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RANVEER SINGH REUNITES WITH SANJAY LEELA BHANSALI

IS ZOYA AKHTAR LAUNCHING SUHANA KHAN AND KHUSHI KAPOOR?

ROCKING! KRITI SANON

MY LIFE, MY RULES

SONAKSHI SINHA ACES THE ART OF LIVING ON HER OWN TERMS

contents

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PHOTOGRAPHS: THE HOUSE OF PIXELS
CREATIVE DIRECTION AND STYLING: MOHIT RAI | MAKE-UP: HEEMA DATTANI | HAIR: MADHURINA KHALE
Outfit: Gaby Charbachy | Bracelets: Ineze, Diosa Paris By Darshan Dave and Anaqa by Nishant Tulsiani | Rings: Curio Cottage and Goenka India











Ed Space

03 Sonakshi Sinha lives life on her own terms
74 Social media shenanigans

Masala Fix

06 Zoya Akhtar set to launch Suhana Khan and Khushi Kapoor, Kareena Kapoor Khan turns producer, Kriti Sanon to take up dirt biking for *Ganapath* and other grist from the rumour mill



Preview

14 Abhilash Thapliyal and Palak Tiwari narrate their dreams and desires

Fashion & Lifestyle

20 Celeb designer Ritika Mirchandani talks about her journey
23 Style secrets of the stars revealed

Exclusives

26 Cover story: Sonakshi Sinha talks about doing things her own way in a candid interview
36 Kriti Sanon opens up about playing a mother in *Mimi*
40 Tusshar Kapoor talks about completing two decades in the film industry
44 Shefali Shah on the joy of being a filmmaker
48 Malavika Mohanan caught in a sensuous photoplay
54 Sonnalli Seygall looks back at her 10 years in showbiz
56 Marathi beauty Amruta Khanvilkar is in a happy space
60 Bangla bombshell Koel Mallick tells it like it is
64 Remembering ace singer and composer Hemant Kumar

Your Say

70 Readers write in their rants and reactions
72 Shatrughan Sinha's racy rejoinders

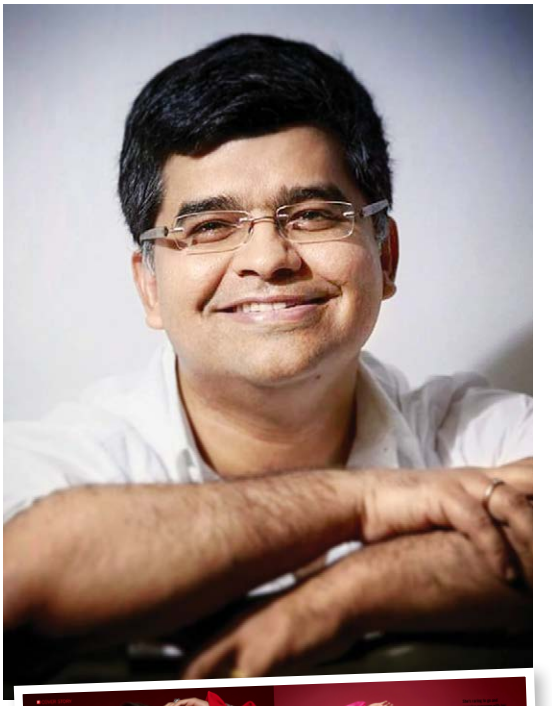
Letter from the Editor

Asli Sona

When she made her debut a decade ago with *Dabangg* (2010), Sonakshi Sinha got hailed for her earthy beauty. She made her presence felt in the film despite being paired with Salman Khan. It was by no means a small feat, considering it was an action film to boot. As everyone knows, heroines are more or less part of the scenery in such films. Her confidence, her poise, won the audience over. Cut to 2016. She played a girl hell bent on revenge in *Akira*. She did her stunts herself and impressed everyone with her kicks and chops. It's sad though that the film didn't do well at the box office. That has been the perennial problem with Sonakshi. Her films where she tries to push the envelope somehow don't find their audience. Take the case of *Lootera* (2013), for instance. She arguably gave the performance of a lifetime in this period drama based on O Henry's story, *The Last Leaf* and directed by Vikramaditya Motwane. Everything, from the music, to the cinematography to direction to acting was excellent. Yet it did below par business. Such has been the case with most of her solo starrers, be it *Noor* (2017), where she played a clueless journalist or *Khandaani Shafakhana* (2019), where she was searching for the perfect aphrodisiac. She gave her 100 per cent to the roles, which were definitely *hatke*.

Her big hits came in the form of hugely commercial films, such as *Rowdy Rathore* (2012), where she was paired with Akshay Kumar for the first time. It was a film involving an honest cop and his lookalike conman, who turns over a new leaf to teach the baddies a well-deserved lesson. Her other hit with Akshay includes *Holiday: A Soldier Is Never Off Duty* (2014). She played Akshay's love interest in both films. Apart from Salman Khan and Akshay Kumar, her other hit pairing has been with Ajay Devgn. They have done films like *Son Of Sardaar* (2012), *Once Upon A Time In Mumbaai Dobaara* (2013), and *Action Jackson* (2014).

Sonakshi has jumped onto the OTT bandwagon and will be seen as a rough and tough cop in the web series *Fallen*, directed by Reema Kagti and Ruchika Oberoi. The series also stars Vijay Varma, Gulshan Devaiah and Sohum Shah. She's also rumoured to be in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Heera Mandi,* a series about Lahore's famous red light district. She has also opened up an arts initiative, which will help budding artists find a platform to showcase their art. The multi-talented actress is on our cover this month. Flip the pages to have a look at her exquisite photos and read her candid take on life, love and career...









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

masala fix



BIRTHDAY BUMPS!

Ranveer Singh's mother Anju Bhavnani celebrated her birthday recently. Ranveer is known for his crackling energy and well, the actor doesn't leave an opportunity to bring the house down with it. Ranveer was seen letting his hair down and grooving like no one's watching at the gathering. He danced with his mother and later also with his father Jagjit Singh Bhavnani. Wife Deepika Padukone couldn't stop laughing at his antics.

Sanjay Leela Bhansali casts Ranveer Singh as Baiju Bawra *pg 06*

Kareena Kapoor Khan to turn producer *pg 08*

PHOTOGRAPH: YOGEN SHAH

Rumours&More



RANVEER SINGH IS SLB'S *BAIJU BAWRA*

Sanjay Leela Bhansali may be busy with the post production of his next *Gangubai Kathiawadi*, but that hasn't stopped him from planning his next – *Baiju Bawra*. The project has been on the director's wishlist for a long time. Rumours were rife that **Ranbir Kapoor** who made his debut with SLB in *Saawariya* will reunite with the filmmaker for this musical. However, Ranbir Kapoor turned down the offer. Later **Kartik Aaryan's** name too was thrown in the ring. But it looks like Kartik was in talks with SLB for some other film because the latest reports say it's none other than SLB's blue-eyed boy **Ranveer Singh** who has been finalised for the dream project. After *Goliyon Ki Rasleela Ram-Leela*, *Bajirao Mastani* and *Padmaavat*, Ranveer and SLB will team up for the fourth time. *Baiju Bawra* is said to have an ensemble cast comprising stalwarts like **Ajay Devgn** and **Alia Bhatt**. **Deepika Padukone** too was said to be in the film but reportedly parted ways as SLB wasn't willing to pay her the same remuneration as her husband.



IS IBRAHIM ALI KHAN ASSISTING KARAN JOHAR IN *ROCKY AUR RANI KI PREM KAHANI?*

SAIF ALI KHAN'S DAUGHTER **SARA ALI KHAN** HAS SUCCESSFULLY ESTABLISHED HERSELF IN BOLLYWOOD AND HIS SON **IBRAHIM ALI KHAN** IS ALSO MAKING INROADS INTO THE INDUSTRY. RUMOUR HAS IT THAT IBRAHIM IS ALL SET TO GET SOME EXPERIENCE BEHIND THE CAMERA WITH **KARAN JOHAR**. A SOURCE HAD REVEALED THAT THE STAR KID IS SET TO DEBUT AS AN ASSISTANT DIRECTOR WITH *ROCKY AUR RANI KI PREM KAHANI*. THIS PROJECT MARKS KARAN'S RETURN TO DIRECTION AND FEATURES **RANVEER SINGH** AND **ALIA BHATT** IN LEAD ROLES.

ZOYA AKHTAR SET TO LAUNCH SUHANA KHAN & KHUSHI KAPOOR



There has been a lot of speculation around **Shah Rukh Khan's** daughter, **Suhana Khan's** acting debut. Suhana has been doing theatre for a while now and was also part of a short film that surfaced on the internet last year. There were reports of **Karan Johar** looking to launch her with a film but rumour has it that **Zoya Akhtar** beat him to it. A report on an online portal suggests that Suhana will be seen in Zoya's directorial venture that will be based on Archie comics. Furthermore, speculation is that **Sridevi** and **Boney Kapoor's** younger daughter, **Khushi Kapoor** will also make her acting debut in the same project. Casting them as BFFs Betty and Veronica, Zoya is all set to bring some young and refreshing talent to the OTT platforms. While the report says this casting is finalised, the actors for Archie and Jughead are still not decided upon. A source did add that **Ibrahim Ali Khan** is being considered for Archie but there is no definitive news on the same as of now. Looks interesting alright!

PRIYANKA CHOPRA, KATRINA KAIF, ALIA BHATT TO COME TOGETHER FOR FARHAN AKHTAR'S FILM



Farhan Akhtar made everyone think of *Dil Chahta Hai* when he tweeted that his next film as a director will feature **Priyanka Chopra**, **Katrina Kaif** and **Alia Bhatt**. "Did someone say road trip? Thrilled to announce my next film as director and what better day than 20 years of Dil Chahta Hai to do it. #JeeLeZaraa with @priyankachopra #KatrinaKaif @aliaa08 will commence filming in 2022 and I cannot wait to get this show on the road," said he in his tweet. His tweet was followed by similar tweets from Priyanka Chopra and Alia Bhatt's handles. *Jee Le Zaraa* is sure to be an exciting film to watch out for considering that we don't have many female-oriented buddy movies in Bollywood. The last mainstream buddy movie featuring an all female starcast was *Veere Di Wedding* which starred **Kareena Kapoor Khan, Sonam Kapoor, Swara Bhasker** and **Shikha Talsania**. *Jee Le Zaraa* has been written by Farhan Akhtar, **Zoya Akhtar** and **Reema Kagti**. The movie will be produced by Excel Entertainment and Tiger Baby Films.

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KAREENA KAPOOR KHAN TURNS PRODUCER

Kareena Kapoor Khan's star value has remained constant through the years. What keeps her going is the fact that she keeps surprising the audiences every few years. Now, we hear that she is going to turn producer and has joined hands for the same with **Ekta Kapoor**. The two are going to produce a thriller which will be helmed by **Hansal Mehta**. The film will be set in the UK and is inspired by real-life incidents. Kareena expressed her happiness and said that she is truly honoured to work as a producer on it with Ekta and she is a huge fan of Hansal Mehta's movies. She knows working with Hansal will be special and the film marks a lot of firsts for her. This is Kareena's first film as a producer, also her first assignment post the birth of her second son – **Jehangir**. Hansal Mehta and Ekta Kapoor are equally thrilled to work with the actress and said so in their social media posts.



KRITI SANON TO TAKE UP DIRT BIKING FOR *GANAPATH*



Kriti Sanon is currently basking in the praise her recent release, *Mimi* has been showered with. But the diva has no time to pop the bubbly. Kriti is currently shooting for *Adipurush* – a hugely mounted film starring **Prabhas** and **Saif Ali Khan**. What also keeps the actress busy is the fact that she is training for *Ganapath*. The film is an action flick by **Vikas Bahl** and it reunites her with her first co-star **Tiger Shroff**. Kriti won't be a damsel in distress but will be kicking some ass alongside Tiger. What's more, we've heard that Kriti is going to do bike stunts in the film and is learning to ride a dirt bike for the same. The film will go on floors sometime this year and looks like she's wasting no time to prepare for her role. Kriti has a bunch of other projects – *Bachchan Pandey* with **Akshay Kumar**, *Bhediya* with **Varun Dhawan**, *Shehzada* with **Kartik Aaryan**, and a film with **Rajkummar Rao** as well. Now that's some big line-up.

R BALKI'S NEXT STARS DULQUER SALMAAN, SUNNY DEOL, POOJA BHATT AND SHREYA DHANWANTHARY



While it was confirmed around two months ago that actor **Dulquer Salmaan** would star in **R Balki's** next, the ace director has now announced that Dulquer will be joined by **Sunny Deol**, **Pooja Bhatt** and **Shreya Dhanwanthary**. "After months of waiting, for me, it is exciting to start shooting anything. And to make a film in a genre that I haven't attempted before is even more exciting. I have had the idea for a long time but never quite got around to writing it, and while it's fundamentally a thriller, it banks so much on these four stunning performers. I just can't wait to get into the edit room," Balki said. R Balki is venturing into a new space with this project as it will be a psychological thriller. The movie is expected to release in 2022.

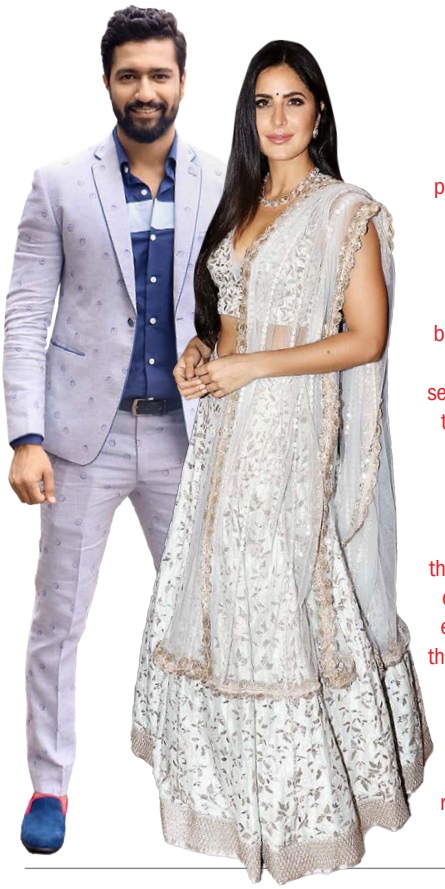
AYUSHMANN KHURRANA REUNITES WITH AANAND L RAI



AYUSHMANN KHURRANA IS SET TO TEAM UP WITH FILMMAKER **AANAND L RAI** FOR THE THIRD TIME FOR AN ACTIONER TITLED *ACTION HERO*. RAI WILL PRODUCE THE FILM UNDER HIS BANNER COLOUR YELLOW PRODUCTIONS ALONG WITH **BHUSHAN KUMAR'S** T-SERIES. *ACTION HERO* WILL BE SHOT IN THE UK. DETAILS ABOUT THE REST OF THE CAST AND CREW WILL BE ANNOUNCED SOON. AYUSHMANN KHURRANA HAS STARRED IN TWO AANAND L RAI PRODUCTIONS – *SHUBH MANGAL SAAVDHAN* (2017) AND *SHUBH MANGAL ZYADA SAAVDHAN* (2020). BOTH THE FILMS WERE ROMANTIC COMEDIES. *ACTION HERO* WILL BE THE SECOND ACTION FILM FOR AYUSHMANN KHURRANA AFTER **ANUBHAV SINHA'S** *ANEK*, WHICH THE ACTOR WRAPPED UP EARLIER THIS YEAR.


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KATRINA KAIF & VICKY KAUSHAL AREN'T ENGAGED



Katrina Kaif and **Vicky Kaushal** may not have openly spoken of their relationship, but social media is abuzz with pictures and news related to the actors. The two met for the first time on a talk show and reports suggest that they have been going strong for over two years now. While we see them attending events together, last snapped at the special screening of *Shershaah*, we've never seen them openly hang out in public. The news that the couple had a *roka* ceremony followed by an engagement surfaced on the internet recently. While the netizens had mixed reactions to the news, a source close to the actors has denied these reports. How we wish the rumours were true.

BHUMI PEDNEKAR TO TEAM UP WITH SHAHID KAPOOR

Ali Abbas Zafar who's known for films like *Tiger Zinda Hai*, *Sultan* and the OTT release *Tandav*, is gearing up for his next film which will star **Shahid Kapoor** in the lead. It looks like the filmmaker has found his leading lady too. **Bhumi Pednekar** will be seen opposite Shahid Kapoor. The film is going to be a remake of a Hollywood thriller. Bhumi Pednekar recently finished shooting a schedule of *Raksha Bandhan* with **Akshay Kumar**. Meanwhile, Shahid Kapoor has finished shooting for his web debut helmed by **Raj Nidimoru** and **Krishna DK**. Looks like an interesting project.





