Laughs) That's the question on everyone's mind. I'm a complete Shah Rukh Khan kind of a romantic guy. I've never believed in hook-ups. For me it's till-the-end kind of love. I've never been open about my personal

I'VE NEVER BEEN OPEN ABOUT MY PERSONAL LIFE. I BELIEVE PEOPLE RUIN SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL BY TALKING ABOUT IT. THAT'S YOUR PURE PLACE... NINETY NINE PERCENT OF MY LIFE IS ON SOCIAL MEDIA. ONE PER CENT IS MINE

singer. When I hold a concert in San Francisco, I sing in Telugu for a section of the audience. When I go to Bangalore, I sing in Kannada. Fans feel closer to you once you sing in their language.

WHAT'S YOUR TAKE ON BOLLYWOOD RECREATING OLD CLASSIC SONGS?

It's not that I've not been part of a recreation. I've got a lot of hits too by doing so. But now it's getting too much. We've seen a shift in the last few months. The soundtrack of *Kabir Singh*, which I was part of, is completely original. I guess I won't do recreations henceforth. We need more originals.

life. I believe people ruin something beautiful by talking about it. That's your pure place. The moment you let the public have a go at it, it will get destroyed. I've always kept that private. Ninety nine per cent of my life is on social media. One per cent is mine. I want to hold onto that.

YOUR INSPIRATIONS...

Apart from all the *gurus* who taught me music, Sonu Nigam's been my *guru*. I've learnt a lot just listening to him. Internationally, it would be John Mayer, Michael Buble and Michael Jackson, who have inspired me.



TIMESCONTENT

The famous poet and lyricist Dr Rahat Indori, who'd written lyrics for films like *Munna Bhai MBBS*, *Meenakshi*, *Khuddar*, *Murder*, *Mission Kashmir*, *Begum Jaan*, *Ishq*, *Ghatak*, *Jaanam*, *Sir*, *Aashiyaan*, *Main Tera Aashiq*, *Naaraaz* and many more, passed away on August 11 in Indore. He was born on January 1, 1950. His childhood name was Kamil, which was later changed to Rahat Ullah. He was a well-read, well-cultured, well-

One of Dr Indori's admirers turned out to be Gulshan Kumar. The T-series head honcho asked him to come to Mumbai and write for films... the song which got him popularity was *Aaj humne dil ka har ik kissa tamaam kar liya* from Mahesh Bhatt's *Sir* (1993)

REMEMBERING DR RAHAT INDORI

DEVESH SHARMA
PROFILES THE LIFE OF POET
AND LYRICIST **RAHAT INDORI**,
WHO PASSED AWAY RECENTLY

(JANUARY 1, 1950 – AUGUST 11, 2020)

educated man, who'd done his PhD in Urdu literature and even taught Urdu for many years. Apart from poetry, he had a passion for painting as well and was said to be a naturally-gifted painter. He's said to have designed the covers of many of his books. He was said to be good in sports and was a captain of the football and

the hockey teams at school and college levels.

The poet-lyricist rose from extreme poverty. His father used to work in a mill but lost his job due to the economic recession. The family even reportedly went homeless for some time. Dr Indori took to Urdu poetry early in life and took part in his first *mushaira* when he was just 19. When he started writing, Urdu poetry was slowly coming out of the traditional norm of writing about love or beauty. Poets had started commenting on what's happening around them, providing a critique of what's wrong in society. The form may have been traditional but the issues were becoming contemporary and Indori too leaned towards that. He developed a strong traditional base and was able to build modern insights on that foundation. He was a secular at heart and always spoke for communal harmony. One of his most famous couplets -- *Sabhi ka khoon hai shamil yahan ki mitti mein/ Kisi ke baap ka Hindustan thodi hai* (Everybody's blood has been mingled in the country's soil; India isn't someone's ancestral property) - perhaps encapsulates



**SAMBHALA HAI MAINE
BAHUT APNE DIL KO**
Composer: Anu Malik
Film: Naaraaz



**YEH RISHTA KYA
KEHLATA HAI**
Composer: A. R. Rahman
Film: Meenaxi



**M BOLE TO MASTER
MEIN MASTER**
Composer: Anu Malik
Film: Munnabhai MBBS

the kind of person he was.

He was soon praised for his unique voice and was a much-admired figure at *mushairas*. He participated in *mushairas* all over India for around 45 years and was also invited to participate in such gatherings in America, UK, Canada, Singapore, Mauritius, Kuwait, Bahrain, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and several other countries. He could have remained a contemporary poet,

One of Dr Indori's most famous couplets – *Sabhi ka khoon hai shamil yahan ki mitti mein/ Kisi ke baap ka Hindustan thodi hai* (Everybody's blood has been mingled in the country's soil; India isn't someone's ancestral property) – perhaps encapsulates the kind of person he was



**CHORI CHORI JAB
NAZREIN MILI**
Composer: Anu Malik
Film: Kareeb



DEKH LE
Composer: Anu Malik
Film: Munnabhai MBBS



BUMBRO BUMBRO
Composer: Shankar Ehsaan Loy
Film: Mission Kashmir



**DIL KO HAZAAR
BAAR ROKA**
Composer: Anu Malik
Film: Murder

experimenting with form and structure, but fate had other ideas. One of his admirers turned out to be Gulshan Kumar. The T-series head honcho asked him to come to Mumbai and write for films. In an interview Indori had revealed that Gulshan had liked his ghazal, *Jheel achcha hai, kamal achcha hai, jaam achcha hai, teree aankhon ke liye koun sa naam achcha hai*. Later on, a song *Jheel rakhon, kanwal rakhon ya jaam rakhon/ Teri aankhon ka kya naam rakhon* was based on it. But the song which got him popularity was *Aaj humne dil ka har ik kissa tamaam kar liya* from Mahesh Bhatt's *Sir* (1993).

However, he was soon disillusioned with the false lustre of the film industry. Living in Mumbai, he wasn't able to invest more time in *mushairas*. He had taken up songwriting as a sort of intellectual exercise but started finding the effort tiring. It was said he was also hurt with the lack of respect meted out to writers and poets in the industry. He tried to find a middle way out, keeping alive the ethos of poetry even while writing to a set situation.

But the constant dumbing down on lyrics was sort of getting to him. And so he said goodbye to Mumbai and went back to Indore before his integrity could be further compromised.

He married Seema Rahat on May 27, 1986. The couple had a daughter Shibil and two sons-- Faisal Rahat and Satlaj Rahat, who is also a budding poet. He got married the second time in 1988 to Urdu and Hindi poetess Anjum Rehbar but the couple separated in 1993.

Dr Indori was suffering from both diabetes and heart ailments. He had complained of breathlessness four-five days before his death. He was hospitalised in Sri Aurobindo Institute of Medical Sciences in Indore on August 10, after being detected for pneumonia. Later tests showed him to be COVID-19 positive. He gave out this information himself on Twitter on the morning of August 11, asking his well-wishers to pray for him and not call him on his direct number. He was placed in the ICU when he experienced breathlessness. Sadly, he went into cardiac arrest around 5 pm the same day and could not be saved. ■

FAREWELL, NISHIKANT KAMAT

DEVESH SHARMA
PROFILES THE LATE
FILMMAKER WHO PASSED
AWAY RECENTLY

(JUNE 17, 1970 - AUGUST 17, 2020)



TIMESCONTENT

Today, when we hear about the astronomical sums being charged by film institutes, we fail to understand how people with just dreams in their eyes but not so copious pockets can afford to enter the film industry. Well, there's a tried and trusted method called learning on the job. It's not an easy

way in and can be quite a backbreaking journey, full of heartaches and failures. But if you can keep a calm head through the bump and the grind and don't mind the potholes, the rewards are worth it. That's what happened with Nishikant Kamat. The filmmaker, who was born on June 17, 1970, hailed from a middle-class background.

Local trains are considered the lifeline of Mumbai and Mumbai Meri Jaan showed how the blasts affected the common citizens in so many diverse ways

Nishikant's father was a math professor while his mother taught Sanskrit. He himself had a degree in hotel management. He studied Hotel Management in Goa and it was here that he got interested in theatre and became the cultural secretary of his college. Coming back to Mumbai, he became a film editor for three years, then worked in

Dombivli Fast was about a common man's angst against the wrongs he sees around him. His protagonist, played by Sandeep Kulkarni, becomes increasingly violent in his behaviour and kind of loses it in the end...



the TV industry for seven years, then worked as a writer for four years before finally making his first film *Dombivli Fast* in 2005, after fifteen years of struggle. The film won the National Film Award for Best Feature Film in Marathi.

Not only was it critically acclaimed, it was also one of the biggest commercial hits in Marathi cinema. The movie was about a common man's angst against the wrongs he sees around him. His protagonist, played by Sandeep Kulkarni, becomes increasingly violent in his behaviour and kind of loses it in the end, unable to take in the scale of corruption that he sees everywhere. Marathi audiences were unused to such treatment of films and hailed Nishikant as the next big thing. Surprisingly, instead of making his next film in Marathi, Nishikant turned his attention down South. He got Madhavan interested in the project and remade *Dombivli Fast* in Tamil as *Evano Oruvan* (2007) with Madhavan and Sangeetha in the lead roles. The film was a critical success in Tamil as well.

Nishikant continued on his path of making realistic cinema, telling his stories from the point of view of middle-class protagonists. He entered the Hindi film industry with *Mumbai Meri Jaan* (2008). Starring Madhavan, Soha Ali Khan,



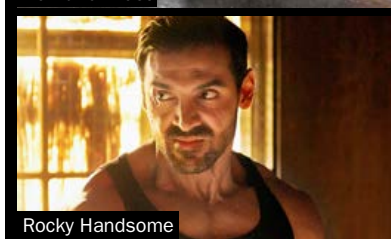
Dombivli Fast



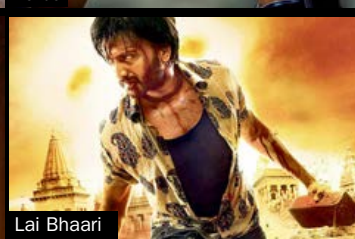
Force



Madaari



Rocky Handsome



Lai Bhaari



Mumbai Meri Jaan

Irrfan Khan, Paresh Rawal and Kay Kay Menon, the film dealt with the aftermath of the Mumbai train bombing on July 11, 2006, where 209 people lost their lives and over 700 were injured. Local trains are considered the lifeline of Mumbai and the film showed how the blasts affected the common citizens in so many diverse ways. The film was critically acclaimed and won several awards, including the Filmfare Best Film Critics' for director Nishikant. Strangely, he changed tracks afterwards and segued into purely commercial space with *Force* (2011), starring John Abraham, Genelia D'Souza and the debutant Vidhut Jammwal. The hugely-violent film, whose highpoint was the confrontation between musclemen Abraham and Jammwal, was a

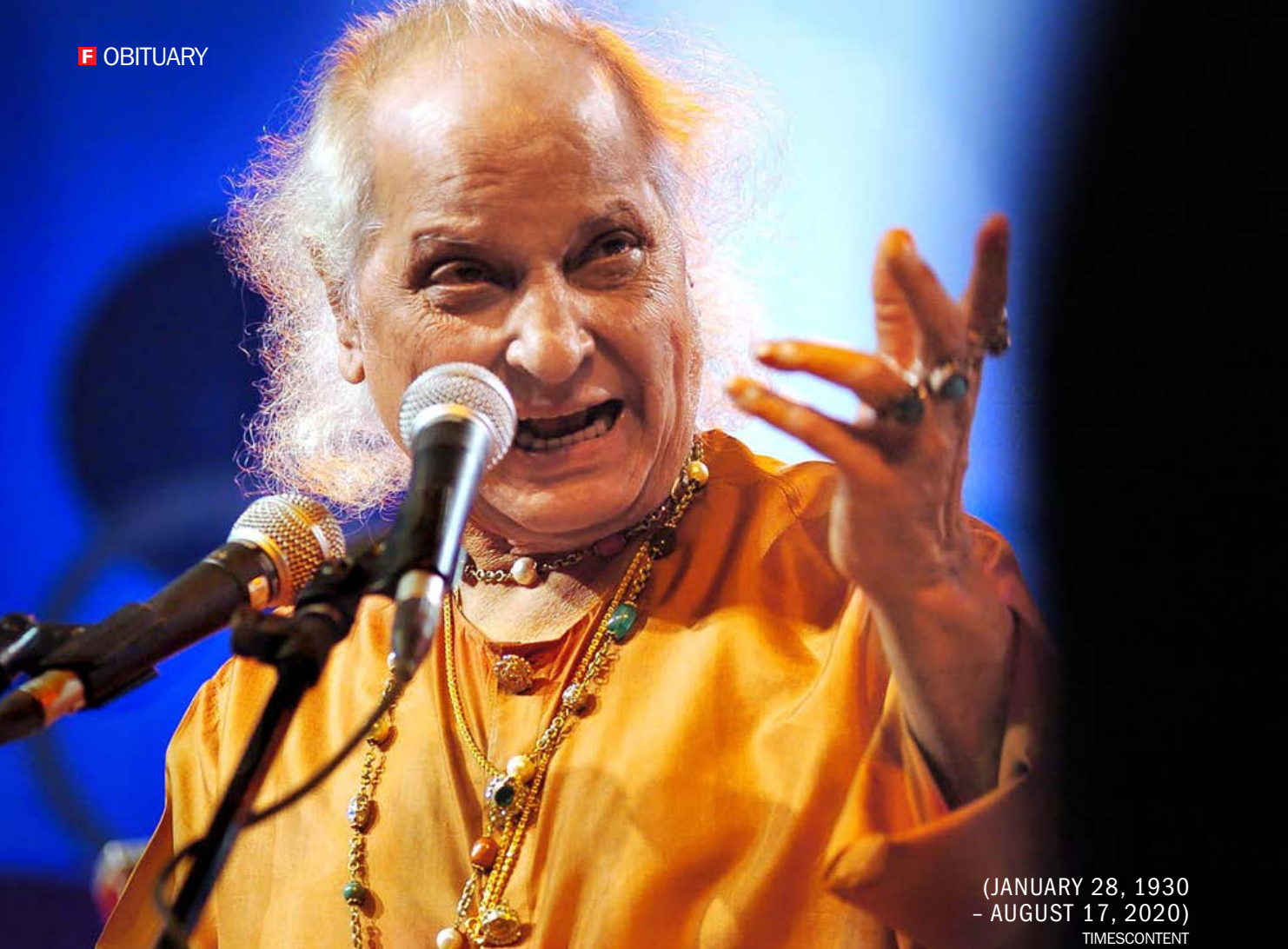
remake of Gautham Menon's successful Tamil film, *Kaakha Kaakha* (2003) starring Suriya and Jyothika.