KARAN JOHAR'S NEXT PRODUCTION TO BE BASED ON THE LIFE OF FREEDOM FIGHTER USHA MEHTA

With *Shershaah*, **Karan Johar's** Dharma Productions has tasted success with a biopic for the fourth time after *Raazi*, *Kesari* and *Gunjan Saxena: The Kargil Girl*. Dharma is all set to make yet another biopic and reports suggest it'll be about a freedom fighter this time around. A report suggests that the production house has acquired rights to make a film on **Usha Mehta's** life. She ran an underground radio channel during the Quit India Movement against the British, called the Congress Radio. A source said, "Dharma Productions has been developing a number of scripts, and one of them is based on Usha Mehta. The said script has been in the making for the last few years, with the production house carrying out extensive research about her." The report further stated that the script is based on a play called *Khar Khar* written by **Amatya Goradia** and **Pritish Sodha**. The source further revealed, "Karan Johar is looking at roping in **Kannan Iyer** to direct the venture. As for adapting the play for the screen, **Darab Farooqui** is working on it." Interesting much!

ABHISHEK BACHCHAN HEADLINES THE REMAKE OF *OTHTHA SERUPPU SIZE 7*



ABHISHEK BACHCHAN REPORTEDLY HAS BOUGHT THE RIGHTS TO THE HIT TAMIL FILM *OTHTHA SERUPPU SIZE 7*. THE FILM IS A SOLO-ACT THRILLER AND IT HAS CAUGHT ABHISHEK'S FANCY. THE ACTOR FLEW DOWN TO CHENNAI ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS TO GET THE REMAKE RIGHTS. ABHISHEK WILL NOT ONLY STAR IN THIS FILM BUT HE WILL ALSO PRODUCE IT. **PARTHIBAN**, WHO ACTED IN AND DIRECTED THE ORIGINAL, IS GOING TO HELM THE HINDI REMAKE. THERE ARE RUMOURS THAT ABHISHEK HAS ALREADY STARTED THE PROJECT ON A CLOSED SET AND WILL FINISH IT IN A SINGLE SCHEDULE.



Rhea Kapoor marries longtime beau Karan Boolani

Rhea Kapoor and **Karan Boolani** recently got married in an intimate ceremony at Rhea's residence. Rhea looked lovely in an off-white embellished *lehenga*, while Karan looked sharp in a *sherwani*. The couple made it official by posting pictures from their wedding ceremony on social media. Rhea captioned the post as, "12 years later, I shouldn't have been nervous or overwhelmed because you're my best friend and the best guy ever. But I cried and shook and had stomach flips all the way through because I didn't know how humbling the experience would be. I'll always be that girl who had to come home to Juhu at 11 pm before my parents fell asleep. Only until now I didn't know how lucky I was to feel torn. I hope we make a family so close that we have many, many loves of our life. Mine are @karanboolani @anilskapoor @kapoor.sunita @sonamkapoor and @harshvarrdhankapoor forever more." While Karan wrote, "Yesterday we made it official to the world... but you and I have been ride or die for over a decade and for that I would like to thank four people who have given me a crazy amount of love, respect, encouragement and constant collaboration. First is a film producer, the second is a fashion stylist. The third is the mother of my daughter Lemon and the fourth is the finest cook to have performed miracles in a domestic kitchen. And their names are Rhea Kapoor. To the best decision I've ever made. Here's to us and everything that awaits us together." Our best wishes to them both.



THE IMMORTAL ASHWATTHAMA STARRING VICKY KAUSHAL SHELVED

In the last couple of months, **Vicky Kaushal** had been giving us glimpse of his preparation for his next big role – *The Immortal Ashwatthama*. He's been working hard in the gym for this superhero film and had been learning archery and horse-riding. We now hear that the VFX-heavy film has been shelved. The reason behind this drastic decision apparently is budget constraints. The sci-fi flick has a huge budget. But it seems owing to the current situation, the producers aren't getting the required finance. *Ashwatthama* has remained one of the most anticipated films in showbiz. The film was going to be directed by **Aditya Dhar** who directed Vicky in *Uri: The Surgical Strike*. Vicky Kaushal will now focus on his next, where he plays Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw. The actor even has *Mr Lele* in his kitty which stars **Bhumi Pednekar** and **Kiara Advani**.

TAHIRA KASHYAP ANNOUNCES HER DEBUT FEATURE FILM *SHARMAJI KI BETI*



Ayushmann Khurrana's wife **Tahira Kashyap** has announced her Bollywood directorial debut. The **Divya Dutta**, **Sakshi Tanwar** and **Saiyami Kher** starrer is called *Sharmaji Ki Beti*. The announcement regarding the same was made with social media posts shared by both Tahira and Ayushmann. While Ayushmann shared the news with a caption that read, "Her debut film," along with a heart emoji. An elated Tahira extended her gratitude to everyone who had been with her since the beginning of this journey. "Feeling so numb! Can't believe it's finally happening I feel only gratitude. Eternally grateful to all those people who are bringing my dream, the story so close to my heart to life. It's too good to be true but I guess 'winter always turns to spring'. This film has seen me through various states and stages of life but all that I have learned from my practice, my mother and my partner is to never give up," read a section of her long post. Congratulations to Tahira on this leap of faith.

ALAYA F OPPOSITE KARTIK AARYAN IN *FREDDY*



ALAYA F SURPRISED EVERYONE WITH HER ACTING IN THE 2020 RELEASE *JAWAANI JAANEMAN*. THE YOUNG ACTRESS EVEN BAGGED THE BEST DEBUT AWARD AT THE FILMFARE AWARD THIS YEAR. ALAYA F WHO'S QUITE THE PROMISING TALENT IS NOW BAGGING SOME INTERESTING FILMS. **KARTIK AARYAN** STARTED A NEW FILM TITLED *FREDDY* RECENTLY. THE FILM IS BACKED BY **EKTA KAPOOR** AND DIRECTED BY **SHASHANKA GHOSH**. WE'VE LEARNT THAT ALAYA F HAS BAGGED THE LEADING ROLE IN THE FILM. ALAYA SAID IN AN INTERVIEW RECENTLY THAT SHE'D LOVE TO GO ON A DATE WITH KARTIK AARYAN. SINCE EVERY NEWBIE IS LINKED TO HIM OR DATING HIM, SHE WANTED TO KNOW WHAT'S IT ABOUT THE ACTOR. LOOKS LIKE, ALAYA NOW HAS AN ENTIRE FILM TO GET TO KNOW KARTIK AARYAN.



MORE NEWS ON SALMAN KHAN, KATRINA KAIF'S *TIGER 3*

Fans were naturally thrilled when news broke out that **Salman Khan** and **Katrina Kaif** would be reuniting for *Tiger 3*. The superstar duo were also clicked in the city recently as they completed shooting a chunk of the movie. Having completed the Mumbai schedule, Salman Khan and Katrina Kaif are set to begin shooting the international segment. It's said to be 45 days long and filled with gruelling, high-octane action sequences. Salman, Katrina and the team will be shooting in five different international destinations like Turkey and Austria. Keeping the ongoing pandemic in mind, **Aditya Chopra** has arranged for a jumbo charter to fly the cast and crew. "YRF is chartering everyone including Salman, Katrina, director **Maneesh Sharma**, the entire cast and crew for this intense international leg that will see the team pull off some spectacular shooting schedules!" added a source. **Emraan Hashmi** is also rumoured to join them in the schedule.



LARA DUTTA BELIEVES THAT RANBIR-ALIA WILL GET MARRIED THIS YEAR

Ranbir Kapoor and **Alia Bhatt** teamed up for *Brahmastra*, love blossomed between them and the two soon became serious. And while the film still has an impending release, the Ranbir and Alia's love story has caught the imagination of the nation. No wonder even **Lara Dutta** believes they will soon tie the knot. Lara Dutta was asked about the Bollywood rumours she believes, to which she reacted saying she is from the older generation and doesn't know who's dating whom these days. "I might say something about some couple and I wouldn't even know if they are still together or not," she said. However when the talented actress was given the example of the Ranbir-Alia wedding rumour which has been doing the rounds for a long time, Lara felt that they will tie the knot. "I believe that they are getting married this year." Alia Bhatt and Ranbir Kapoor are often seen doing rounds of the Krishna Bungalow reconstruction site with mom **Neetu Kapoor** in tow. It's being said that Alia and Ranbir will marry once the construction is complete.

CHUNKY TAUGHT ACTING TO AKSHAY

CHUNKY PANDAY REVEALED ON A SHOW THAT HE GRADUATED FROM A SCHOOL CALLED MADHUMATI'S DANCING SCHOOL AND **AKSHAY KUMAR** ENTERED THE SAME INSTITUTE. "YOU KNOW HOW IT IS, WHEN YOU JUST JOIN, THE TEACHERS DON'T TEACH YOU, THE SENIOR STUDENTS TEACH YOU. SO I USED TO TEACH HIM SOME DANCE MOVES, AND SOME DIALOGUE DELIVERY." HE FURTHER ADDED THAT AKSHAY KEEPS JOKING ABOUT THE FACT THAT HE DIDN'T GET GOOD ROLES OR AWARDS INITIALLY IN HIS CAREER SINCE CHUNKY WAS HIS GURU. "HE HAD TO UNDO WHAT I TAUGHT HIM AND BECOME A BETTER ACTOR, AND THAT'S WHY HE'S BECOME AKSHAY KUMAR." HILARIOUS!



KUNAL KAPOOR TO TURN PRODUCER

Kunal Kapoor is all set to take a new step in the industry as a producer. He has been writing stories ever since his assistant director days. Kunal says that in recent times the masses have become accustomed to new formats of storytelling and fresh concepts as they've exposed to movies from all around the world. This is the opportunity Kunal wants to seize as he knows the audiences are ready for new stories. Kunal Kapoor is going to make a movie on the life of India's Winter Olympian – **Shiva Keshavan**. He is also called India's fastest man on ice. Speaking about what drew him to Shiva's story, the actor said, "He is an amazing athlete. What drew me to Shiva Keshavan was not only the fact that he has represented India in the Olympics six times, but that it was also a story about the spirit of India and the incredible things we manage to achieve with limited resources. It's a story of resilience and the path less taken; it's also a celebration of our culture and diversity." Well, we surely can't wait for this story to unfold.



preview

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

DREAM WARRIOR

ROHAN VERMA

X FACTOR: A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO WORK

Born and brought up in Ghaziabad, Rohan Verma went to college to study filmmaking while secretly harbouring the dream of becoming an actor. He acted in 15 short films while he was studying. He did post graduation in Acting and Theatre from Jamia Millia Islamia. And then started his ever-evolving journey as an actor. He acted in *Vidhaan*, a feature film that won many accolades including Best Actor Award at various LGBTQ+ film festivals. His more recent works include *Bhaukaal Season 2, Chintu, State of Siege: Temple Attack*, *Main Hero Bol Raha Hun*, *The Successful Losers* and *Bhakk*. He is a big Irrfan Khan fan and considers the late actor as his idol. He has also worked as Hindi and English dubbing artiste for the last three years.



Newbies Abhilash Thapliyal and Palak Tiwari acquaint us with their dreams and desires *pg 14*

GREAT ASPIRATIONS

Abhilash Thapliyal, who made a name for himself thanks to the OTT show Aspirants, *shares anecdotes about his journey with* **Vedanshi Pathak**



Abhilash Thapliyal was recently seen in the hit web show *Aspirants* made by TVF (The Viral Fever) and his character was hugely liked by the audience. Abhilash was initially a radio jockey in New Delhi. However, a chance encounter with director Amit Sharma and Manoj Bajpayee changed his life. "Amit Sharma and Manoj Bajpayee had come to Delhi to promote *Tevar* and they both told me that I'm made for the visual medium after watching my skit. Sometimes you need a spark to get motivated and their words ignited that spark in me. I came to Mumbai, met Amit, who offered me my first break as an actor in the film *Dil Junglee*," he recalls.

Son of an ex-army man, Abhilash was born in Jammu and Kashmir and raised all across India in army bases in places like Gwalior, Gurdaspur, Jaipur and Delhi. Hailing from Uttrakhand, the actor says it was confusing for him as a child as he had to change a lot of cities and schools in the process. But he likes to call himself a 'pure Hindustani' at heart as thanks to his late father's profession, he was able to travel to most parts of our country and

"AMIT SHARMA AND MANOJ BAJPAYEE HAD COME TO DELHI TO PROMOTE *TEVAR* AND THEY BOTH TOLD ME THAT I'M MADE FOR THE VISUAL MEDIUM AFTER WATCHING MY SKIT"





Aspirants

> "A LOT OF DIRECTORS MESSAGED (AFTER *ASPIRANTS*), A LOT OF ACTORS LIKE VICKY KAUSHAL, AYUSHMANN KHURRANA, TAAPSEE PANNU... WHEN THEY SAY THAT THEY LOVED YOUR WORK, IT'S A DELIGHT"

experience its rich heritage first hand.

He's fallen in love with Mumbai and calls it the most non-judgemental city there is. "You know, if you are hard-working and if your intent is correct, you will get whatever you want in the city. You feel safe in the city and you feel belonged. I think that is the most beautiful thing about Mumbai." He was always good at impressions and used to do lots of different voices in his show. That's what helped him during the *Mufflerman* skits as well, which made him famous on the internet.

He had gone back to Delhi to be with his father as he was battling cancer at that point of time, when a call to audition for *Aspitants* came his way. He didn't want to leave his father but his father sensed it was a good opportunity and insisted he should go for the audition. Abhilash got selected but sadly lost his father when he was shooting for the series. It was hard to put his personal grief aside and do justice to his character but Abhilash found strength in the memory of his army man father and went with the flow. "*Aspirants* will always be very special to me in many ways. I think people have started seeing me as a nuanced actor now," he reflects. What he can't get over is the fact that so many of the current aspirants to IAS or even people who have passed and are holding important posts around the country have reached out to him and have told that they could relate to his character. And he's getting compliments from people within the industry as well. "A lot of directors messaged, a lot of actors like Vicky Kaushal, Ayushmann Khurrana, Taapsee Pannu... When they say that they loved your work, it's a delight. A lot of casting directors called me and they were like, 'you were brilliant as SK and we fell in love with the character and we could see the nuances that you brought to the character.' All the compliments are very close to my heart."

The actor considers himself a late bloomer and wants to make up for the lost time. He wants to work 24/7 and explore every aspect of acting. "I want to constantly evolve as an actor. I want each role to be different and I want people to re-discover me with every role." You're often judged for your looks in this industry and Abhilash too experienced the same. He learnt to be thick-skinned about that. "Thin, tall, dark, whatever you are, you know, you accept yourself the way you are physically, mentally and emotionally and move forward." He adds that those days are gone when looks were the only criteriion for getting roles. And according to him, the length of the role too doesn't matter either. "I'm open to anything. The story and the character has to excite me. I'm least bothered about the number of lines the character has or the screen time the character has because if my character has even a single line and it impacts the story, it adds to the story. I've seen so many people, playing small parts and still getting noticed because that small part has a lot of impact and that's what I want to do," he asserts.

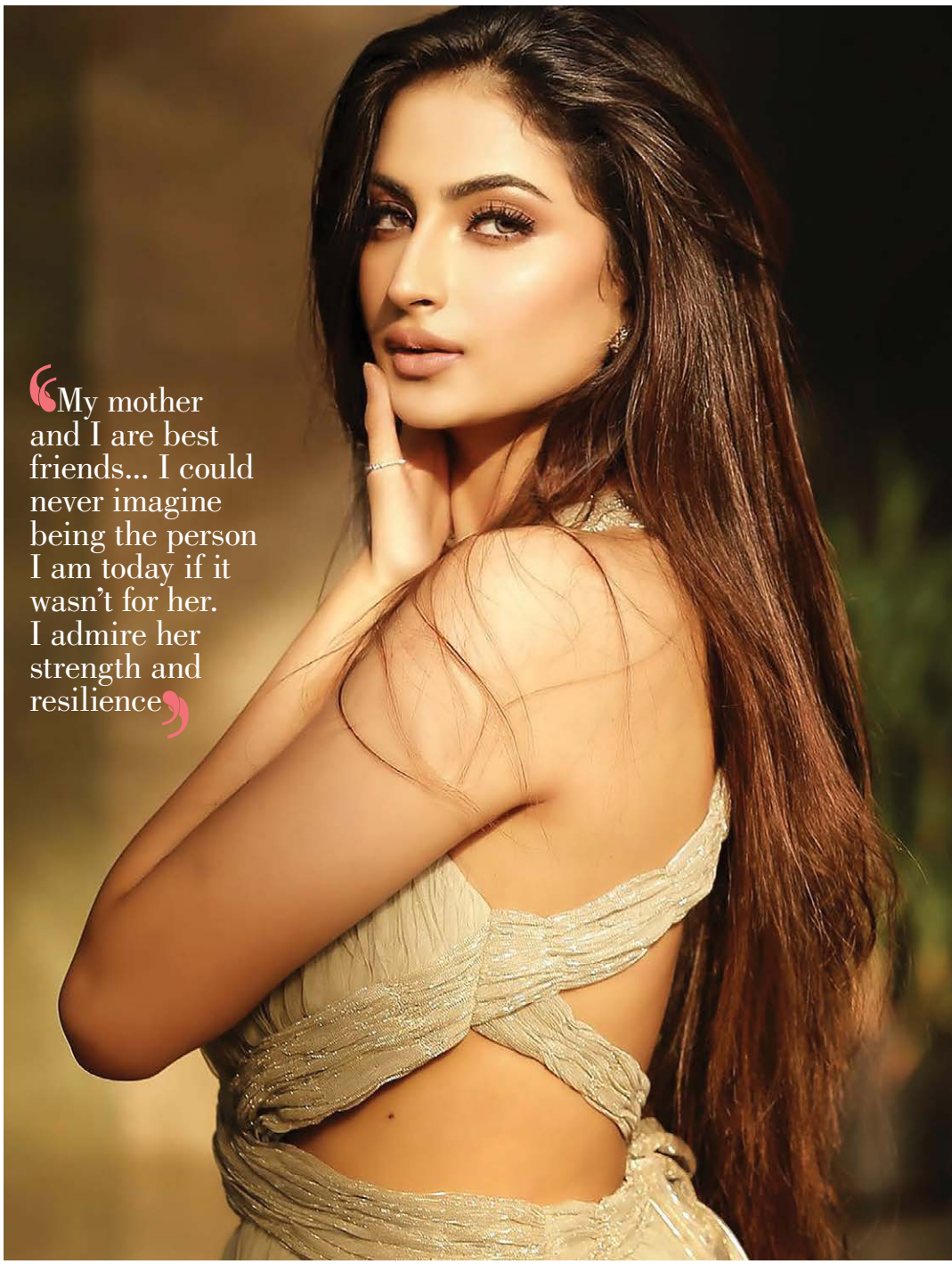
Despite his popularity over social media, the actor believes his breakthrough moment is yet to come. He says he doesn't want to be an empty influencer but be someone like Naseeruddin Shah who is hardly active on social media but whose stature as an actor remains unparalleled. "I believe in quality over quantity. I want to work with quality filmmakers like Anurag Kashyap or Amit Sharma. They're some of the best storytellers in this country right now. I'd gladly be part of a one-line role in their films." ■

Young & Restless

NEWBIE **PALAK TIWARI** TALKS TO **VEDANSHI PATHAK** ABOUT HER HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS

Actress Shweta Tiwari's daughter Palak Tiwari will soon be seen in *Rosie: The Saffron Chapter*, directed by Vishal Mishra and bankrolled by Oberoi Mega Entertainment. Vivek Oberoi is her co-star in the thriller. Being the daughter of a famous TV star, Palak always dreamt of being an actress herself. Apart from continuing her mother's legacy, she wanted to try her hand at acting because she finds magic in the movies. "Why else would a group of people knowing that the character they've come to love is a facade still connect with it in such great capacity, that it makes them cry their eyes out. It makes no sense. and that's the incomprehensible beauty of it. That's what I've always dreamt of doing," she comments.

Palak sounds wise beyond her 20 years when she adds that another attraction for joining the movies was the camaraderie she found between everyone working on a project when she visited her mom's sets. She was briefly an AD and that experience too reconfirmed her belief that she was meant to be in showbiz. It also taught her that the smallest individual too is important to a project. The allure of living different lives while playing a character also







Rosie: The Saffron Chapter

> "The only person truly aware of your true potential is you alone. Nobody can measure your capability because they're blind to your latent potential and will always be"

appealed to her. "Even though the character you're playing could very well be antithetical to yourself, you still have the responsibility of portraying that in a way that makes sense to the audience," she elaborates.

Palak has been brought up almost single-handedly by her mother and as such, they share a deep bond. "My mother and I are best friends and we are also extremely dependent on each other subconsciously. We were always close but inevitably the teenage years were a bit of a struggle because of the rebellious stage every teenager goes through. Today, I'm a little more perceptive to the realities and struggles of life. I could never imagine being the person I am today if it wasn't for her. I admire her strength and resilience," she gushes.

Like many other projects, her debut film, *Rosie: The Saffron Chapter,* too has been facing rough weather because of the pandemic and the lockdowns. She reveals that the film is based on a series of true events. "My character is a seemingly normal catholic girl living her mundane life, she's an excellent worker and has a big heart. For this film I did a deep dive into the '50s and the '60s, the Madhubala era, the Sadhana era. I drew a lot from films like *Mahal* and *Woh Kaun Thi*. The goal was to convey both innocence and a sense of mystery and I feel I've done justice to it," she asserts.

Apart from being an actress, Palak is also a social media sensation. She's aware of the unsavory side of social media and is saddened that certain individuals use these platforms to spread hate. She does her bit to fight that. "I can't change everybody's opinion but I surely can do my bit to spread some positivity, love and light through this medium which can sometimes make a gloomy day, sunny. I'm here to spread positivity and will keep doing so."

Thanks to having done her schooling at the Singapore International School, she's lucky to have friends from diverse backgrounds and nationalities. That certainly has broadened her worldview. She loves to read and reading encyclopedias is her passion. "I have a younger brother Reyansh whom I love to quiz on different topics. Quizzing each other is our favourite pastime. Believe it or faint but we also love to watch psychological documentaries," she giggles. She adores horses and is an avid rider. She's missing her equine friends amidst the lockdown. "Riding a horse is something I find soothing. It completely relaxes me and is a good exercise at the same time," she explains.

Palak does ask her mother for advice but takes the final decision herself when it comes to choosing films. She has committed to some projects but isn't allowed to talk about them. She's waiting for the makers to announce them first. Palak would love to work with Shahid Kapoor, Ranveer Singh and Ranbir Kapoor and with filmmakers like Sanjay Leela Bhansali, SS Rajamouli, Karan Johar to name the obvious biggies.

Ask her about the life mantra that she lives by and she smiles, "The only person truly aware of your true potential is you alone. Nobody can measure your capability because they're blind to your latent potential and will always be. Some may have seen your possible best, and some your worst, but you alone have seen them both and everything in between. Only you have the true merits to evaluate yourself." Wise words indeed. ■

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GREEN REVOLUTION

KIARA ADVANI

WHERE: *SHERSHAAH* PROMOTIONS

THE X FACTOR: THE UNIQUE GREEN HUE

Kiara Advani and sarees are a lethal combination. Right from the start of her career, she's served some of her finest looks in sarees and one of our favourites came along during her recent movie promotions. Kiara looked like a dream in this lime green drape by Torani. The intricate white embroidery around the scalloped border and the floral blouse with a V-neck made this one of her most raid-worthy looks. She finishes it off with a low neat bun, a pair of *jhumkas* and bright pink bangles to add a pop of colour to this stunning look.

Chatting with celebrity designer Ritika Mirchandani *pg 20*

How to jazz up your hair like a diva *pg 24*

COMPILED BY: ANALITA SETH
PHOTOGRAPH: MAYUR BHUTWANI

CONTOUR CULTURE

RITIKA MIRCHANDANI IS KNOWN FOR HER FUSION OF GEOMETRIC DESIGNS WITH TRADITIONAL EMBROIDERY. SHE CHATS WITH **ANALITA SETH** ABOUT HER EVOLUTION AS A BRAND AND THE CHALLENGES AHEAD



Kajal Aggarwal with Ritika Mirchandani



Janhvi Kapoor

Fashion is about intricately weaving a dream that not only serves you with the luxury of style but also with the comfort that comes with it. Giving her contemporary take on traditional couture, designer Ritika Mirchandani has given ethnic wear a touch of modern minimalism while keeping the beauty and intricacy of Indian wear alive in embroidery and silhouettes. As the fashion world transforms and evolves, we find out what it takes a luxury brand to survive and keep up with the ever-changing times.

WHEN DID YOU KNOW YOU WANTED TO BE A DESIGNER?
As a young girl, I watched my mother work tirelessly to run a successful brand under her name Usha Mirchandani. Her talent and ambition inspired me to tap my own creative potential.

WHEN WAS THE FIRST TIME A CELEBRITY WORE AN OUTFIT DESIGNED BY YOU?
Karisma Kapoor had worn an ivory *lehenga* and belted jacket, styled by Isha Amin, which has been our signature silhouette over the years. The embroidery on it consisted of our signature geometric artwork. Karisma has always had flawless style and this was a big deal for us at RM.

WHICH HAS BEEN YOUR FAVOURITE STYLED LOOK ON A CELEBRITY?
During Diwali 2020, Deepika Padukone was styled by Shaleena Nathani in our signature ivory *sharara* and belted peplum *kurta*. This look revived the spirit of our festive demand during the pandemic.

Karisma Kapoor had worn an ivory lehenga and belted jacket, styled by Isha Amin, which has been our signature silhouette over the years. The embroidery on it consisted of our signature geometric artwork



Madhuri Dixit Nene

Other looks I've loved include our red belted beaded *lehenga sari* on Madhuri Dixit and our blush pink *sharara* that Kiara Advani wore recently. I've also loved our label on Karisma Kapoor in recent times as well.

WHAT IS YOUR PROCESS AND MOTIVATION WHILE DESIGNING?


Kiara Advani


Ananya Panday

WHAT DOES RITIKA MIRCHANDANI AS A BRAND STAND FOR?

Ritika Mirchandani as a brand has always delivered luxury without any compromise and I feel all these celebrities have done justice to portraying exactly that. Be it a decked-up white *sharara* worn by Deepika or a red *lehenga* worn by Madhuri exuberating timeless elegance; be it a fresh makeup look of Kiara or fun and young look of Ananya or even a sophisticated sober look of Karisma. They all portray the essence of Ritika Mirchandani.


Karisma Kapoor

My inspiration lies in the evolution of art history. From cubism to art nouveau and Art Deco, our collections have been inspired by different periods in art history. Our signature geometric artwork has always been from one of these eras. Our autumn-winter

When I started 10 years ago, marketing relied on advertising in print media and via word of mouth. In the absence of smart digital media, it was difficult to reach out to my target market in an effective way


Deepika Padukone


Madhuri Dixit Nene

2021 collection which is yet to be released has been inspired by Art Deco, the vibe of the roaring '20s and *The Great Gatsby*. Art Deco pattern is known for its precise and clear lines, geometric shapes, and patterns which are implemented on the surface or attached to a structure, it is also characterised by rich colours, bold geometric shapes, and lavish ornamentation.

HOW WAS IT WHEN YOU JUST STARTED OUT? WHAT WERE THE SETBACKS AND HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THEM?

When I started 10 years ago, marketing relied on advertising in print media and via word of mouth. In the absence of smart digital media, it was difficult to reach out to my target market in an effective way. I had to participate in exhibitions to showcase new collections and we tried to get ourselves featured in fashion magazines and spreads to create visibility in India

I would advise young designers to give as much importance to the business aspect of fashion as much as they would to design. I struggled with that initially and over time I realised that the importance of a strong structure in business goes a long way




Mouni Roy


Tamannaah Bhatia


Janhvi Kapoor

and across the world. On the contrary, today with digital marketing being at the forefront, brands have it easier in terms of showcasing their product worldwide. Social Media has served as a plus point today in providing a wider audience for retailers and brands like us.

HOW HAS THE RISE OF SOCIAL MEDIA HELPED YOU AS A BRAND?

The rise of social media has given my brand a strong sense of visual identity all the while connecting me with a wider audience throughout the world. It has opened my gates to the entire world.

WHAT ARE SOME CHANGES YOU'VE SEEN IN YOUR BRAND IN THE LAST TWO YEARS, AS WE'RE STRUGGLING WITH THE PANDEMIC?

I've seen the *sharara* develop into a signature timeless Ritika Mirchandani trademark style. Customers are embracing my belted silhouettes and clean lines. The digital push over the last two years has resulted in the overseas market welcoming my brand in markets like the USA, the UK, and other European & Southeast Asian countries. I feel blessed to be amidst all this. Weddings are more intimate and customers are liking our fuss free and versatile silhouettes.

HOW DO YOU SEE THE FASHION INDUSTRY EVOLVING POST THE PANDEMIC?

I think the focus will be on sustainability and less on fast fashion. The era of influencers is here and will continue, as will the impact of digital marketing. I believe there might be fewer physical fashion shows and the focus largely will be diverted to online outreach. Luxury collections might be less frequent and styles might be more timeless. The customer has become more discerning and the looks have become more versatile. Today's bride is looking for fewer frills and more style.

AS A LUXURY BRAND, IT IS HARD TO BE ENTIRELY SUSTAINABLE, BUT WHAT ARE SOME WAYS YOU TRY TO BE CONSCIOUS IN YOUR COLLECTIONS?

We have reworked most of our packaging away from plastic to paper and fabric, including even our ribbons. Since embroidery and hand beading is a large part of Indian couture, there is a presence of plastic in them, which, with product innovation should be eased out over the next couple of years. My designs are elegant and luxurious but also practical and timeless. RM clothes can be mixed and matched and worn in different ways according to the occasion.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR ADVICE TO YOUNG DESIGNERS TRYING TO MAKE IT IN THE INDUSTRY?

I would advise young designers to give as much importance to the business aspect of fashion as much as they would to design. I struggled with that initially and over time I realised that the importance of a strong structure in business goes a long way. Additionally, it's vital to create your own signature which stands out in a market that is currently so saturated. Following trends in creating collections is great but a strong signature style defines a brand's identity in a deeper way.



Alexis



Dion Lee

JENNER JAZZ!





CROP IT LIKE KYLIE

Kylie Jenner's love of white crop tops has reached B-town

Kylie Jenner is a magician who has taken the simplest piece of clothing, a white crop top and made it look like every girl's summer dream. She's worked with every kind of white crop top available and has styled them to perfection with denims, shirts and even sweatpants. We're seeing more and more Bollywood divas opting for this casual yet sexy look ever since comfort has become key. It's easy, breezy and perfect for summers. And if you want to turn this morning look into a date night outfit, just add a light blazer on top and you're good to go.





Dion Lee

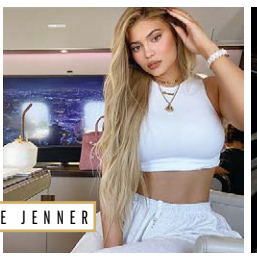


Amen

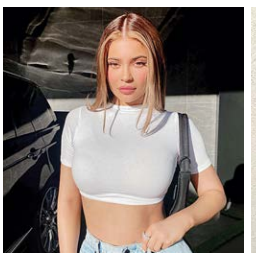


Dion Lee





KYLIE JENNER









"I know how influential I am over my fans and followers. I feel like everything I do, my hair color, my makeup, I always start these huge trends, and I don't even realize what I'm capable of." - Kylie Jenner

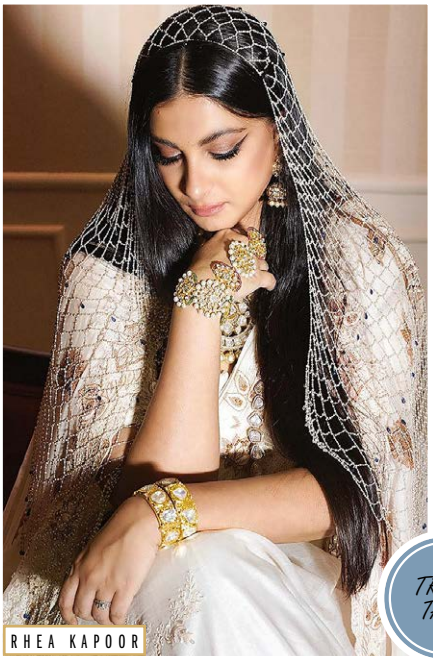
HAIR AND NOW!

Upgrade your hairdos with accessories to make a statement





SONAM KAPOOR AHUJA



RHEA KAPOOR

TRESS TALK



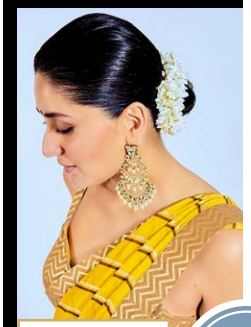
VIDYA BALAN



MADHURI DIXIT NENE

There's nothing like being overdressed when it comes to ethnic wear. You can wear a saree, add a trench coat to it, accessories it with a statement necklace, wear blingy heels and carry an embroidered potli and there's still going to be scope for more. To help you go that extra mile and not let your hair take the back seat, a fancy hair accessory can go a long way. You can go the traditional way like Sonam Kapoor with an eye-catching *maang-tikka* or opt for a chic scarf for your bun like Vidya Balan or a boho feathered extension like Madhuri Dixit Nene. All these styles make your look elegant ten fold. The latest addition to hair accessory is from Rhea Kapoor's bridal look where she added a pearl veil instead of a regular one and we can't help but gush over this beautiful and elegant way to accessorise a simple saree or *lehenga*.



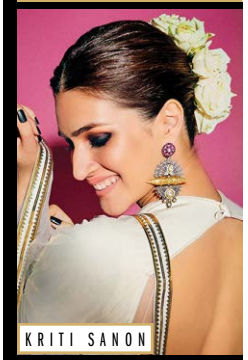


KAREENA KAPOOR KHAN

FLOWER POWER



SONAM KAPOOR AHUJA



KRITI SANON

The simplest way to add some glamour to your hairdo is wrapping around fresh *gajra* or flowers to a bun or simply pinning back your hair with metallic bobby-pins. This is both functional and trendy to look at.