Nishikant went back to Marathi cinema with *Lai Bhaari* (2014), starring Riteish Deshmukh and Radhika Apte. The film harked back to the Salim-Javed era and was all about lost siblings seeking revenge. It became a bumper hit, running more than 100 days.

Nishikant next remade the acclaimed Malayalam film *Drishyam* starring Mohanlal in Hindi. The 2015 film, starring Ajay Devgn and Tabu in the lead, deviated in small ways from the source material but it still proved to be a critical and commercial hit, just like the original. He teamed up with John Abraham again for *Rocky Handsome*

(2016), an out and out action film, which was a remake of the 2010 Korean hit, *The Man From Nowhere*. The film got mostly negative reviews from critics. Nishikant, who also acted in the film, kind of stayed away from directing after the release of his next *Madaari* (2016). The film, starring Irrfan Khan, was a spiritual successor to Nishikant's first film, *Dombivli Fast*, and had a common man reacting to the malaise that he sees around him. Besides directing, Nishikant also acted in films like *Hava Aney De* (2004), *Daddy* (2017) *Julie 2* (2017) and *Bhavesh Joshi* (2018).

The filmmaker/actor was hospitalised in Hyderabad some days ago as he was suffering from liver cirrhosis. He passed away on August 17, 2020, and was just 50 when he died. ■



(JANUARY 28, 1930
- AUGUST 17, 2020)
TIMESCONTENT

HIS MASTERFUL VOICE

PANDIT JASRAJ WAS A DOYEN OF INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC. **DEVESH SHARMA** LOOKS BACK AT HIS LIFE AND CAREER

One of India's foremost classical vocalists, Pandit Jasraj, was born in a family of classical musicians of the Mewati *Gharana* on January 28, 1930. His native village was Pili Mandori, which falls in the Hisar district of Haryana. His father, Pandit Motiram, a noted classical singer, passed away when

Pandit Jasraj was just 4. The family, comprising his mother and two brothers, moved to Hyderabad soon after, where his brother Pratap Narayan (composer duo Jatin-Lalit's father) began teaching him the basics of the tabla. It's said that the family later moved to Ahmedabad. Six years later, when he was 11, Jasraj began accompanying

PANDIT JASRAJ DEvised A NEW JUGALBANDI STYLE WHERE MALE AND FEMALE SINGERS SING DIFFERENT RAGAS AT THE SAME TIME. IT CAME TO BE KNOWN AS JASRANGI AFTER HIM

his elder brother Maniram, a vocalist, on the tabla.

He could have emerged as one of India's best percussionists but for a snide remark by a vocalist. That made Panditji give up the instrument and take up vocal singing. The tabla world's loss became vocal singing world's gain. He reportedly vowed he'd not cut his hair till he

HE COULD HAVE EMERGED AS ONE OF INDIA'S BEST PERCUSSIONISTS BUT FOR A SNIDE REMARK BY A VOCALIST. THAT MADE PANDITJI GIVE UP THE INSTRUMENT AND TAKE UP VOCAL SINGING. THE TABLA WORLD'S LOSS BECAME VOCAL SINGING WORLD'S GAIN



became an accomplished singer. He soon became one of the most celebrated classical vocalists and was the recipient of several awards and honours like the Padma Vibhushan, the second-highest civilian honour in the country, the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, Maharashtra Gaurav Puraskar, the Dinanath Mangeshkar Award, the Rajiv Gandhi Award and many more.

He gave his first concert at 22. The family moved to Kolkata in 1946, though he continued to train in the Mewati style. Kolkata is known for its rich cultural heritage and was a hub of classical music at that point of time. It can be surmised that he benefited greatly from its influence. He also reportedly trained under Swami Vallabhdas of the Agra *Gharana*. He was said to like Ustad Amir Khan of the Agra *Gharana* and began incorporating elements from other *gharanas* into his music. While purists were understandably angry at what they consider sacrilegious, he was later

ironically praised for his innovations by music connoisseurs. He devised a new *jugalbandi* style where male and female singers sing different *ragas* at the same time. It came to be known as *Jasrangi* after him.

His music came to be known for its spiritualism, its divinity. He was said to be close to spiritual guru Jiddu Krishnamurti. We don't know whether it was this influence or his own natural spiritual progression towards the devotional aspects of classical music that led him to Meera Bhajans, Jaideva's *Geeta Govindam*, Vedic chants, recitations of Upanishadic texts, and also poetry written by other saint poets.

We've heard of birds and animals being moved by Tansen's music but such a thing actually happened in Pandit Jasraj's life. In 1987, he was singing at the Sankatmochan Hanuman temple in Lucknow on the occasion of Hanuman

Jayanti. Just then a deer, seemingly mesmerised by the singer's voice, walked into the gathering, leaving everyone spellbound. Panditji was lost in his rendition and hence his eyes were closed. When he opened his eyes and saw the spectacle before him, he greeted the deer with

folded hands.

He had a distant relationship with the film industry in the sense that he's Jatin-Lalit's uncle. Besides he was married to filmmaker V Shantaram's daughter Madhura, whom he reportedly met on the sets of *Jhanak Jhanak Payal Baje* (1955). She's a filmmaker in her own right, having directed documentaries on both her father and her husband before making her directorial debut in fiction with the Marathi film *Aai Tujha Aashirwad* (2010). The couple has two children, music director Shaarangdev and actress and singer Durga Jasraj.