It is said that the first impression comes from the hair and the shoes. So concentrate on these things and express your personality.

exclusives



DIFFERENT STROKES

I want to do things that challenge me, things I've never done before. I don't want to do things just for the sake of it. Just because it's a big film or just because it's opposite a huge star, I don't want to think in that direction any more

Sonakshi Sinha says she has matured as an actress and doesn't feel the need to cater to the gallery any more. Exciting times ahead for her as she tests the OTT waters with *Fallen*

PHOTOGRAPHS: THE HOUSE OF PIXELS



HITTING A HOME RUN

SONAKSHI SINHA SEEMS TO BE WINNING THE GAME OF LIFE, BOTH PERSONALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY. **RAHUL GANGWANI** TRIES TO DECODE HER MAGIC PERSONA

PHOTOGRAPHS: THE HOUSE OF PIXELS | CREATIVE DIRECTION AND STYLING: MOHIT RAI
MAKE-UP: HEEMA DATTANI | HAIR: MADHURINA KHALE
Outfit: Gaby Charbachy | Bracelets: Ineze, Diosa Paris By Darshan Dave and Anaqa by Nishant Tulsiani
Rings: Curio Cottage and Goenka India



I MET SONAKSHI SINHA FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 2011 AT THE 56TH FILMFARE AWARDS.

She didn't have the nervousness of a newcomer, while on the red carpet or on stage while receiving the Best Debut Award from Preity Zinta for *Dabangg*. There have also been many changes in her life in the last ten years, from her choice of films, her friend circle to her fashion. But one thing has remained constant – her confidence. Sonkashi has a sense of self-assuredness which is rare and extremely invigorating too. She's used the lockdowns to pursue things she never had the time for and has honed her skills set as well.

Outfit: Gauri Nainika
Jewelery: Joolry and Ineze
Shoes: Ego

She's raring to go and surprise everyone with her on-screen adventures. She's set to mark her big OTT debut with Amazon Prime Video's *Fallen,* a series by Excel Entertainment headlined by her where she plays a cop. We can't wait for her to fight the goons and solve the cases. She's also entering the horror-comedy genre with her upcoming film *Kakuda* and then of course there are strong rumours of her being signed for Sanjay Leela Bhansali's web series about Lahore courtesans called *Heera Mandi*. That aside, she's also taken control of her passion for art by launching House of Creativity, said no to toxicity by quitting Twitter, and has plans of turning producer one day. Excerpts from a free-flowing interview with the fiery actress, who doesn't flinch from calling a spade a spade...



YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN A SUPREMELY CONFIDENT PERSON. OF LATE, BY VENTURING INTO NEWER HORIZONS, OR EXITING SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS, YOU'VE FURTHER HIGHLIGHTED THAT ASPECT OF YOUR PERSONALITY...

I've never really been the kind of person who plays to the gallery. I've always preferred to do things on my own terms. So, if you think that I come across as a more confident person now, it's because I've done things that I've wanted to do. And I love my privacy, I love my work as much, and the only clash over here is with the kind of thing I do - there is no privacy. So, there is very little of yourself that you can hold back for yourself, which is just for you. So, I try to preserve that as much as I can, which is why, over the years I've cut back from social media.

WHAT MADE YOU QUIT TWITTER?

When I started the experience of social media, it was nice. It was new to everyone and everyone was getting a hang of it. You were interacting more with people who liked your work, who appreciated you for the stuff that you did. Then suddenly along the way it lost its charm, lost its path. People just have no online etiquette. You make yourself accessible to random people

Outfit: Alex Perry | Jewelery: Kira | Shoes: LYN

"I'VE NEVER REALLY BEEN THE KIND OF PERSON WHO PLAYS TO THE GALLERY. I'VE ALWAYS PREFERRED TO DO THINGS ON MY OWN TERMS. SO, IF YOU THINK THAT I COME ACROSS AS A MORE CONFIDENT PERSON NOW, IT'S BECAUSE I'VE DONE THINGS THAT I'VE WANTED TO DO"

> PEOPLE JUST HAVE NO ONLINE ETIQUETTE. YOU MAKE YOURSELF ACCESSIBLE TO RANDOM PEOPLE AND THEY REALLY HAVE NO FILTER. SO, UNTIL SOMETHING IS DONE ABOUT IT, THE BEST YOU CAN DO IS PULL YOURSELF OUT OF THE EQUATION. WHICH IS WHAT I DID



Outfit by - Polite Society | Rings: Joolry, Diosa Paris By Darshan Dave | Bracelets: Goenka India, Diosa Paris By Darshan Dave and Joolry | Shoes: EGO

and they really have no filter. So, until something is done about it, the best you can do is pull yourself out of the equation. Which is what I did. Honestly, it doesn't make any difference to me because it's not affecting my work in any way. If anything, quitting it is doing me good. Like I'm more at peace mentally without all that negativity. For me, it was a decision I made at the right time. I didn't really think twice about it.

YOU RECENTLY STARTED AN ART VENTURE CALLED HOUSE OF CREATIVITY. HOW DID THAT COME ABOUT?

Art is something I turn to for my peace of mind. It's my solace away from the hectic lives that we lead. Whenever I want to switch off from the world, I just go and paint. I've started doing it a whole lot more nowadays. I'm possessive about my art. I hate parting with my paintings. I'll show you my art room, there are canvases just lying there. My brothers and I came up with this House of Creativity. The thought was that it's so difficult to break out into a particular scene where you're new. I'm a known actor but to break out as an artist, I was like a headless chicken. I didn't know where to go, whom to turn to, whom

to ask, what to do. We came up with this idea, to give a platform to artists who are looking to break out in the art scene. You can be from any walk of life, you can be new, you can be established, just your work needs to be good. We'll give you that platform to showcase your work. I found that so relatable. I can be on this platform even though I

> ART IS SOMETHING I TURN TO FOR MY PEACE OF MIND. IT'S MY SOLACE AWAY FROM THE HECTIC LIVES THAT WE LEAD. WHENEVER I WANT TO SWITCH OFF FROM THE WORLD, I JUST GO AND PAINT. I STARTED DOING IT A WHOLE LOT MORE NOWADAYS



Outfit: Falguni Shane Peacock | Earings: House of Shikha | Rings: Solasta, Talisman, Diosa Paris By Darshan Dave

am not an established artist. I paint because I love to paint and I'm sure there is a market out there even for my kind of work. You make things happen for yourself, you make these opportunities for yourself and in the bargain if you're helping out other people, that's just the icing on the cake.

IT MUST BE GRATIFYING TO SEE THE RESPONSE IT HAS GOT...

Yeah, it is gratifying. Like I said, it's such an unknown territory that you don't know what to expect, where it'll go, how it'll do. But the kind of response we've gotten is really, really good. I sold my first painting too. I've been auctioning my work for charity here and there. And during the lockdown, I did my sketches and sold a few of my paintings for charity. That itself was gratifying but when you sell your painting commercially, that also feels really good you know? Because it's like a stamp that you're an artist now. I'm happy that I was able to do that for myself.

CAN YOU COMPARE IT IN ANY WAY TO THE MONEY WHICH YOU MADE WITH YOUR FIRST FILM?

Absolutely, it's even more special because this is something I've been doing



Outfit: Rahul Mishra | Rings: Talisman, Joolry and, House of Shikha

since I was a child. It just felt really different, you know.

WHAT MADE YOU SAY YES TO YOUR FIRST WEB SERIES, *FALLEN*?

It was offered to me way before the pandemic and it resonated with me immediately. I was blown away by the subject, I was blown away by my character and I just went for it.

DID YOU HAVE ANY DOUBTS AT ALL ABOUT DOING AN OTT SHOW?

Not really. Honestly, the package was amazing. I was getting to work with Reema Kagti for the first time and Excel too. I've never worked with them, I love the kind of cinema they do. So, it was like really a no-brainer for me. I wanted to work with this team and the script was amazing. My character was great, I went for it. I had literally no reason to say no. Why would I say no, just because it was a series and not a movie?

HOW WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE OF DOING A SERIES?

It's like making three movies at a time, but it's a lot of fun. It's a different ball game altogether. Like a series is usually directed by more than one director. So, we had two directors Reema Kagti and Ruchika Oberoi, and there were a few days where they used to fight for me like "you're done with Sonakshi in the morning, now send her back on set". So I'm like what is going on? But again, it is a new experience, you learn a lot, it's really fun. It's so interesting to work with one director who has a

> "I KNOW THERE ARE CERTAIN THINGS I WON'T BE ABLE TO DO IN A WESTERN SET UP. THEY ALMOST ALWAYS KISS IN EVERY SHOW, EVERY FILM. SOMETIMES THERE'S NUDITY. THESE ARE THINGS I WOULD NOT BE COMFORTABLE WITH. SO WHY EVEN BOTHER?"

completely different style and in the evening you're working with another director who is drastically opposite from that. And what's more fun to see is how they marry what they've shot separately and make it look like one. So, it was a really fun experience.

RUMOURS ABOUND THAT YOU'VE BEEN CAST IN SANJAY LEELA

> IT'S SO INTERESTING TO WORK WITH ONE DIRECTOR WHO HAS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT STYLE AND IN THE EVENING YOU'RE WORKING WITH ANOTHER DIRECTOR WHO IS DRASTICALLY OPPOSITE FROM THAT. AND WHAT'S MORE FUN TO SEE IS HOW THEY MARRY WHAT THEY'VE SHOT SEPARATELY AND MAKE IT LOOK LIKE ONE



Outfit: Gauri Nainika | Jewelery: Joolry and Ineze
Shoes: Ego

BHANSALI'S WEB SERIES *HEERA MANDI*? WOULD YOU LIKE TO CONFIRM THEM?

Right now, let these rumors float around. I'd like Mr. Bhansali and his team to make the official announcement. I'm also waiting for it.

TALKING ABOUT BHANSALI, WOULDN'T WORKING WITH HIM BE A DREAM COME TRUE FOR YOU?

Absolutely. Ever since I've made my debut, people have been telling me you're a quintessential Hindi film heroine. And you have a very regal vibe about you, you should do a role in a period film and all that. And it hasn't happened so far. The only period film I did was *Lootera* which was set in the 1950s. But working with SLB would be a dream come true for me, because that kind of space, that kind of scale, I would love to imagine myself in. And the way he portrays his heroines is just beautiful.

AS AN ACTOR, YOU'VE HAD AN INTERESTING CAREER GRAPH. YOU STARTED WITH BIG

MASALA FILMS, THEN YOU SURPRISED EVERYBODY WITH *LOOTERA*, AND THEN CAME FILMS LIKE *AKIRA* AND *NOOR*, WHERE YOU WERE THE LEAD. WHAT'S THE NEXT GAME PLAN?

Honestly, I've done what I had to do to make my presence felt. Now that I've tasted blood I want to play stronger characters. I want to do more author-backed roles. I want to do things that challenge me, things I've never done before. I don't want to do things just for the sake of it. Just because it's a big film or just because it's opposite a huge star, I don't want to think in that direction any more. Today, I am way more confident about myself, my skill and my craft than I was eight years back. So I think, whatever my experiences have been, whatever work I've done that is what has made me like this and given me the confidence right now to say these words.

DO YOU ALSO PLAN TO BANKROLL PROJECTS?

Yes, of course, I think that would be the logical next step, like just to ensure longevity in the industry. Whether it is as an actor or producer or somebody who just loves films. I'm sure that'll happen eventually for me, I just need the right film to do it.

WHAT KIND OF FILMS WOULD YOU LIKE TO PRODUCE?

I think something with a really strong story, something not too mainstream, doesn't have to have me as the main lead, could be with other actors. I don't want it to be a typical "Now I'm a producer, I'll put myself in every film I produce" - I don't want it to be like that. I want it to be good, interesting projects which I can even make with other actors.



> "*FALLEN* WAS OFFERED TO ME WAY BEFORE THE PANDEMIC AND IT RESONATED WITH ME IMMEDIATELY. I WAS BLOWN AWAY BY THE SUBJECT, I WAS BLOWN AWAY BY MY CHARACTER"

Outfit: Alex Perry | Jewelery: Kira | Shoes: LYN

ARE YOU SEEING A CHANGE IN THE WAY WOMEN IN THE INDUSTRY ARE WORKING AND PROGRESSING?

Absolutely, and it has happened rapidly in the last few years. They are commanding the same money, but they are not getting it



which is very sad. And everybody goes on and on, including men, about equality and this and that, but nobody actually practices it. So that way I think we have a long way to go but I'm happy that the tide has started turning.

WHAT DO YOU THINK HAS LED TO THIS CHANGE?

I just feel like the kind of women we have, the kind of mindset we have, the kind of world we have been working in, that has really strengthened us to an extent where we are able to speak up for ourselves. The actresses of my generation have gone through a kind of upheaval. We know our worth, we know what we bring to the table, take it or leave it. Which is what has really helped, and I hope it continues to do so.

WHO AMONG YOUR PEERS DO YOU ADMIRE A LOT?

Alia Bhatt. I think she is the most talented actor we have today, without a doubt. You can literally see her growth from her first film to her second film, to her third film. And to achieve what she has achieved at such a young age is phenomenal. I have immense respect for her.

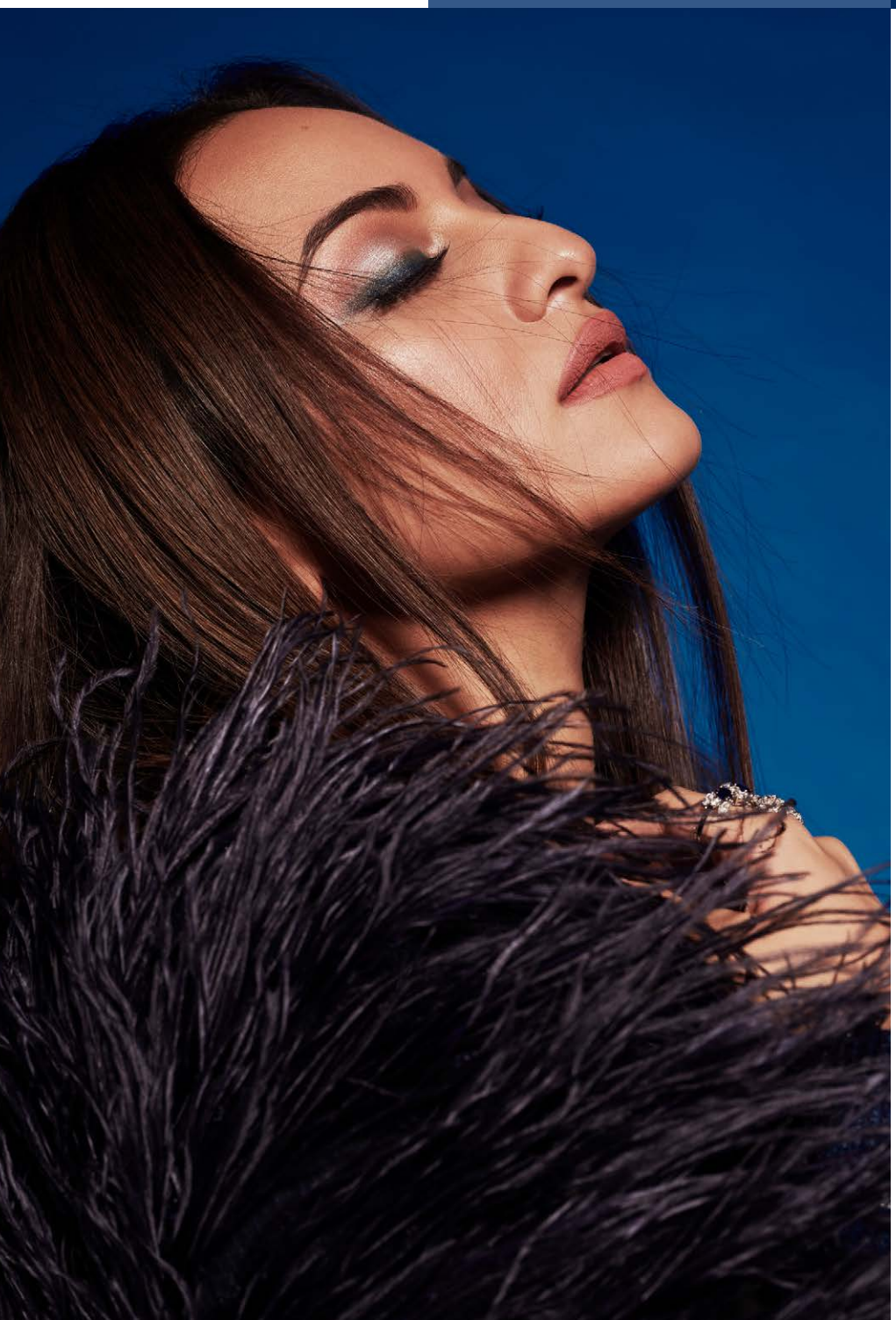
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Rings: Joolry, Diosa Paris By Darshan Dave
Bracelets: Goenka India, Diosa Paris By Darshan Dave and Joolry | Shoes: EGO

"EVER SINCE I'VE MADE MY DEBUT, PEOPLE HAVE BEEN TELLING ME YOU'RE A QUINTESSENTIAL HINDI FILM HEROINE. AND YOU HAVE A VERY REGAL VIBE ABOUT YOU, YOU SHOULD DO A ROLE IN A PERIOD FILM AND ALL THAT. AND IT HASN'T HAPPENED SO FAR"

YOU ADMIRE TAAPSEE PANNU ALSO A LOT...

I think she talks a lot of sense and she doesn't back down and I really appreciate that. That resonates with me. Sometimes she even surprises me by the things that she says and I'm just reading it or listening to it or seeing it on

> "EVERYBODY GOES ON AND ON, INCLUDING MEN, ABOUT EQUALITY AND THIS AND THAT, BUT NOBODY ACTUALLY PRACTICES IT. SO THAT WAY I THINK WE HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO BUT I'M HAPPY THAT THE TIDE HAS STARTED TURNING"



Outfit: Falguni Shane Peacock | Earings: House of Shikha | Rings: Solasta, Talisman, Diosa Paris By Darshan Dave | Shoes: Christian Louboutin

TV and I just immediately start rooting for her. I appreciate people who speak out and in a way that is so unabashed and forthright.

A LOT OF INDIAN ACTORS ARE ALSO EYING THE WEST. DO YOU HAVE SUCH ASPIRATIONS?

Not at all, I'm happy over here. I'm getting more than enough work over here. I mean if someone does have the fire within them to go there and start from scratch, good for them, that's amazing. I don't see myself doing that. I know there are certain things I won't be able to do in a Western set up. They almost always kiss in every show, every film. Sometimes there's nudity. These are things I would not be comfortable with. So why even bother? Here I have reached a place, a point in my life where I'm doing a lot of work without having to let go of my principles. Never has there been a film where I have been dropped because I said "No, I won't kiss on screen". They know what I bring to the table. They know what value I add to the film which is why I have been working for so long. ■

Perfect delivery

KRITI SANON IS ON CLOUD NINE AFTER THE CRITICAL SUCCESS OF *MIMI*, WHERE SHE PLAYS A SURROGATE MOTHER. **RAGHUVENDRA SINGH** SHARES IN THE EUPHORIA

Kriti Sanon has been lauded by both the critics and the masses for her performance in *Mimi*. Despite being a comedy, it's a sensitive film dealing with serious issues like surrogacy and women empowerment. It shows a small-town girl becoming a surrogate mother and later taking care of the child born of that surrogacy. By surrounding *Mimi* with woke parents and friends, it sends a hugely positive message. The actress poured her heart and soul into the role. It's not easy for an actor to emote something outside of her experience. It was understandably difficult for Kriti to portray a pregnant woman. She reportedly put on 12 kgs for the role, which was emotionally draining as well. She does outright commercial films but in between makes sure to pick up something which satisfies the performer in her. The critical success of *Mimi* has shown that her instincts have been proved right yet again. Presenting excerpts from a heart-to-heart chat with the braveheart actor...

We were expecting you to collaborate with Laxman Utekar for *Luka Chuppi* 2. But you came up with *Mimi*. What excited you about this film?

Somewhere when the *Luka Chuppi* shoot had ended, Dinu (Dinesh Vijan) and I were taking a flight from somewhere and he just spoke to me about this film about a girl who wants to be an actress and she talks to Ranveer Singh's poster and all that. There is this foreign couple who comes and asks her to be a surrogate mother, in return for money and she agrees. And for some reason later they don't want the child. And I just felt goosebumps when he told me the story. I wanted to know more. The message that the film gives at the end just felt beautiful. I think I was somewhere mentally ready to lead a film. This came to me at the right point. It had everything. It had a big heart, soul, emotion… amazing scenes… like really performance-oriented scenes. But at the same time it also made me laugh a lot. We were not trying to crack jokes, there is comedy in the situation, in people's reactions. I am sobbing in the scene when my mother is asking me – *kiss ka bachcha hai yeh* (whose child are you



A still from *Mimi*



“I think *Mimi* came to me at the right point. It had everything. It had a big heart, soul, emotion… *amazing scenes… like really performance oriented scenes. But at the same time it also made me laugh a lot*”

PHOTOGRAPHS: ROHAN SHRESTHA

carrying)? My state of mind is very intense at that point and the moment I point at Pankaj Tripathi – his reaction made me laugh.

What are the things that are common between Mimi and you?

Both of us really believe in our dreams. Even I had a dream of becoming an actor. She genuinely talks to the posters. Her room is splattered with the posters of different stars. She tells them I am about to come to Bombay in no time, you just wait and watch. She is ambitious, she is a risk-taker. She faces her obstacles, her situations bravely. I could relate to her on all those aspects

You gained a lot of weight for Mimi's character. How did you prepare yourself mentally for the role?

I did it by chewing my director's brains, having lots and lots of conversations to know what the character is feeling at different points in the film. A lot of hormonal changes happen during pregnancy. I spoke to my mother about what all she went through, the whole cravings, which was the most difficult month kind of thing. I spoke to her about delivering… how painful it is. And she told me that she felt like 'I was going to die on that bed.' There were some pregnant women around me and I asked them about things like bladder control… or times when they couldn't sleep because they couldn't find a comfortable position. There are so many things that a woman goes through at that point of time. Laxman sir had told me he wanted the delivery scene to be as real as possible. It was going to be a long scene where the difficulty a mother faces while delivering would be highlighted. If you notice, it doesn't have any background score in it. The camera is totally focussed on my reactions. I saw a lot of actual delivery scenes… so much so that I am actually now petrified of delivering a child. And you know Mimi was a surrogate mother who decides to keep the baby even when the couple she was having the baby for backs out. So a lot was going on in my character's mind and I had to portray all of it without dialogue. There is anger, there is hurt, there is frustration. Her dreams have been shattered. But she decides to become a mother all the same



"Mimi is ambitious, she is a risk-taker. *She faces her obstacles, her situations bravely: I could relate to Mimi on all those aspects"*





With sister Nupur Sanon

> **"I spoke to my mother about what all she went through, the whole cravings, which was the most difficult month kind of thing.** ***I spoke to her about delivering… how painful it is. And she told me that she felt like 'I was going to die on that bed.'"***

because something sacred has awoken inside her. There was a scene where she completely breaks down and I was sobbing even after the director said cut. Laxman sir was shocked by my intensity and gently asked me to let it all go and snap out of it. The film took an emotional toll on me.

Mimi is a big Bollywood fan. She loves Ranveer Singh. Like her, do you have a favourite as well?

I have always been a Madhuri Dixit fan. I have grown up watching her stuff. Performing on her songs. I have had Hrithik Roshan posters in my room. I have been a Shah Rukh Khan, Salman Khan fan at one point. Obviously when you meet people and talk to them… it just becomes different then. It's not the same thing. But I have not been star struck. But yes, even today when I watch any great performance, it makes me a little bit of a fan of them.

You remind us of Madhuri Dixit in the song *Param sundari*.

That's a huge, huge compliment. I don't think anyone can touch her, I think somewhere I have always copied her. For me dancing is not just about the body and your *adas*. It has a lot to do with your face also.

You are doing movies like *Mimi* and then you are doing big commercial films like *Bachchan Pandey*. Is it a conscious move on your part to balance things out?

I don't want to be put in a bracket. I don't want people to think *achcha, isski film hai toh aisi hee hogi*. I don't want that. I like watching all kinds of films as an audience… I also like to do various kinds of films as an actor. And I think *Mimi* is as commercial as *Bachchan Pandey*. I'm glad I'm getting films like *Mimi, Bachchan Pandey, Hum Do Hamare Do, Bhediya* or *Adipurish* where I can showcase my versatility.

When can we expect *Luka Chuppi 2*?

I have no idea right now. I am assuming Laxman sir is writing about one-two scripts that I know of. But I don't know anything beyond that. I truly love him, he is such a genuine person. He is a very pure-hearted, honest, passionate guy and… his life story is a film in itself. *Luka Chuppi* had a different flavour and *Mimi* had a different flavour. He doesn't like to repeat himself and that's another thing I like about him.

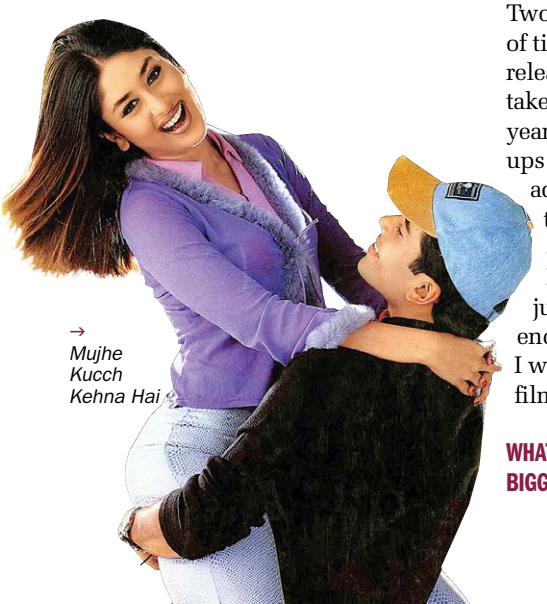
You must be very proud of Nupur Sanon…

Yes, of course. I went on Youtube recently to check on *Param sundari*'s status and was surprised to know her song *Filhaal 2* was at the number one spot. It's a great feeling. Everyone has a different journey. She has started her journey with these two songs which are films in themselves. And they are doing extremely well. And she got that chance and that too with none other than Akshay sir. She's started well on her journey and I'm extremely happy for her. ■

20 REASONS WHY...

TUSSHAR KAPOOR RECENTLY COMPLETED TWO DECADES IN THE FILM INDUSTRY. HE TAKES A WALK DOWN MEMORY LANE WITH **ANALITA SETH**

In 2001, a gawky, fresh-faced youngster played a boy next door in *Mujhe Kucch Kehna Hai*, which was a remake of the Telugu hit *Tholi Prema* (1998). Much has changed since Tusshar Kapoor played that boy perpetually smitten by Kareena Kapoor. Tusshar evolved from playing nice-guy roles to complex characters in films like *Khakee (2004)* and *Shootout At Lokhandwala* (2007) to being part of Rohit Shetty's *Golmaal* franchise. Today, he has created a niche for himself as a comic hero. He became the first single male celeb from the industry to become a parent through surrogacy. While there's no Mrs Kapoor, Tusshar loves being both father and mother to his doting son Laksshya, born in 2016. Last year, he turned producer as well with *Laxmii.* While the film received brickbats from the critics, it was later touted as one of the most-watched films on the OTT. Excerpts from a free-flowing interview with the star whose mantra is to keep moving forward in life.



→ *Mujhe Kucch Kehna Hai*

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO HAVE COMPLETED TWO DECADES IN THE INDUSTRY?

Two decades is not a small amount of time. I've pretty much had one release a year so I've never really taken a break since I started twenty years ago. There have been a lot of ups and downs. It's a part of every actor's life. I cherish both sides of that coin. The successes came after a lot of mistakes were made. I learnt from them and then just like the movies, got a happy ending. It's been a fulfilling journey. I would want to relive it as long as films are still being made.

WHAT'S BEEN THE BIGGEST LESSON AND BIGGEST REGRET IN YOUR CAREER?

No regrets really. Of course, in the initial stages there's always a learning curve that we all have to go through. You have to fall, make wrong choices and then collect your thoughts and experiences and learn from them. I learnt that it's okay to say no sometimes, to speak up for yourself and sometimes even do things which make you unhappy initially. That's the best way to get your finest work out. That's why I turned my career around with *Khakee* and it's been pretty steady ever since.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST DAY ON THE SETS LIKE?

My first day of shooting was at the Mehboob Studios. I remember I went to Siddhivinayak temple with my father that day and he then dropped me to the sets. I recall being very nervous though I wasn't showing it. It was a sequence where I had to walk with a stick because I had an accident. I then had to head to Kareena Kapoor's house to propose to her and she rejects me. Then my character wakes up and it was all a dream. So my character decides not to take that plunge. It was a dream sequence that was eventually edited out because of the length of the film. And that was a good thing as I was still learning the


“TWO DECADES IS NOT A SMALL AMOUNT OF TIME... THERE HAVE BEEN A LOT OF UPS AND DOWNS AND IT’S A PART OF EVERY ACTOR’S LIFE. I CHERISH BOTH SIDES OF THAT COIN”

ropes and that was like a warm-up day for me. It was only after a couple of days that I realised that acting is something that I can get a hang of, something that I was beginning to enjoy. The first schedule was like your first day at school. But the first day was quite a bad dream.

WHAT DID IT FEEL LIKE WHEN YOU WON THE BEST DEBUT AWARD AT FILMFARE?

I still remember that day. I was so nervous because I didn't know if I would win. I took a chance and went to the ceremony and got it. I was so excited. I remember thanking my co-stars, Kareena and Rinke Khanna. Kareena even said on stage that she's never seen a hero thanking a heroine when he wins an award. We had a party at my house. My parents had invited some friends over by chance and we joined in and celebrated the award also. Those were such innocent days, quite stressful too. We valued awards a lot. It was such a big deal then. Even after winning, we'd have a hangover of the anxiety of being at an event like that. Multi-tasking was not such a simple thing those days. I have bittersweet memories of that time.

HOW DID YOU COPE WITH A SETBACK OR FAILURE INITIALLY IN YOUR CAREER?

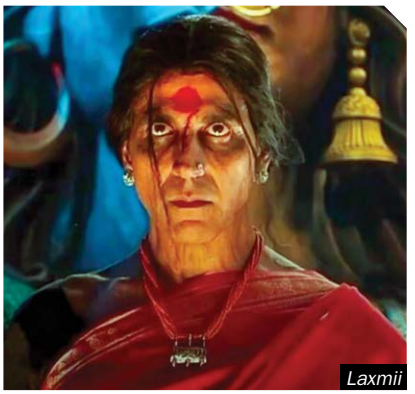
I was so young when I started out. At that age every actor gets funked out when a film isn't well received in the first few years. That's what happened to me. It was tough and I didn't know how to deal with it. Gradually I realised it was inevitable and you have to keep working and making better choices. I had no idea how to cope with setbacks or failure. We didn't speak of these emotions back then. We had to struggle and fight our own battles. I would just get up the next morning and go back to the sets. Today we have so many devices and people to talk about stress. Back then you had your parents, who'd tell you it's going to be fine. That's all. You had to wake up and just bear with it. There was no one else to help you through failure or depression.



"MY FIRST DAY OF SHOOTING WAS AT THE MEHBOOB STUDIOS. I REMEMBER I WENT TO SIDDHIVINAYAK TEMPLE WITH MY FATHER THAT DAY AND HE THEN DROPPED ME TO THE SETS. I RECALL BEING VERY NERVOUS THOUGH I WASN'T SHOWING IT"

PHOTOGRAPH: ROHAN SHRESTHA


Golmal Again!!!


Laxmii

YOUR FIRST FILM AS A PRODUCER, *LAXMII* HAD AN OTT RELEASE DUE TO THE PANDEMIC. WERE YOU DISAPPOINTED THAT IT DID NOT GET A THEATRICAL RELEASE?

I was a little disappointed initially that we had no choice but to take the OTT route. But I'm glad that happened because otherwise we would have been waiting for its release even today. We did the right thing. The film was ready so why keep it with yourself? I kept myself positive and went ahead with what everyone said was the right thing to do. When it released online, it got mixed reviews but then gradually we found out through the number of views and ratings that it did well on OTT. Then, when it came out on satellite, the record was set straight with TRPs that are synonymous with a hit Akshay Kumar film. Of course, there would have been a week or two of euphoria had we released it in the theatres. We pretty much got the validation otherwise.

WHAT MADE YOU PICK *LAXMII* AS YOUR FIRST PRODUCTION?

My co-producer Shabinaa asked me to watch *Kanchana* and the day I saw it, I knew I wanted to remake it. Either I wanted to act in it or produce it. I just had to be a part of it. It was a long process after that with lots of ups and downs. But it's all worth it because I like this genre and once you set your heart on something, you shouldn't give it up. That's become my motto in life now. You have to fall, get up and move on.

"THE TIME THAT YOU SPEND WITH YOUR CHILD IS THE BIGGEST GIFT YOU CAN GIVE HIM/HER. MORE THAN THE MONEY OR GIFTS, IT'S TIME THAT'S MORE VALUED"

HOW DO YOU ENVISION OTT AND THEATRES CO-EXISTING IN THE FUTURE?

I think theatre, OTT and television will all co-exist. OTT has become a great alternative. I started watching shows online only after the lockdown. Now it's become a great alternative and I haven't really missed cinemas. But we all know, when theatres reopen, we will all go back to them. That culture is in our blood. While we have a way out for our daily entertainment with OTT, the truth remains that when theatres reopen, people will flock to the cinemas and the box-office will be broken. It'll be a storm.

WHAT HAS FAMILY LIFE BEEN LIKE FOR YOU IN THE LOCKDOWN?

I've been doing online schooling with my son Laksshya for over a year and a half now. I've been sitting in on his classes and that makes up for half of my day. After that I go to the gym and that is followed by meetings. In the evening, I'm back with my son, we have dinner and then I'm back to reading scripts, checking mails and working on errands I couldn't do in the day. So it's a non-stop day and I don't find time to get bored. I've picked up a new habit of watching something before bed so I never get bored.