He did sing a few songs, such as *Vandana karo*, composed in the raga Ahir Bhairav by composer Vasant Desai, for the film *Ladki Sahyadri Ki* (1966), a duet with vocalist Bhimsen Joshi for the soundtrack of the film *Birbal My Brother* (1975), and a ballad, *Vaada tumse hai vaada* for 1920 (2008) directed by Vikram Bhatt. Panditji was a fabled teacher and his list of renowned students include Saptarshi Chakraborty, Sanjeev Abhyankar, violinist Kala Ramnath, Tripti Mukherjee, Suman Ghosh, flautist Shashank Subramanyam, Anuradha Paudwal, Sadhana Sargam, Ramesh Narayan and many more. Pandit Jasraj passed away on August 17, 2020 due to a cardiac arrest. He was living in New Jersey, USA and was 90 years of age at the time of his death. ■

FILM SONGS SUNG BY PANDIT JASRAJ

VAISHNO JANA TO
Composer: L Subramaniam
Film: Gour Hari Dastaan
- The Freedom File (2015)

VAADA TUMSE HAI VAADA

Composer: Adnan Sami
Film: 1920 (2008)

ASA JULAHA KA
Composer: Vanraj Bhatia
Film: Susman (1987)

JHEENI JHEENI
Composer: Vanraj Bhatia
Film: Susman (1987)

**VANDANA KARO
JAIN VIR KI**
Composer: Vasant Desai
Film: Ladki Sahyadri Ki (1966)

THE PHENOMENON

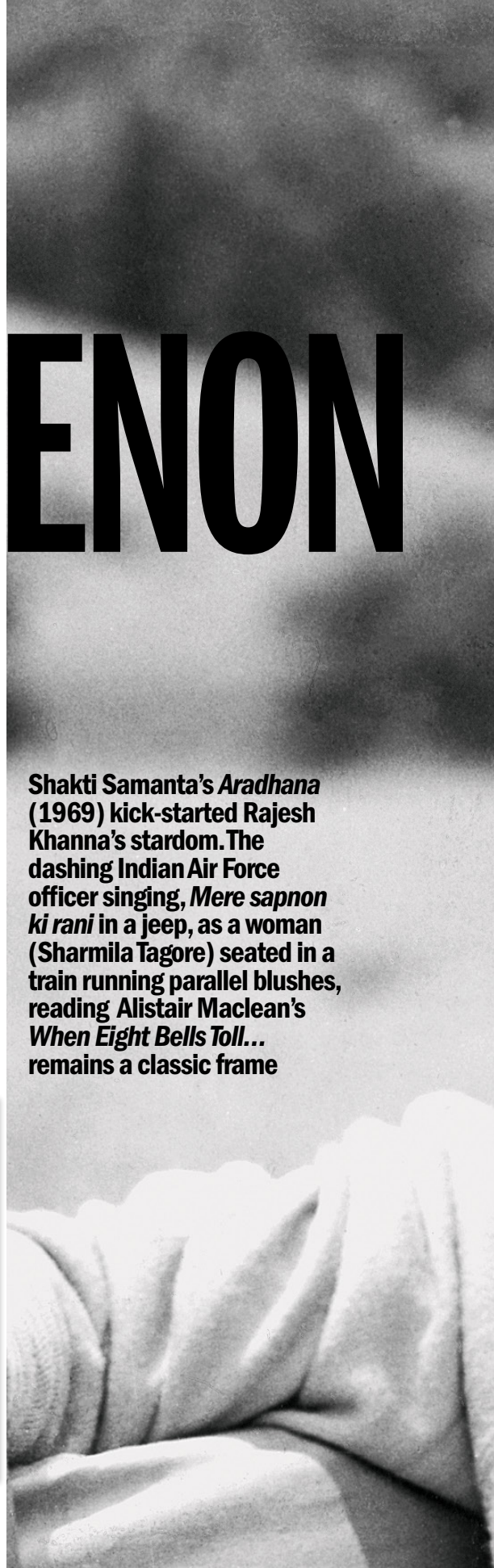
— ★ ★ ★ —
THE LATE **RAJESH KHANNA** SAW
PHENOMENAL FAME IN THE
EARLY '70S. **FARHANA FAROOK**
REVISITS THOSE YEARS THAT
HAVE LEFT BEHIND A LIFETIME
OF MEMORIES
— ★ ★ ★ —

He starred in 15 consecutive hits between 1969 to 1971. The frenzy he prompted, the fandom he enjoyed, the craze he celebrated – no actor yet has been able to duplicate that kind of superstardom. Women got married to his photograph, while others picked up the dust on his car wheels and applied it as *sindoor*. Some even committed suicide when he got married to an adolescent Dimple Kapadia. He didn't have the Greek God looks of his predecessors. His features were gentle and his voice gentler. The boyish face dotted with pimples, the crinkling eyes, the typical wave of the hand and the *Guru kurta*... Rajesh Khanna was a cult. His onscreen mortality added to his magnetism. It was at once both – a reminder of our vulnerability and a shout out to live fully. He aced the 'loser in love' façade in most of his films, making women want to protect him and possess him. Jack Pizzey, who made the BBC documentary, *Bombay Superstar* (1974), described him as an actor who had the 'charisma of Rudolph Valentino and the arrogance of Napoleon.' And just as time bound these were, so was Rajesh's swag. "Those were heady days. I admit that I may have made some mistakes. I was a superstar, but I was also an ordinary mortal," he once confided in an interview when questioned about his alleged arrogance. Taking a look at that era, which defined him and deified him...

Rajesh Khanna was born on December 29, 1942, in Amritsar, Punjab as Jatin Khanna. He was adopted by his well-placed relatives, Chunnilal and Leelawati Khanna, who lived in Girgaum, Mumbai. He was a rare rookie, who went about seeking work in films in his own MG sports car. He became one of the eight finalists in the All India Talent Contest, organised by United Producers and *Filmfare* in



Shakti Samanta's *Aradhana* (1969) kick-started Rajesh Khanna's stardom. The dashing Indian Air Force officer singing, *Mere sapnon ki rani* in a jeep, as a woman (Sharmila Tagore) seated in a train running parallel blushes, reading Alistair Maclean's *When Eight Bells Toll...* remains a classic frame



(1942-2012)



1965. He made his debut in Chetan Anand's *Aakhri Khat* (1966), India's entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 40th Academy Awards. This was followed by *Raaz*, *Aurat* and *Baharon Ke Sapne* (all in 1967) and *Doli* and *Ittefaq* (both in 1969).

Shakti Samanta's *Aradhana* (1969) kick-started his stardom. The dashing Indian Air Force officer singing, *Mere sapnon ki rani* in a jeep, as a woman (Sharmila Tagore) seated in a train running parallel blushes, reading Alistair Maclean's *When Eight Bells Toll*... remains a classic frame. In a double role as Arun/ Suraj Prasad Saxena, Rajesh got the nation hooked. The film also saw the resurgence of Kishore Kumar with hits like *Kora kaagaz tha* and *Roop tera mastana*. *Aradhana* bagged the Filmfare Best Film award. Raj Khosla's *Do Raaste* (1969) too won him attention, though it was a family affair. The film gave us the ultimate seduction song – Laxmikant Pyarelal's *Bindiya chamkegi*, filmed on Rajesh and Mumtaz. Manmohan Desai's *Sachaa Jhutha* (1970), had him play a villager Bhola, whose lookalike, Ranjit Kumar is a criminal mastermind. While Mumtaz played his ladylove, actress Naaz shot to fame as *Meri pyaari beheniya banegi dulhania* was sung by Rajesh for her in the film. The L-P number became a *bidaai* staple. Mukul Dutt's *Aan Milo Sajna* (1970), pairing him with Asha Parekh, is remembered for L-P's *Achcha to hum chalte hain*.