WHAT'S YOUR BIGGEST TAKEAWAY FROM FATHERHOOD?

I can write a book on my journey as a father. Very briefly, the time that you spend with your child is the biggest gift you can give him/her. More than the money or gifts, it's time that's more valued. That's what has brought me closer to him and we do so many things together now. He's a balanced child because I've been with him through this journey and I balance out my work to spend enough time with him.

WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON NEXT?

My next film is as a producer and actor, both. It's called *Mareech*. It's a thriller and dark, very different from what I've done before. It's most likely to release on OTT but I haven't worked out the details of that yet. As the title suggests, it's spooky, mysterious and it's the first of its kind for me

IF YOU GET A CHANCE TO GIVE SOME ADVICE TO YOUR 20-YEARS-YOUNGER SELF, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

I wouldn't change anything personally about myself because I was raw but it worked for me. I would just tell myself that you shouldn't worry and God is always by your side if you're willing to take on the challenges that come in your way. Don't worry about what's not in your control. Even if you do screw up at times, don't worry if there's nothing you can do about it. You'll meet all kinds of people, some who are nice to you and some who aren't. Take everything with a pinch of salt. Focus on life and work and watch everything fall into place. ■

Scent of a woman

SHEFALI SHAH HAS BEEN LAUDED FOR *HAPPY BIRTHDAY MUMMY JI*, A SHORT FILM SHE'S DIRECTED AND ACTED IN. SHE CHATS ABOUT FINDING HER OWN VOICE AND OTHER MATTERS WITH **MAYUKH MAJUMDAR**

The first time I watched *Juice* was sometime in 2017 when my mother walked into my room and showed me a video that her female friends from school were circulating on WhatsApp groups. I don't think the word 'woke' had embedded itself into public discourse as it has now but *Juice* was one of those short films that really wakes you up. It resonated deeply with my mother - a homemaker - and her friends. Cut to 2021, the star of *Juice*, Shefali Shah, has come out with another slice of magic called *Happy Birthday Mummy Ji (HBMJ)*. As of writing this article, this Shefali Shah directorial has more than 16 lakh views and over 18,000 likes on YouTube. Some say that true art is supposed to disturb you and some say that art is that which gives you hope. *HBMJ* does both.

A varied number of comments were left under the video on YouTube. "I am an Agarwal married into a Jain family. I am (non) vegetarian but not allowed to eat onion or garlic. Just like Shefali in this story, my day will come too," wrote a viewer. "Almost every female in India can relate to this," wrote another



Happy Birthday Mummy Ji

"I know Suchi so closely... every line she says, every word she says... all of that is me. It came from my personal life, my friends, my family, my mom, my sister, people I've seen closely"

In her previous interviews, Shefali Shah has spoken about how she was typecast into mom roles very early on in her career. But even within that limited space, the actress managed to stand out - she was a mother in *Dil Dhadakne Do*, *Delhi Crime*, *Juice*, *Once Again*, *Ankahi* and in *HBMJ*. Each character of hers is different and addresses different aspects of being a woman who also happens to be a mother.

HBMJ says so much in just 14 odd minutes. Every time you watch it, you catch something new. It's like a game that Shah is playing with the viewer. At the start of the film, her character Suchi looks so dull that she may as well be another piece of crockery in the pantry. Once she starts embracing her freedom thanks to the COVID-19 lockdown, there's a gush of red and green that rushes through the screen. She has flowers in her hair, is climbing trees, frying fish and playing marbles. The ending of the movie is awash with the colour of peace - beige and white. It's when Suchi has come to terms with herself and her new avatar.

The talk veers to the film's visual appeal. She gives credit to the film's DOP Eishit Narayan for it. "*HBMJ* is my second directorial, the first one is *Someday*. It had a very different visual language. In this film, even at the cost of it sounding *chota muh badi baat*, I wanted the kind of visual quality that Pedro Almodóvar films have. Everything is really rich to the eyes. I don't mean rich in terms of the clothes or the costumes



PHOTOGRAPHS: RIDHIMA MEHRA

or the stuff around her - I mean the colours, vibrancy. It's robust and really hits you and takes over all your senses," she reveals.

She adds that she sat through every aspect of the film. Like she had her say during its colour gradation as well. She wanted the saturation to be high. She wanted the greens to be like the green you see after the rain. Every shot was broken down and every detail was worked on from each flower that's in her house to everything she does. God is in the details, as they say, and Shefali adhered to that in every frame. "When Suchi makes tea, there's *hara chai patti* lying there - it's something I do in my house. Or the fact that the colour palette of the film... in the beginning, everything in her house is blue. The curtains are blue, the plates are blue and she's wearing blue so she becomes just another part of the house until she steps out and you see her on the ledge and on the side there's her reflection and all she has to see is her reflection and know that she's not alone," she muses.

In this single-character film, which she directed and acted in, the challenge for Shefali was to cover an entire story arc in 14 minutes. She says one thing that helped her say it all in such a short time was the closeness she felt towards her character Suchi. "I know Suchi so closely. Every line she says, every word she says, all of that is me. It came from my personal life, my friends, my family, my mom, my sister, people I've seen closely. Every time she's talking to her husband and he hangs up on her... he's not trying to be rude but men just do it. I mean, all three men in my life do it all the time. You're talking to them and then *'thak'! Arrey, mai baat kar rahi hoon!* Because they are always in a rush to move on. Or the kind of detail she puts into creating that





Happy Birthday Mummy Ji

"We could turn a blind eye and pretend that they don't have sexual needs but they do. Women do snap their bras the moment no one is looking... And particularly on screen, she doesn't have to be prim, proper and put together and well behaved"

party. It came from my personal life." Nevertheless, directing the film mustn't have been easy as she was the only person in the frame. She says instead of focussing on being an actor, she focussed on the direction part as being Suchi came easy to her. She's also written the story and that helped as well.

The film has a rather risque scene in the end, where Suchi is shown using a hand faucet presumably for self-pleasure... Shefali bursts out laughing at that and compliments me on being on the right track. "Thank you for recognising it because someone asked me if I had committed suicide! I was like *'barbaad!* What movie have you been watching because I was watching something else!' She elaborates that Suchi truly became liberated in the scene. It was a declaration of the fact that she doesn't need anyone for well, anything... "It literally has a 'happy ending'. And yes, women do that. I mean we could turn a blind eye and pretend that they don't have sexual needs but they do. Women do snap their bras the moment no one is looking or pull their wedgies out. And particularly on screen, she doesn't have to be prim, proper and put together and well behaved. They belch, they burp and they fart. So period." The bra-unclasping scene caught many positive comments on YouTube. A male director perhaps wouldn't have thought of adding that. It's said that women directors are better at telling women-oriented tales but Shefali doesn't think so. "I don't know if a man would have understood the sheer joy of unhooking a bra but I don't think that only women directors can talk about sensitive topics and deal with sensitive details. *Juice* is a perfect example. I mean, it's Neeraj Ghaywan, you know? Or for example, *Delhi Crime* which is Rishi Mehta," she reflects.

Her next big screen outing is *Darlings*, directed by Jasmeet K Reen. It marks the debut of Alia Bhatt as a producer and has Vijay Verma and Roshan Mathew starring in it alongside Shefali and Alia. Shefali says she fell in love with the script the moment she read it. She remarks that the film would help her change her image. "Somehow I have this image of being a serious actor and *Darlings* is a dark comedy. It's well-written and hilarious and it's completely down my alley. Alia Bhatt, Vijay Varma and Roshan Mathew are terrific actors and it's great when we are together on set. I've had so much fun on that set."

She also has the web series *Human* coming up. It's a medical thriller which exposes the underbelly of the medical world and talks about human drug trials. She says she picked up the project as her character, Dr Gauri Nath, was unlike anyone she'd ever met. She reflects, "I've never met anyone like her or even heard or seen or read about a real person who's like her! And everyone who is privy to the script feels the same thing. We've never met anyone like this. And after a point of time, Dr Gauri Nath started surprising me. I didn't know what she was going to do. I can't wait to do this." ■



PHOTOPRAPH: ABHAY SINGH

YOU DON'T NEED TO BE NAKED TO LOOK SEXY



September showers

***MALAVIKA MOHANAN** LOOKS LIKE A DREAM IN THIS SULTRY YET CLASSY PHOTOSPREAD*

PHOTOGRAPHER: VAISHNAV PRAVEEN/HOUSE OF PIXELS | STYLED BY: MOHIT RAI | MAKEUP: NITI GOENKA
HAIR: ROHIT BHATKAR | LOCATION: WINDSOR GRANDE RESIDENCES
Outfit: @gauriandnainika


WIND IS THE
MOST SKILLED
HAIRDRESSER



SPRING IN THE STEPS, SUMMER IN THE EYES



Outfit: @smokelabofficial x @lovebirds.studio



CRIMSON IS THE COLOUR OF FUN, OF ADVENTURE

Outfit: @tarikedizofficial



ALL YOU NEED IS A LOOK TO BRING SOMEONE CLOSER

Outfit: Custom made

LOOKING BACK, *LOOKING FORWARD...*

ANALITA SETH CHATS WITH **SONNALLI SEYGALL,** WHO LOOKS BACK ON HER 10-YEAR-LONG CAREER WITH AFFECTION

Sonnalli Seygall has completed 10 years in showbiz. Debutantes like to play safe but she started off her career playing a grey-shaded character in *Pyaar Ka Punchnama* (*PKP,* 2011). She's always gone for something different in the last decade. And while all of her choices might not have fructified, she still stands by them. She was a model before getting into films and can still be seen in a lot of ads. She begins by saying, "I always wanted to be a part of Miss India. I wasn't inclined towards acting but I was sure I wanted to be a model. Acting did not fascinate me." She got noticed by filmmakers after taking part in the contest and signed her first film in 2010. "My friends always said I'd go to Bollywood. Maybe I too felt it deep down but never took it seriously. I only gave it a thought when I started getting offers," she reveals.

She still remembers



Pyaar Ka Punchnama 2



"MY FRIENDS ALWAYS SAID I'D GO TO BOLLYWOOD. MAYBE I TOO FELT IT DEEP DOWN BUT NEVER TOOK IT SERIOUSLY"

her audition for *PKP*. She was one of the last girls to audition for the film and thought she'd not get the film. They had two rounds of auditions and she recalls reading out her part in front of director Luv Ranjan. "I did two rounds of auditions on the same day. One was a solo reading and in another I was reading with Raayo S. Bakhirta, who was later cast opposite me. Suddenly, they were discussing money with me and I thought it was all happening too fast." She called up her mother first, as she wasn't sure what to do. Her mother told her to just trust herself and go with the flow. Sonnalli did just that and it proved to be the best decision of her life, as the film proved to be a sleeper hit.

PKP starred Sonnalli along with five other new actors, including Kartik Aaryan, Nushrrat Bharuccha, Divyendu Sharma, Rayo Bakhirta and Ishita Raj Sharma. They all spent an entire month doing workshops and getting to know each other. Sonnalli shared that even when one of them did not have a scene on a day, all six would be on the set to watch what was happening. "My first wasn't canned for the first six days. I would have this nervous energy in anticipation that today's going to be my shoot. Eventually, one day I hadn't slept enough so I was hoping I wouldn't have my first shot and that's the day I was called in for my first scene."

While the film did well in 2011 it also received a lot of backlash for its misogynist content. Speaking of how it would be different if it were to be released today Sonnalli says, "It would have done better for the actors at least. I also feel it would have got better numbers. After *PKP*, none of us did anything until *PKP2*. Kartik and Nushrratt did *AkashVaani* but nothing else. I feel if it was released today when content is king and actors get noticed despite no one being anyone's daughter or son, we would have benefited more. As for the backlash on the content, I don't think it would have done badly today. People know it's a comedy and an exaggerated version of reality. I genuinely feel it would have done better."


Pyaar Ka Punchnama

"I WANTED TO BREAK THE NOTION THAT MODELS CAN'T ACT. MANY OF US HAD TO FACE THAT PREJUDICE, RIGHT FROM DEEPIKA PADUKONE TO ANUSHKA SHARMA, INITIALLY THEY ALL FACED IT"

After doing *PKP* and its sequel, Sonnalli made a cameo in *Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweety* as well and starred in films like *High Jack*, *Setter* and *Jai Mummy Di*. Sonnalli did not fear being stereotyped initially because as a young actor one doesn't fear anything, it's only later that the fear sets in. "The fear came in when all I got were glamorous roles and negative characters. I wanted to break the notion that models can't act. Many of us had to face that prejudice, right from Deepika Padukone to Anushka Sharma, initially they all faced it. So yes, I was stereotyped."

Trying to break the stereotype, Sonnalli rejected *Hate Story* so she could reroute her career and do fresher characters. "It was a very tempting offer. But I knew I had to step away. I knew if I did that, my chances of doing something different would become less." This made her do films like *Setters*, where she played a cop and *High Jack* where she played a pilot. Unfortunately, these films didn't do well but she did get a chance to showcase her versatility.

She'll be seen next in *Boondi Raita* where actors like Rajesh Sharma, Himansh Kohli and Ravi Kishan are her co-stars. The film is set in Uttarakhand and will be shot in Rishikesh and Dehradun. She plays a small-town girl in the film and she's planning to visit those places to acclimatise herself for her role. She's disheartened by the fact that so many people even from the showbiz are suffering because of the lockdown. "My spot boy one day told me, 'Ma'am, *ab toh* shoot *nahi hoga, ab hum kya karenge?'* Personally, I'm trying to help out people who have lost their jobs in our industry, but it's not enough," she asserts. Sonnalli is happy to hop onto the OTT bandwagon as it offers a wealth of opportunities. "Now with the whole digital space opening up, the opportunities are more and people are ready to experiment more." That's the reason she took up Vikram Bhatt's *Anamika*, where she's doing lots of action. "I never knew action can be so technical. I'm learning a lot with *Anamika*. I've also signed for another series, *Ilegal Season 2*, where my character is glamorous but in a very different way. It's a new character and viewers are in for a surprise," she informs.

She's seen a lot of ups and downs in the last decade but doesn't regret anything. She remarks, "I'm satisfied with my journey so far. My career could have been better but I'm happy with the kind of projects I did. New opportunities are opening up and things will only get better from here." Fingers crossed! ■

Come as you are



JITESH PILLAAI INTERVIEWS MARATHI BEAUTY AMRUTA KHANVILKAR, WHO DISCUSSES HER TAKE ON LIFE AND MORE...

Amruta Khanvilkar has made a name for herself in Marathi cinema for close to a decade now. Hindi audiences know her from *Raazi* (2018), where she played Alia's sister-in-law and in *Malang* (2020), where she had a supporting role. She became a household name nationwide when she participated in *Nach Baliye 7* in 2015 along with husband Himmanshoo A. Malhotra and the couple won the competition. She also appeared in *Fear Factor: Khatron Ke Khiladi 10* (2020). Though she didn't win the reality show, she still made the viewers root for her through her resilience and tenacity. Amruta has seen many ups and downs in her life and career and has always come up smiling. Presenting excerpts from a no-holds-barred interview with the feisty actress...

You didn't have work for two years. An actor's life is filled with ups and downs and a lot of uncertainty. How do you heal?

I was a very stubborn child. I believe that if I hadn't been in this industry, I wouldn't have known terms like humility, gratitude and patience. I feel that God has literally pushed me into this industry so that I realise the meaning of all these terms. Gratitude, humility, patience and consistency are so important in your life. Somehow, the actor that I've become has shaped me as a human being. And the person that I've become has also shaped me as an actor. If you get a cough and a cold, the doctor gives you a course of five days and your body heals. But what about the mind? My parents were so busy making a living for me and my sister that they did not have time to sit and tell us how to live life. They





MY FAVOURITE PERSONAL MEMORY IS THE FIRST MARATHI FILMFARE AWARDS WHERE I PERFORMED ON STAGE. TO SEE THE PHOTOS FROM MY DANCE PERFORMANCE SPLASHED IN THE *FILMFARE* MAGAZINE WAS EXHILARATING. I REMEMBER KEEPING THE MAGAZINE IN THE *MANDIR*

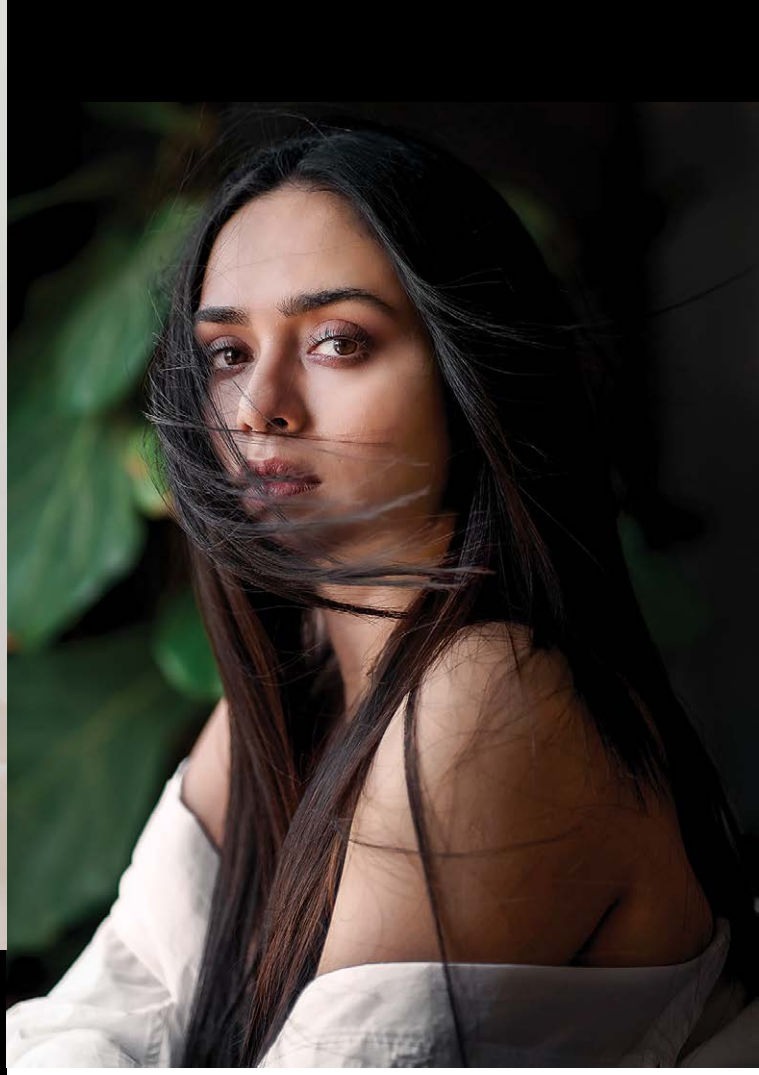
showed us through their examples whatever they could - they tried their best. But for every next generation it is important to know that when you put your mind in stress it is also necessary to heal it. I've always listened to my doctors. Nowadays, I seek the advice of an Ayurvedic doctor. I stopped allopathy right after *Nach Baliye.* I changed my lifestyle, I started reading more, and listening and watching the good stuff. Positive thinking is not something that you wake up to one day and think, today I'm positive. No. It is food for your mind. You have to keep feeding it and that is how you get your energies cleared and that is how you rise in your vibrations.

Tell us about your first Filmfare Awards memory.

My God there are so many. Watching *Filmfare,* right from childhood, was like a big event at home. When *Filmfare* came on TV, I used to snatch the remote









With Subodh Bhave

> “WHILE FILMING *KATYAR*, THE KIND OF VIBE AND ENERGY THAT SUBODH BHAVE GENERATED WAS INFECTIOUS”

and keep it with me till the end credits rolled. I used to watch these huge stars coming in and performing and taking home the awards and longed to experience it all myself one day. Madhuri Dixit performing *Dola re dola...* Aishwarya Rai performing *Silsila ye chahat ka…* Shah Rukh getting the Black Ladies left, right and centre... all these memories are something that have actually shaped my childhood. When *Filmfare* started an awards ceremony just for Marathi cinema that was like a dream come true not just for me but for the entire Marathi industry. Marathi cinema has been experiencing a good run recently and I'm glad to be a part of these golden years. And *Filmfare* coming to Marathi is a big deal. My favourite personal memory is the first Marathi Filmfare Awards where I performed on stage. To see the photos from my dance performance splashed in the *Filmfare* magazine was exhilarating. I remember keeping the magazine in the *mandir*. Then, my second memory was getting nominated as Best Supporting Actor and our darling Neena Kulkarni winning that award. And I couldn't be happier. Then, the third one was performing *mujra* on stage to all Rekha *ji* songs. I remember watching her in her die-for Kanchivaram sarees at various *Filmfare* functions. Recreating her songs on stage was a huge honour.

How did it feel when you were walking on the* Filmfare *red carpet for the first time?

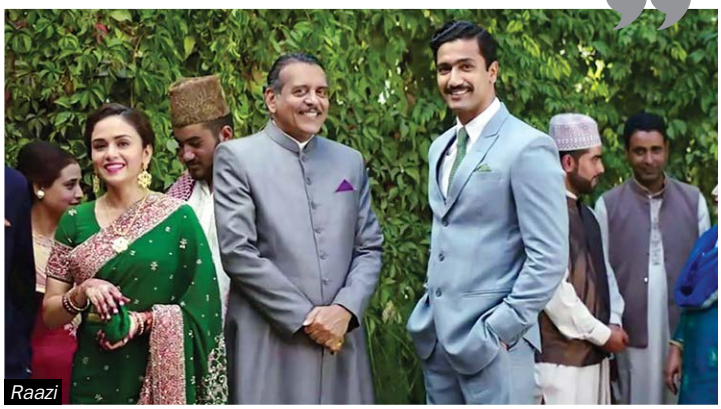
I was grinning from ear-to-ear. I think I finally understood what that phrase meant. *(Laughs)*. I think every actor glows on the stage of *Filmfare.*

Take us through some of your performances or rehearsals, something that stayed with you?

The *mujra* performance really stayed with me. Because, firstly, it was so beautifully choreographed by Subhash Nakashe and there were these props which looked like they were part of an old set. They helped me to get into the mood of *mujra*. There



> I WAS A VERY STUBBORN CHILD. I BELIEVE THAT IF I HADN'T BEEN IN THIS INDUSTRY, I WOULDN'T HAVE KNOWN TERMS LIKE HUMILITY, GRATITUDE AND PATIENCE. I FEEL THAT GOD HAS LITERALLY PUSHED ME INTO THIS INDUSTRY SO THAT I SHOULD REALISE THE MEANING OF ALL THESE FACTORS



Raazi

is always a *shayari* that it starts with. I had always seen Madhuri Dixit do that on the stage of *Filmfare.* So, the whole poetry bit and coming down from the prop and performing to Rekha *ji's* songs… that is something I will never forget. Subhash Sir always encouraged me saying it's a privilege to perform on the *Filmfare* Stage. And I should count my blessings that I'm getting to perform on Rekha *ji's* and Madhuri Dixit's songs.

Tell us about the* Katyar Kaljat Ghusali *moment when your film won so many awards.

While filming *Katyar,* the kind of vibe and energy that Subodh Bhave generated was infectious. Every film is a team effort. And even after five years of that film, we're still part of its WhatsApp group. We still send funny messages and Gudi Padwa, Diwali and New Year wishes to one another in the group. I think that film was bigger than all of us. For every award, we were kind of taking the entire team onstage. And when it got the Best Film Award, we literally called up everyone who was associated with it on stage. It was a unique experience.

***Your dance performances have a certain seamlessness. Did it intimidate you knowing that you'd be doing a Sandhya number in* Ani... Dr. Kashinath Ghanekar.**

When you're a rookie, you make do with what you get. For many years I only performed *Wajle ki baara* (*Natarang*, 2010), which thankfully had become a huge hit, in my shows. I wanted to do something different and always longed to recreate an iconic song from the past. So to perform a legendary number like *Tumhavar keli mi marji bahaal* from *Pinjara* (1972), which was immortalised by Sandhya*ji,* was a once-in-a -lifetime opportunity. Nothing from the original song got changed in *Ani... Dr. Kashinath Ghanekar* (2018). The costumes, the props, the lighting, camerawork, everything was the same. Sumeet Raghavan played Dr Shriram Lagoo and I was playing Sandhya*ji*. We were asked to mimic their expressions. And I think we both managed it well. Those who had seen the original appreciated it, as did the new generation. It acted as a doorway to the past for them.

You've done OTT, Hindi films, so many serials and also a reality show - how do you process all this?

Frankly, I think as an actor, your only aim should be to just do your job. And I'm not just saying it for the heck of it. I adhere to it from the bottom of my heart. I'm not somebody who has limited my options. Like if I had limited my options, I would have never done a *Katyar* or a *Raazi.* I give my best to whatever opportunities I get. *Wajle ki baara* was just one *lavani* number in *Natarang.* Sonalee Kulkarni was the heroine, who got another fabulous number, *Apsara aali* in the film. So there's nothing to process as such. Just keep giving your 100 per cent to whatever comes your way and you're sorted. ■

MOTHER'S *DAYS*

BENGALI ACTRESS **KOEL MALLICK** BECAME A MOTHER LAST MAY AMIDST THE PANDEMIC. ONE YEAR LATER, AS SHE INFORMS **JITESH PILLAAI** THAT SPENDING TIME WITH HER TODDLER DURING THE LOCKDOWN IS THE BEST THING THAT HAPPENED TO HER

Koel Mallick is the daughter of the veteran Bengali actor Ranjit Mallick. She made her debut as an actor while still in college with Nater Guru *(2003). Though she started off playing arm candy to the film's hero, she slowly made a name for herself by choosing films which allowed her to showcase her talent. Films such as the dark and brooding* Hemlock Society *(2012), the supernatural fantasy* Arundhati *(2014), drama* Chhaya O Chhobi *(2017), romcom* Ghare & Baire *(2018) and detective film* Mitin Mashi *(2019) established her as an versatile actor who could fit into any genre. She married producer Nispal Singh Rane in 2013. They had been in a relationship for seven years before deciding to tie the knot. In May 2020, at the height of the pandemic and the lockdown, she became mother to son Kabir. She's been taking it easy since then, revelling in the challenges of motherhood and rediscovering her own childhood in the process. Excerpts from an interesting* tete-a-tete *with the Bengali beauty*

YOU'VE PLAYED SO MANY ROLES AND THE CURRENT ROLE THAT YOU'RE PLAYING IS THAT OF A YUMMY MUMMY. YOU'RE SO BUSY DOING ADS, MOVIES AND ENDORSEMENTS, SO HOW DO YOU FIND TIME FOR THE BABY?

My baby is my utmost priority. It's not about consciously taking a decision like "No, I can't do that or I can do this". I think once you're a mother, you're always a mother. He's a part of me. Even when I'm at work, I know what he's doing at that point of time. I have to video call and check if he's having his food properly because he's teething now. So for the few days, he was being extremely cranky about food. He wasn't eating properly so I was stressed. I was chasing him and then I thought, this is the reason commercials happen that way where mothers chase their children saying, "*kha le beta*"! And the same thing happened in my house where I was chasing my son. Thankfully, at this point of time, I haven't begun shooting for any particular film but I've obviously started other work like going to events and meetings. Once you start shooting, you have to adhere to call timings. You have to be there, be on the set, you can't rush back because you have a baby at home. But for events and all, I make it a



“MY BABY IS MY UTMOST PRIORITY. IT’S NOT ABOUT CONSCIOUSLY TAKING A DECISION LIKE “NO, I CAN’T DO THAT OR I CAN DO THIS”. I THINK ONCE YOU’RE A MOTHER, YOU’RE ALWAYS A MOTHER. HE’S A PART OF ME. EVEN WHEN I’M AT WORK, I KNOW WHAT HE’S DOING AT THAT POINT OF TIME.”



"WE DID NOT REALLY START OUR RELATIONSHIP AS LOVERS. WE STARTED OFF AS FRIENDS AND EXPERIENCED THE DEPENDENCE, THE FAITH AND LOYALTY THAT COMES WITH FRIENDSHIP. I THINK THAT IF YOU START OFF AS LOVERS, THE HONEYMOON PERIOD GETS OVER AFTER A FEW DAYS"

point that it is not during the time that he's having his lunch or going off to bed because before going off to bed, he's kind of cranky. I have to be with him throughout the night. So everything put together, it's an overwhelming experience. Earlier, when I used to speak to mothers they'd say that it's inexpressible - the kind of feeling that you have as a mother. But now, being a mother, I completely understand. I instantly guess the expressions that comes on his face. I know what he wants and what he dislikes. Thankfully, he's a happy baby and he's always giggling. During the time that he was in my womb, I used to listen to all kinds of beautiful music and *bhajans* and



With husband Nispal Singh Rane

dance merrily. During the lockdown, when I was completely confined to my house, I was generally having fun. Maybe because of that, it's got into him. He's a fun-loving baby and is always entertaining others or entertaining himself.

NOW THAT YOU HAVE A CHILD OF YOUR OWN, DO YOU UNDERSTAND YOUR OWN MOTHER BETTER? THE KIND OF STRESS THAT YOU MUST HAVE GIVEN HER...

My mother always says that I've always been a very *lokkhi* (good-natured) girl, you know. I've always been extremely obedient towards my parents. I don't think I was a difficult child. But my husband Rane (Nispal Singh Rane) was very mischievous as a kid. Yesterday, for instance, we went to the playground and I was enjoying myself on the swings beside my son. Rane was pushing the swing and while I kept telling him to slow down, he kept pushing the kid higher and higher and didn't listen to me. When we went back home I told my father-in-law that your son is going to spoil my son by teaching him all kinds of mischief. My son is going to have a mixed personality, I think.

YOU'VE DATED YOUR HUSBAND FOR THE LONGEST TIME AND THEN YOU GOT MARRIED IN 2013. HOW HAS THE MARRIAGE BEEN? HOW HAS IT CHANGED YOU AS A PERSON AND HOW HAS IT CHANGED HIM AS A PERSON?

We did not start our relationship as lovers. We started off as friends and experienced the dependence, the faith and loyalty that comes with friendship. I think that if you start off as lovers, the honeymoon period gets over after a few days. For me, it's been about having the faith that he's always going to hold my hand and always be responsible as an individual. My father's always been like that to me and to my mother. No matter how busy he was, I can never say that he wasn't a good father to me or wasn't a good husband to my mother. I think, unknowingly, those are the traits and characteristics that I was looking for in my husband. When I started working with Rane, I'd generally talk to him about my profession and other stuff because I didn't want to stress my parents out. Now that I look back, I notice that I'd go to him for advice and be absolutely certain that whatever he'd suggest would be good for me. I remember during my initial days in the industry - around my fifth film, I texted Rane saying that I think I'm a misfit here. I've always had a sheltered existence and



I began working during college, so I never really had the chance to make friends or get to know people. And Rane texted back: "I think you're Miss. Fit here". I will always be thankful for that because that made me believe that I should stick to this industry...

WOW.

Yes, because I didn't understand the language of the industry at that time. And Baba never discussed it much at home. However, *Baba* taught me to be responsible. When I signed my first film, he told me that this wasn't a game and that a lot of money was being invested in the film. Since then, I've engraved that in my heart. For me, work is worship. *(Laughs)* Also, I'm fortunate and blessed that God has surrounded me with such nice people because I cannot tell you how impossible I've been.

GIVE ME AN EXAMPLE. YOU SEEM TO BE SUCH A SORTED INDIVIDUAL.

"MY HUSBAND RANE (NISPAL SINGH RANE) WAS VERY MISCHIEVOUS AS A KID... I TOLD MY FATHER-IN-LAW THAT YOUR SON IS GOING TO SPOIL MY SON BY TEACHING HIM ALL KINDS OF MISCHIEF. MY SON IS GOING TO HAVE A MIXED PERSONALITY, I THINK"



With son Kabir

(Laughs) Not as an individual but as an actor, God! I used to look at my rushes and blush because I was bad. I was horrible *(Blushes).* And I was not as confident, as mature as people are today. Now, when I see people coming into the industry, they know how they are going to dress up and style themselves and they're very well put together. I had no idea about that. I just feel blessed that people have overlooked my flaws and loved me.

HOW MUCH HAS YOUR EDUCATION HELPED YOU AS AN ACTOR?

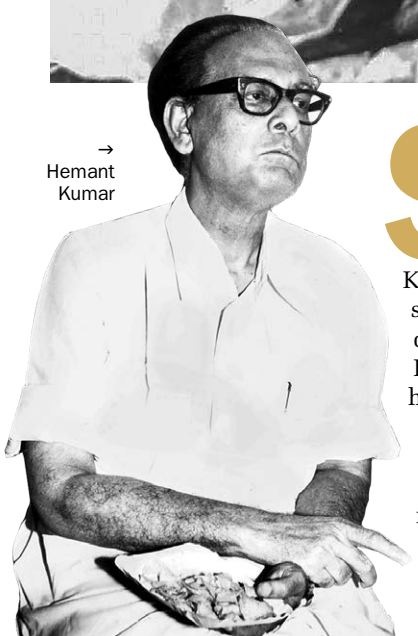
I remember being an agony aunt in my class. I was graduating in psychology and I'd started shooting at that time. On top of all that, I was also the class representative. Our professors were extremely serious about our education so much so that college felt like school. There was a huge amount of discipline. Psychology has helped me a lot in understanding why some people are bitter. Generally speaking, if someone is bitter with you, you don't try to understand where they're coming from. You feel bad. However, I think I've maintained that place where people feel they can talk to me about their life. In college, I remember thinking at times, "She's not my close friend, just a classmate but how is she sharing such personal stuff with me?" Many times, you hardly get someone to listen to your woes. And most times you don't want advice but just need to pour out your concerns. So, if somebody is pouring their heart out to you, you should just listen to that person. So yes, psychology helped me a lot not just in my profession but also in my life. ■

GOLDEN VELVET

DEVESH SHARMA PAYS HOMAGE TO THE MUSICAL GENIUS OF **HEMANT KUMAR**



Rehman and Meena Kumari in *Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam*



→ Hemant Kumar

Someone once said of Hemant Kumar that if God had a voice, he'd sound like Hemant Kumar. The dulcet-toned singer was a gifted composer as well. He made a name for himself as a composer and singer both in Bengali and Hindi cinemas. In Bengal, no Uttam Kumar film was said to be complete without Hemant Kumar singing for the *mahanayak*. In Hindi cinema, he didn't become the signature voice of anyone. He suited everyone from Dev Anand, Pradeep Kumar, Bharat Bhushan to Dharmendra and Joy Mukherjee. He could sing everything from pathos-filled songs to nonsense lyrics. His death anniversary falls on September 26. Presenting a short profile of the music maestro's life and career.