MA Thirumugham's *Haathi Mere Saathi* (1971), having a Disneyesque appeal, endeared Kaka (as he was fondly called) to children. With the signing amount given to him by producer, Sandow M. M. A. Chinnappa Thevar, Rajesh apparently bought a bungalow at Carter Road from



“Whenever Rajesh entered a hotel after a shoot at midnight, there would be a queue of 600 girls waiting to see him. As a result, even I'd get some importance, as people would ask for my autograph as well.”
– Mumtaz in an interview

Rajendra Kumar. Renamed as Aashirwad, it grew to become a landmark. Shakti Samanta's *Kati Patang* (1971) reiterated Rajesh's stardom. Adapted from the eponymous novel by Gulshan Nanda, which in turn was inspired by the Hollywood film *No Man Of Her Own*, it was shot in picturesque Nainital. R.D. Burman's tracks *Yeh jo mohabbat hai*, *Yeh shaam mastani* and *Pyaar deewana hota hai* and Asha Bhosle crooning *Mera naam hai Shabnam* in 'rap', was a bonanza for audiences.

Asit Sen's *Safar* (1970) was perhaps Rajesh's starkest film. Produced by Mushir-Riaz, it was based on a novel by Ashutosh Mukherjee. Rajesh, playing a cancer patient, urges his love (Sharmila Tagore) to marry a businessman (Feroz Khan). Eventually, she loses them both. One to disease. The other to debt. Indeevar's



Zindagi ka safar remains an immortal assertion of mortality. In close proximity to *Safar*, Rajesh played the titular role in *Anand* (1971), someone who's suffering from lymphosarcoma of the intestine. The Hrishikesh Mukherjee film paired him with *Babu Moshai*, Amitabh Bachchan. Songs like *Zindagi kaisi hai paheli* and *Kahin door jab din dhal jaaye* from *Anand* still top nostalgia lists. In the same year, Rajesh's 10-minute cameo in Ramesh Sippy's *Andaz* (1971) is credited for turning the Shammi Kapoor-Hema Malini film into a superhit. Singing, *Zindagi ek safar hai suhana*, he blazes on the screen riding a motorbike with Hema Malini...

Shakti Samanta's sublime *Amar Prem* (1972) was based on the short story, *Hinger Kochuri*.

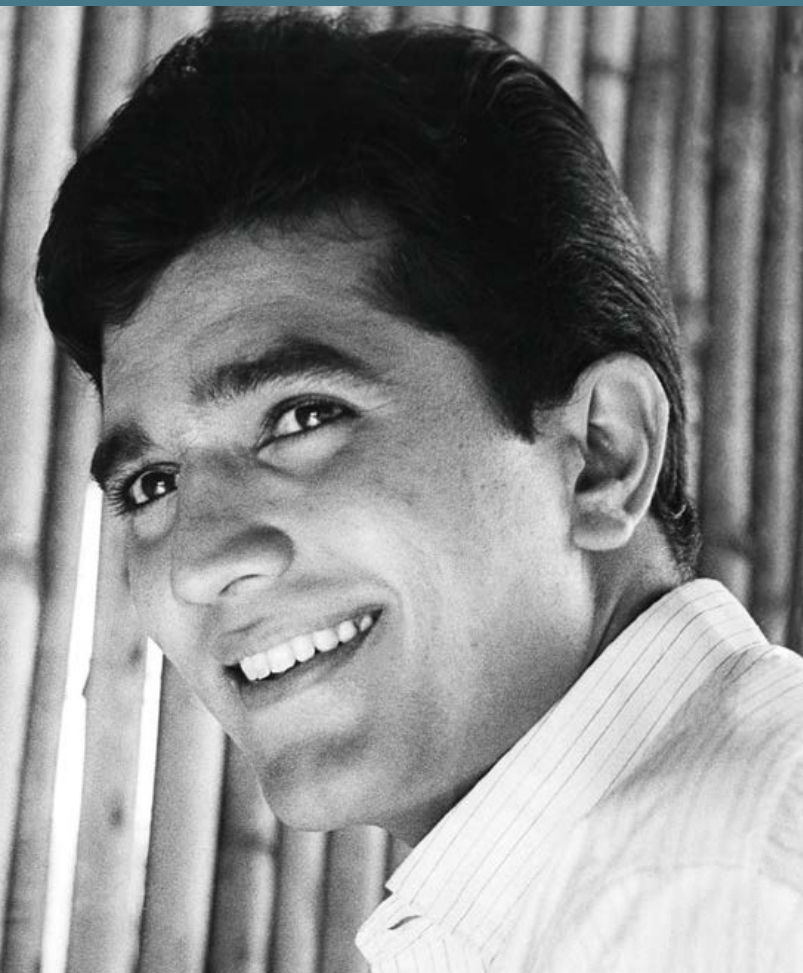
The film contrasted the debauchery of society with the divinity of a child. Story goes that when the song *Chingari ko bhadke* was to be shot at Howrah Bridge in Kolkata



RAJESH KHANNA'S TIMELESS SONGS

- ★ **ROOP TERA MASTANA**
(*Aradhana*)
- ★ **WOH SHAAM KUCCH AJEEB THI**
(*Khamoshi*)
- ★ **YEH SHAAM MASTANI**
(*Kati Patang*)
- ★ **MERE NASEEB MEIN AYE DOST**
(*Do Raaste*)
- ★ **ZINDAGI KAISI HAI PAHELI**
(*Anand*)
- ★ **ZINDAGI EK SAFAR HAI SUHANA**
(*Andaz*)
- ★ **ZINDAGI KA SAFAR**
(*Safar*)
- ★ **KUCCH TOH LOG KAHENGE**
(*Amar Prem*)
- ★ **ZINDAGI KE SAFAR MEIN**
(*Aap Ki Kasam*)
- ★ **O MERE DIL KE CHAIN**
(*Mere Jeevan Saathi*)
- ★ **DIYE JALTE HAI**
(*Namak Haraam*)

In May 1973, *Zanjeer* had introduced Amitabh Bachchan as the 'Angry Young Man'. *Namak Haraam* in November reiterated it. It was apparently Rajesh Khanna himself who, at the premiere of *Namak Haraam*, told Hrishida, "Here's the superstar of tomorrow"



snuffing out of his stardom. In May 1973, *Zanjeer* had introduced Bachchan as the 'Angry Young Man'. *Namak Haraam* in November reiterated it. It was apparently Rajesh himself who, at the premiere of *Namak Haraam*, told Hrishida, "Here's the superstar of tomorrow."

There were several notable films in 1974 including Yash Chopra's *Daag*, Manmohan Desai's *Roti*, J Om Prakash's *Aap Ki Kasam*, KS Prakash Rao's *Prem Nagar* and Shakti Samanta's *Ajanabee*. But the cinematic jargon had changed. In the '80s, he gave hits like *Souten*, *Thodi Si Bewafai*, *Avtaar*, *Agar Tum Na Hote* and *Amrit...* Yet they were few and far between. *Aa Ab Laut Chalein* (1999) and *Wafaa* (2008) were his last few outings.

CRAZE & CHARISMA

Mumtaz and Sharmila Tagore, one known for her spontaneity, the other for her sophistication, were integral

with Rajesh and Sharmila, the authorities didn't grant permission. They feared the bridge would collapse with the weight of the crowds. Rajesh's dialogue from the film, "Pushpa, I hate tears," has assumed cult status today.

Films like *Bawarchi*, *Joroo Ka Ghulam*, *Dil Daulat Duniya*, *Apna Desh* in the same year enjoyed a decent run. But what came as a premonition that year were three flops, *Shehzada*, *Mere Jeevan Saathi* and *Maalik*. Yet, the huge buzz around

Hrishida's *Namak Haraam* (1973), dispelled doubts. Based loosely on the British-American classic *Becket* (1964), starring Peter O'Toole and Richard Burton, it was a proletariat vs plutocrat conflict. While Amitabh Bachchan played Vicky, son of an industrialist, Rajesh played Somu, his humble friend. Reportedly, Rajesh was offered to play Vicky. But he opted for Somu, who dies in the end. Kaka believed his onscreen death insured his success. But this time the death marked the



- 1 Khamoshi
- 2 Namak Haraam
- 3 Kati Patang
- 4 Aan Milo Sajna
- 5 Aap Ki Kasam
- 6 Aradhana
- 7 Daag
- 8 Do Raaste
- 9 Dushman
- 10 Haathi Mere Saathi



His funeral, which took place on July 19 was attended by nine lakh people. It was the ultimate tribute to his stardom. His fans came from places like Surat, Ahmedabad, and even foreign countries. Amidst pristine flowers and tearful farewells, superstar Rajesh Khanna was laid to rest



to Rajesh Khanna's journey. Mumtaz, with whom he acted in eight films, once said in an interview, "Whenever Rajesh entered a hotel after a shoot at midnight, there would be a queue of 600 girls waiting to see him. As a result, even I'd get some importance, as people would ask for my autograph as well." While Sharmila, with whom he did around six films was quoted saying, "Women came out in droves to see Kaka. They'd stand outside the studios to catch a glimpse, they'd marry his photographs, they'd pull at his clothes. Delhi girls were crazier for him than Mumbai girls. He needed police protection."

Friend and actor Kamal Haasan, once shared an incident, which revealed Rajesh's charisma down South even in the early '80s. They both had been to watch the film, *The Swarm*, in Chennai. "After the show... all hell broke loose... I became Rajesh Khanna's bodyguard as I took him through the crowd. His shirt was torn, but he was enjoying himself. He chuckled

like a child," Kamal was quoted saying. Javed Akhtar (co-writer of *Haathi Mere Saathi*) too was witness to Kaka's stardom. "At a state lottery in Bangalore, the government asked him to draw the lucky number in a stadium. I was with him... The sound of 50,000 people gasping (when they saw him)... He was like Caesar. It was unbelievable."

While the world was swooning over him, Rajesh was in love with actress/model Anju Mahendru those days. They were in a relationship for seven years. Apparently, his alleged ego and possessiveness caused a dent in their relationship. On the rebound, he married the teenaged Dimple Kapadia, who was to debut in *Bobby*, in March '73. After two daughters, Twinkle and Rinkie, and a decade of trying to make her marriage work, Dimple walked out of Aashirwad. But she never divorced him. Anju and Rajesh resumed their friendship after 17 years. What's more, Dimple and Anju are friends too and were with him till his last journey.

A HERO'S FAREWELL

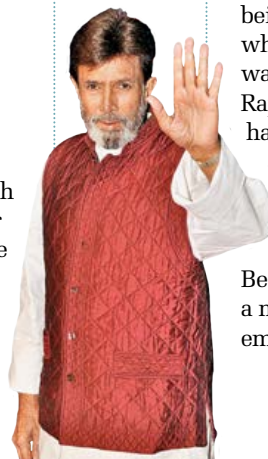
It was in 2011 that reports of Rajesh's terminal illness started doing the rounds. His last few months had the family rallying around him. Dimple, they say, never left his side. He passed away on July 18, 2012, in the presence of Dimple, his daughters Rinke Khanna and Twinkle Khanna, son-in-law Akshay Kumar and friend Anju Mahendru. His funeral, which took place on July 19, was attended by nine lakh people. It was the ultimate tribute to his stardom. His fans came from places like Surat, Ahmedabad, and even foreign countries. Amidst pristine flowers and tearful farewells, he was laid to rest. In a special pre-recorded message, which was played on his *chautha*, Rajesh thanked his friends and fans for the love they'd showered on him. It was reminiscent of his Shakespearean soliloquy from *Anand*, "*Babumoshai... Hum sab toh rangmanch ki kathputhliyan hain jinki dor uparwale ki ungliyon main bandhi hain. Kab, kaun, kaise uthega yeh koi nahi bata sakta hai.*" In retrospect, Rajesh Khanna's life closely resembled the life of the lead character in *The Sunset Boulevard* (1950). Difference being that while Norma Desmond, who plays a forgotten filmstar, wants to make one last comeback, Rajesh actually did. His demise has resurrected his stardom in a surreal way. His movies, his music (especially with R.D. Burman) and his memories have got a new lease of life. Because Rajesh Khanna was not a man. He was an emotion. And emotions never die.

❶ With bride Dimple Kapadia

❷ Receiving the Filmfare Special Trophy from Dimple

❸ The final farewell

❹ With Anju Mahendru



your say

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

INSTA LIKE

Medley of moments

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

@ranveersingh:
the gram made
me do it

*If the gram
is making
Ranveer Singh
do this, then
we're okay with
the machines
taking over.*



@priyankachopra
Can't get enough.
♥ @pandathepunk
*The Chopra-Jonas
family welcomed
its fifth member,
a beautiful dog
named Panda.
This picture of
Priyanka with the
little punk is just
too cute for words.*



@bhumipednekar:
Just us
@samikshapednekar

*Are you even sisters if you don't
take a break from work and pose
for pre-pillow fight pictures?*



@sakpataudi: Coming soon!! Couldn't resist!
Congratulations @kareenakapoorkhan be safe and
healthy - and radiant as ever ! ♥

*...and here's to our favourite post so far.
A big cheers to Soha Ali Khan for her
impeccable humour.*



@vickykaushal09: Ki karaa, petrol khatam
hi nahi hunda! #3am

*A bucketful of good looks, an overload of talent and
a killer sense of humour. Vicky Kaushal is clearly
a Superman, erm, a superstar in the making...*



Readers send in their feedback pg 78

Shatrughan Sinha's racy rejoinders pg 80



IN THE MAIL

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

1st Prize
₹1500

KAREENA KAPOOR KHAN'S STUNNING COVER

Your latest cover (August) with Kareena Kapoor Khan, who also happens to be my favourite actor, is more than stunning. All the shots were spectacular. Who thought we would see her husband and actor Saif Ali Khan turn into a photographer during the pandemic. What made it special was her interview with editor Jitesh Pillai. She seemed so comfortable with him. Great stuff, *Filmfare*. I absolutely loved the issue.

Hansika Awasthi, Lucknow

EXCITING COLLABORATIONS AHEAD

I read about Ajay Devgn and Sidharth Malhotra collaborating for the very first time in the last issue (August) of *Filmfare*. The news has got me excited as I'm a huge fan of both. I hope the project goes on floors soon.

Aarti Iyer, Chennai



Kareena Kapoor Khan

NAILING THE QUARANTINE SHOOTS

While everyone is struggling during the pandemic, it is amazing to see how you guys are making the most of what you can. I thoroughly enjoyed watching pictures from Kareena Kapoor Khan (August) and Rajkummar Rao's (May) at-home photoshoots. I can only imagine how tough it must be to coordinate shoots under such circumstances. But you guys have come through with flying colours.

Parthasarathy Sen, Bangalore

2nd Prize
₹1000

KUNAL KEMMU'S IMPRESSIVE COMIC TIMING

Thanks to OTT platforms, watching films as soon as they're released has been the best thing during this lockdown. After reading several great reviews online, I ended up watching the Rajesh Krishnan directorial *Lootcase* starring Kunal Kemmu. Honestly, it's one of the funniest and most entertaining films this year. Kunal Kemmu is excellent with his comic timing.

Anil Mathur, New Delhi



Kunal Kemmu: Praiseworthy performance

→ REMEMBERING PANDIT JASRAJ

The year 2020 has been really tough on all of us. Too many Bollywood celebs have passed away this year. I was sad to read about the demise of legendary Indian classical music genius, Pandit Jasraj. I read an article on your website, which paid tribute to the late maestro. It was great to read about his journey over the years. He will always remain in our hearts.

Raghav Hazarika, Darjeeling



Maestro: Pandit Jasraj

GANPATI BAPPA MORYA!

Just like every year, this year too, my family and I welcomed Lord Ganesha home on the occasion of Ganesh Chaturthi. Such a holy period for one and all, sincerely hope all our problems go away. I want to thank *Filmfare* for always doing on-time reporting of all the daily updates of our favourite movie stars. I thoroughly enjoyed the coverage your team did on the Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations on your website and social media. Wishing you all good luck.

Yogita Kulkarni, Mumbai

AYUSHMANN KHURRANA'S TETE-A-TETE WITH FILMFARE

One of the most talented stars in Hindi cinema today, me and my family absolutely love Ayushmann Khurrana. Right from his first film, *Vicky Donor* to his latest release *Gulabo Sitabo*, he has always struck the right chord with us viewers. I recently read his interview (July) with editor Jitesh Pillai. It was nice to learn about him on a personal level where he spoke about his wife, family and more. Hearty conversations always are the best. Great work by the editor and your team.

Archana Nagpal, Surat

SUPER GOOD NEWWZ!

I really enjoyed watching Raj Mehta's *Good Newwz* last year. While the film was a typical Bollywood comedy, it made for a thoroughly entertaining film which can be watched again and again. When I read in your magazine (August) that the director was collaborating with Varun Dhawan and Kiara Advani for a sequel, it got me excited as I liked the chemistry the two stars shared in the song *First class* from *Kalank*.

Kiran Joshi, Solapur



Sushant Singh Rajput and Sanjana Sanghi in *Dil Bechara*

↑ SUSHANT SINGH RAJPUT'S FINAL ADIEU

I watched Sushant Singh Rajput's last film *Dil Bechara* recently and my heart was overflowing with emotions. He was truly a brilliant actor and I had been a huge fan of his work. Even in his last film, Sushant wonderfully managed to cast a spell on each one of us with his performance. It's a beautiful film, I would recommend everyone to watch it.

Aditi Shetty, Bangalore

SUSHANT SINGH RAJPUT'S MYSTERIOUS DEATH

Ever since the Supreme Court transferred the Sushant Singh Rajput death case to the CBI for investigation, there has been a ray of hope for many of the late actor's fans, including myself. I believe we all deserve to know the truth and am hopeful that with the CBI probe, things will soon be crystal clear.

Ajay Saini, Rohtak

Just one Point



Superman: Sonu Sood

There's no doubt that Sonu Sood has turned into a superhero for the country. My respect for the actor has grown immensely and I'm looking forward to seeing more of him on screen. **Rajesh Shrivastava, Allahabad**

Kareena Kapoor Khan (August) is nothing short of a Hindi film icon. I've been watching her work since she made her debut with *Refugee* back in 2000 and she's grown with each passing film. **Rajat Gaur, Agra**

I know it's pretty much impossible to host an event right now and even in the near future for that matter. But, I would absolutely love it if we could get some sort of digital version of the regional awards for 2020. **Dilip Doshi, Nanded**

When I read about the news of Amitabh Bachchan, Abhishek Bachchan, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and Aaradhy Bachchan testing positive for COVID, it left me in a state of shock. Now that they're out of the danger, I hope the family gets healthy soon. **Tarun Khanna, New Delhi**

I want to see a Bollywood couple like SRK - Kajol on a *Filmfare* cover again. I know it might take a while for it to happen, but one lives in hope. **Indranil Sengupta, Bhubaneswar**



Ishaan Khatter and Tabu in *A Suitable Boy*

TABU AND ISHAAN KHATTER'S MAGICAL CHEMISTRY

I've been reading a lot about Mira Nair's *A Suitable Boy*. I'm really excited to watch this unique, never-seen-before pairing of Tabu and Ishaan Khatter in the show. Since I've read the book, I'm curious to see how the makers have presented the story in the form of a web series.

Tarun Gogoi, Kolkata

↓ THE TERRIFIC TRIO

There had been rumours of Katrina Kaif working with Excel Entertainment for a while now. But when I read in your latest issue (August) that she'd be collaborating with Ishaan Khatter and Siddhant Chaturvedi for Excel Entertainment, I was over the moon. I'm a big fan of Katrina and the fact that she's starring with two promising fresh faces will definitely make for something special.

Richa Reddy, Hyderabad



Siddhant, Katrina and Ishaan

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PHOTOGRAPH: MEETESH TANEJA

Shatrughan Sinha's Rapid fire



Big draw: Akshay Kumar

Can you name a real and rooted film or web series in recent times?

Abhijit Ghosh, Parganas (North)
There are many. The two I can pinpoint at the moment, are the Manoj Bajpayee starrer *The Family Man* and the Israeli series *Fauda*.

Did we need Sushant Singh Rajput's untimely demise to finally take mental health seriously?

Mehek Mahtani, Pune

First of all, I don't believe Sushant Singh Rajput had any mental-health issues. People can be driven to suicide for various reasons. Mental health care has been getting a big push ever since Deepika Padukone opened up about it. Depression has always been part

of our lives. We have to learn to deal with it and sometimes resort to professional and medical help. Support from our family, our loved ones, our friends and colleagues is important as well in overcoming it.

Life skills and value education are the most important needs of society right now. Shouldn't these be made compulsory in schools and institutions as short term materialistic success is failing lives?

Dibyasha Mishra, Bhubaneswar
Knowledge and education are the strong pillars of life. No matter how much you learn, there is still a lot left to learn. Yes, it's a good idea to initiate these in school so the children can appreciate the value and respect what life has to offer.

the medicines to deal with coronavirus and the other is staying together with your family. Staying home during the lockdown can be difficult and stressful. Humour is the most important tool to counter anxiety. Yoga, meditation and interacting with your family members is surely going to make the difference in pulling through these difficult times.

With the lockdown and no movies screening, do Bollywood fans miss Akshay Kumar movies?

Bumeja Arvind, Tumkur

Human beings are very flexible. Yes, they must be missing Akshay and other stars they love but now they have other forms of entertainment as well to look forward too. The real test of stardom will happen after the pandemic subsides and theatres open. If people still flock to screens because of the stars then the battle is

What punishment would you suggest for China for spreading COVID-19 pandemic in the world?

Atul Tankha, Ratlam

I leave it to the superpowers and the world leaders to take the lead in this matter, in whatever manner they deem fit.

Is 'humour' the only medicine to deal with coronavirus until a vaccine comes out?

Abhijeet Sharma, Faridabad

Yes, humour is one of

Abhijit Ghosh



Mind matters: Deepika Padukone

won, otherwise we will have to start thinking of other parameters about how to lure the public.

Sushant Singh Rajput's suicide has opened the Pandora's box of nepotism and entitlement in the movie industry. Will the industry return to normalcy ever?

K. S. Sundaram, on email

It's a tragedy that shocked everyone. Yes, it has brought to light certain harsh truths about the industry. Returning to normalcy may take a while. The untimely

demise of one of our best and brightest, self-made and supremely talented Sushant Singh Rajput is a great loss indeed.

What would the new dawn be like, after the dark COVID-19 night, for the film industry?

Jaideep Sharma, Kolkata

The new dawn could be back to business as usual. New creative ventures like web series, for example, have become popular as people are binge-watching them during the lockdown. I believe the trend will continue afterwards as

1st Prize

What according to you is the mood of the nation today?

Shrinjal Singh

Today, the mood of the nation is justice for Sushant Singh Rajput

2nd Prize

When you came to the industry, heroes were fair skinned and cute and you were the opposite. But you left an impression as a Bihari and made everyone Khamosh!

Md Salim, Kolkata

Opposites attract -- haven't you heard? I was different and the public loved that change. And slowly they started believing in talent rather than fair skin and good looks. And I'm sure I had enough talent to make them Khamosh! I'm humbled with an attitude of gratitude towards your astute observation, my friend. Looking back, I can tell you that it was a difficult phase, initially at least. I've practised and preached the mantra of being better than the best or being different than the rest, ever since my FTII days. And it has always helped me in my life. By the grace of God and the love of people like you, I've managed to give my personal best always.

well. I hope, wish and pray that it brings a great ray of hope after the disasters.

Should we make a film on the coronavirus?

Purshotam Kanjani on email

Oh yes, why not. Any director/ filmmaker who finds the scope of making an interesting film on it should be encouraged to do so. Anything that sheds light on the pandemic should be welcome indeed.

What lessons has the current pandemic situation taught you?

Rashmi Nathani, Mumbai

Precaution, preparation and patience - PPP. I'm not talking about PPE, which are apparently in short supply.

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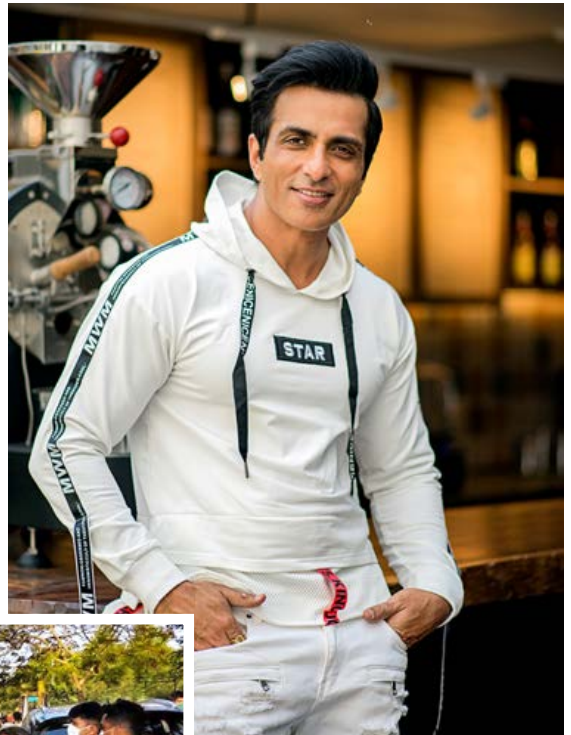
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YOUR QUESTIONS WILL BE FORWARDED TO: Shatrughan Sinha, who insists his answers do not reflect his political and social views.

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ONE-MAN ARMY



Sonu Sood: Lending a helping hand

Among numerous films made on Bhagat Singh, two stood out. One starred Ajay Devgn and the other Sonu Sood. Though his film (*Shaheed-E-Azam*, 2002) wasn't a box office success, the newcomer certainly got noticed. Good things were predicted for him. But as it's seen so often in the industry, the buzz petered out soon. He was all but forgotten, till he made a resurrection of sorts down South as an actor specialising in negative roles. The success of the Nagarjuna starrer *Super* (2005), which was inspired by *Dhoom* and where he and Nag played accomplished thieves who were frenemies, brought him back from oblivion. Sonu soon developed a cult following down South and became a staple in most big-ticket releases. He won the attention of the Hindi film viewers with the period drama *Jodhaa Akbar* (2008), where he played the valiant brother of Aishwarya Rai Bachchan. Appearing as the antagonist Chhedi Singh opposite Salman Khan in the massive hit *Dabangg* (2010), endeared him further to the Hindi audience. His claim wasn't just restricted to Indian shores, however. He tasted

international acclaim after appearing alongside Jackie Chan in *Kung Fu Yoga* (2017). He was destined to be known as a reliable supporting actor but fate had other plans...

Most of us saw the images of lakhs of migrant workers walking barefoot thousands of kilometres home. Only a few of us decided to do something about it. One such person was Sonu Sood. He decided to use his good offices to fast track transport for as many migrant workers as he could. He started off helping a handful but his gesture soon took on a life of its own. His phone number got out on social media circles, on WhatsApp groups. Thousands of people began messaging him on a daily basis asking him for his help. Cometh the hour, cometh the man, they say. A lesser man would have changed his number and would have tried to forget the whole problem. Not Sonu though. He took on the challenge and started reaching out to as many people as he could. Using his good offices, he was able to procure inter-state travelling

permits for thousands and even arranged transport for them. He even helped in airlifting students who were stuck overseas.

People soon started calling him a real hero. The social media exploded with positive messages thanking him. There were memes too but they were good-natured and not mean. Currently, there's a cult around Sonu but he hasn't let it all go to his head. He feels responsible for those he helped reach home and plans to start initiatives which will help them gain their livelihood back. It's also heard that he's going to provide homes for around twenty thousand migrants in Guru Gram. It's clear that he's single-handedly doing the government's job and we wonder what the state of the country would be if other like-minded people joined him. He surely deserves not only the applause but also the support of his industry colleagues. The industry has given generously in the past, whenever natural disasters have struck. We're sure they'll rise to the occasion once more...

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