SIMPLE BEGINNINGS

Hemant Kumar was born in Varanasi on June 16, 1920. His family soon moved to Kolkata. He did his schooling in Kolkata and was supposed to study engineering but dropped out of Jadavpur University to pursue


Sharmila Tagore and Dharmendra in *Anupama*


Meena Kumari and Ashok Kumar in *Aakhri Raasta*

a career in music. He studied classical music under Ustad Faiyaz Khan's student Phanibhusan Gangopadhyay, but didn't pursue it further after Ustad's untimely death. He's also said to have learnt classical music from Sailesh Dasgupta and Rabindra Sangeet from Anadi Ghosh Dastidar. He was said to be the foremost exponent of Rabindra Sangeet and his songs in the genre were much sought after. He continued to bring out albums regularly from the '40s till the late '80s. He recorded his first song for All India Radio in 1935. The song *Amar ganete ele nabarupi chirantanii* was said to be much loved by the listeners. His first song as a singer was in the Bengali film *Nimai Sanyas* (1941). He also started composing quite early. Bengali non-film songs like *Katha kayonako shudhu shono* and *Amar biraha akashe priya*, composed in 1944, are said to be some of his first compositions. His first Hindi songs were in *Irada* (1944) under the baton of Pt. Amarnath. His first movie as a music director was the Bengali film *Abhiyatri* (1947).

MUMBAI CALLING

Hemant Kumar became associated with Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) in the '40s and formed a lifelong friendship with another IPTA member, composer Salil Chowdhury. He was one of the stars of Bengali cinema by then and was invited to come to Mumbai by Hemen Gupta for his film *Anand Math* (1952). The song *Vande Mataram* from this film, sung by Lata Mangeshkar, offered a robust version of the patriotic anthem and is popular even today. His own version of the song too is worth listening to. Apart from Lata, he used Geeta Dutt's voice too in films songs like *Nainon mein saawan, Aa re banware aa*, and

HE BECAME ASSOCIATED WITH INDIAN PEOPLE'S THEATRE ASSOCIATION (IPTA) IN THE '40S AND FORMED A LIFELONG FRIENDSHIP WITH ANOTHER IPTA MEMBER, COMPOSER SALIL CHOWDHURY

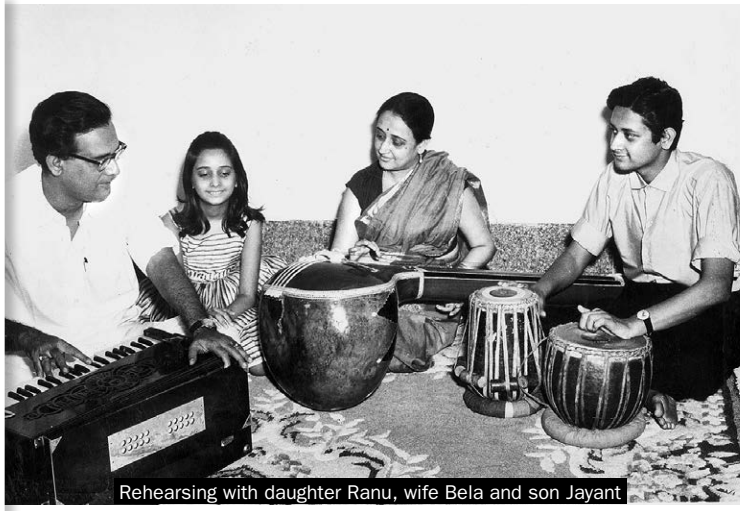
the devotional duet, *Jai jagdish hare*, which he sang in her company. They formed a musical friendship with the film, which resulted in quite a few hit duets like *Wo jabse mili ankhiyan tab se jiyraa dole re* (*Amanat*, 1955), *Ye mast nazar shokh ada kiske liye hai* (*Bandi*, 1957), *Tum aur hum bhool ke gham* (*Fashion*, 1957), *Mujhko tum jo mile sara jahaan mil gaya* (*Detective*, 1958), *Gumsum sa yeh jahan ye raat ye hawa* (*Duniya Jhukti Hai*, 1960) and many more.

FAME GAME

Success knocked on his door with *Nagin* (1954). Songs such as *Jadugar saiyan, Mera dil yeh pukare aaja, Teri yaad*


Biswajeet and Waheeda Rehman in *Kohra*


Meena Kumari and Gemini Ganesan in *Miss Mary*


Rehearsing with daughter Ranu, wife Bela and son Jayant


Dharmendra and Meena Kumari in *Majhli Didi*

mein jalkar dekh liya (all by Lata), Hemant's pathos-filled *bhajan*, *O zindagi ke denewale* and *Tan dole* made him a household name overnight. His erstwhile assistant Kalyanji of Kalyanji-Anandji fame played an instrument called Clavioline, which was an early prototype of today's synthesizer, to bring out the '*Been*' sound in the song *Tan dole mera man dole*. It was an innovation which became hugely popular. His other successful films as a composer include BR Chopra's debut film as a producer, *Ek Hi Raasta* (1956). The social melodrama featured that bouncy Hemant-Lata duet, *Sawale salone aaye din bahar ke*, filmed on Daisy Irani, Sunil Dutt and Meena Kumari riding a tandem bicycle. Its solo Hemant number, *Chali gori pi se milan ko chali*, composed in *raag Bhairavi* and sung by Hemant himself too remains popular even today. South remake *Miss Mary* (1957) proved to be another musical hit. The Meena Kumari-Gemini Ganeshan film had popular numbers like *Yeh mard bade dilsard, bade bedard, O raat ke musafir chanda zara bata de, Brindavan ka krishna kanhaiya* sung by Lata Mangeshkar and Mohammed Rafi and *Gaana na aaya, bajaana na aaya*, sung by Kishore Kumar.

His magnum opus as a composer can be said to be Guru Dutt's *Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam* (1962). Guru Dutt had always worked with either SD Burman or OP Nayyar. Hemant Kumar jumped at the opportunity given by Dutt and came up with an album where each song was a masterpiece. Who can forget the pathos-filled *Na jao saiyaan chhuda ke baiyan* by Geeta Dutt, bringing out the pain of *Choti bahu*, or *Piya aiso jiya mein*

HIS MAGNUM OPUS AS A COMPOSER CAN BE SAID TO BE GURU DUTT'S *SAHIB BIBI AUR GHULAM* (1962). HEMANT KUMAR CAME UP WITH AN ALBUM WHERE EACH SONG WAS A MASTERPIECE

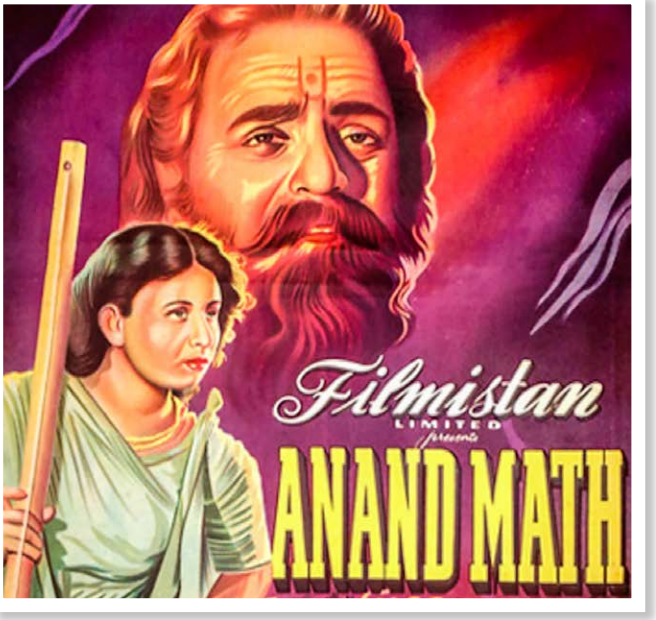
samaaye gayo re, again by Geeta, highlighting her false joviality. Asha Bhosle sang the superb *Bhanwara bada nadaan hai* and also *Meri baat rahi mere man mein*, where she sounded more like Geeta Dutt than Geeta Dutt herself. In *Anupama* (1966), the minimalist orchestration of the song *Kuch dil ne kaha*, which speaks of love's first bloom, is just right for the monologue-like lyrics and Lata kind of whispers out the nuances. Lata got another great song, *Dheere dheere machal* and Hemant himself sang *Ya dil ki suno duniyawalo*, perhaps the most poignant of his compositions.

IN PRODUCTION

The production bug bit him with *Bees Saal Baad* (1962). The film is a loose adaptation of the Bengali hit thriller *Jighansa* (1951).



With Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and wife Bela

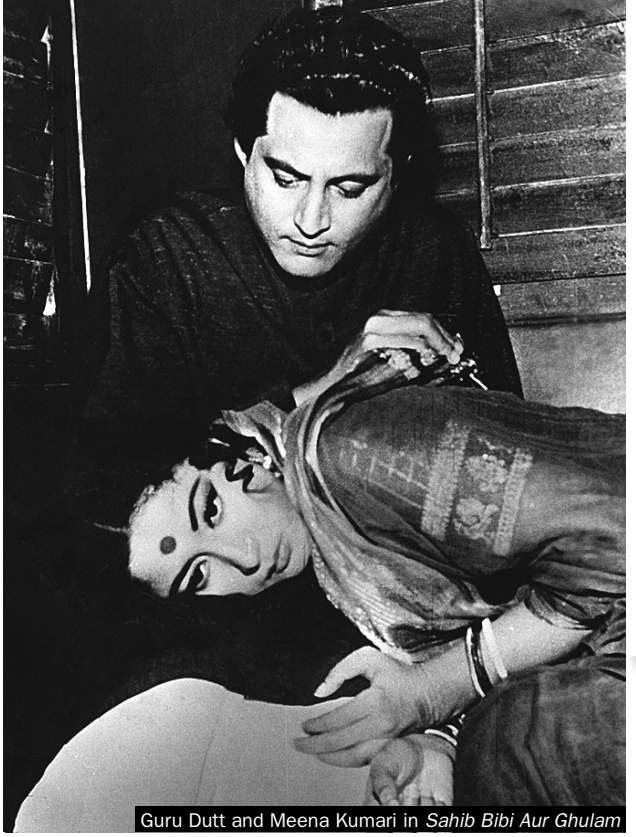


HE WAS SAID TO HAVE BEEN BORN WITH A NATURAL BARITONE. PERHAPS THE FIRST COMPOSER WHO REALISED HIS GIFT FOR SINGING AND USED IT WAS FELLOW BENGALI, THE GREAT SD BURMAN

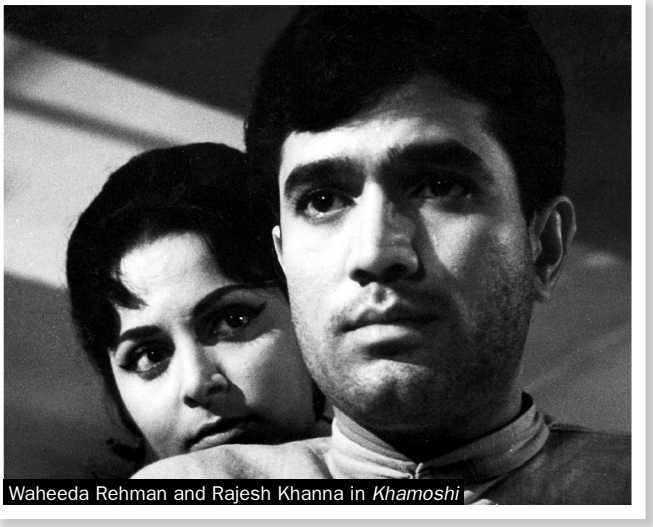
Kahin deep jale kahin sung by Lata Mangeshkar is on par with Lata's own *Aayega aanewala* from *Mahal* (1949). It also had two frothy songs, *Zara nazron se kehdo ji* and *Beqarar karke hamen yun na jaiye* sung by Hemant himself. *Kohra* (1964), produced by Hemant had another haunting song, *Jhoom jhoom dhalti raat* sung by Lata. But the film is famous for perhaps the most romantic of Hemant's compositions, *Yeh nayan dare dare*. You don't remember the music, as your ears can't have enough of his soulful voice. *Faraar* (1965), starring Anil Chatterjee, wasn't as successful as his previous films but contains the soulful Kaifi Azmi *ghazal, Log peete hain ladhkhadate hain*, sung by Hemant himself. *Khamoshi* (1969), was his last Hindi film as a successful composer and producer. In *Hamne dekhi hai un ankhon ki mehekti khushboo*, Gulzar's mesmerising wordplay got a worthy counterpart in Hemant's layered composition and Lata Mangeshkar sang it with the gravitas it deserved. Kishore Kumar got one of the best songs of his career in the intricate, *Woh shaam kuch ajeeb thi* and Hemant *da* outdid himself in *Tum pukar lo...tumhara intezar hai*... Here again, you don't tend to remember the music, as your ears drown in sadness created by Hemant's voice. Later films, such as *Biwi Aur Makaan* (1966) and *Bees Saal Pehle* (1972) didn't perform well at the box office, leading him to give up production for good.

SINGING FOR HIS PEERS

Hemant Kumar was said to have been born with a natural baritone. Perhaps the first composer who realised his gift for singing and used it was fellow Bengali, the great SD Burman. His collaboration with Dada Burman started with *Sazaa* (1952), in the duet *Aa gupchup gupchup pyar karein*, the female portions were sung by Sandhya Mukherjee. SD gave him the haunting *Yeh raat yeh chandni phir kahan* in *Jaal* (1952). *House No. 44's* (1955) poignant *Teri duniya mein jeene se, yeh behtar hai ke mar jaayen*, was a rare *ghazal* sung by Hemant. *Chup hai dharti*, another pathos-filled solo from the same film is still a favourite too. Hemant has lent his voice to many *bhajans* but nothing could beat SD Burman's *Shivji bihane chale* from *Munimji* (1955). Guru Dutt's tragic *Pyaasa* (1957) was about a depressed poet, a dejected lover played by Dutt himself and SD chose Hemant *da's* baritone to bring out the world weariness in *Jaane*



Guru Dutt and Meena Kumari in *Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam*



Waheeda Rehman and Rajesh Khanna in *Khamoshi*

woh kaise log they jinke pyar ko pyar mila. The list wouldn't be complete without the inclusion of *Hai apna dil to awara*, from *Solva Saal* (1958), which remains evergreen as ever. *Na tum hamein jaano* from *Baat Ek Raat Ki* (1962) was another great effort from the composer-singer duo. Hemant turned himself into a true blue Mughal era singer for C Ramchandra's *Anarkali* (1953) in the song *Jaag dard-e-ishq jaag*.

Then, he demonstrated his classical virtuosity for Vasant Desai composed *Nain so nain nahi milao* in *Jhanak Jhanak Payal Baje* (1957). Perhaps the most soulful of his songs for other composers is *Chhupa lo yun dil mein pyaar mera,* composed by Roshan for *Mamta* (1966). The *bhajan*-like composition –you only hear cymbals in the background–is apt for Hemant's baritone as



Pradeep Kumar in *Nagin*



Master Rattan in *Jagriti*

HE MARRIED BELA MUKHERJEE, A SINGER IN 1945. THEY HAD TWO CHILDREN: A SON, JAYANT, AND A DAUGHTER, RANU, WHO ENJOYED A MEASURE OF SUCCESS AS A COMPOSER IN THE '60S AND THE '70S AS RANU MUKHOPADHYAY

his voice transcends the boundary between love and devotion. His gems for other composers include *Main gareebon ka dil, hoon watan ki zabaan* for Sardar Malik in the film *Aab-e-Hayat* (1955), *Din raat badalte hain, haalat badalte hain* for Chitragupt in *Naya Sansar* (1959), *Laharon pe lahar, ulfat hai jawan, raaton ki sahar, chali aao yahaan* for Snehal Bhatkar in *Chhabili* (1960), *Jagat bhar ki roshni ke liye* for Laxmikant-Pyarelal in *Harishchandra Taramati* (1963). He even sang *Rahi tu mat ruk jaana* under Kishore Kumar's music direction for *Door Gagan Ki Chhaon Mein* (1964).

PERSONAL GLIMPSES

He married Bela Mukherjee (died 25 June 2009), a singer in 1945. They had two children: a son, Jayant, and a daughter, Ranu, who enjoyed a measure of success as a composer in the '60s and the '70s as Ranu Mukhopadhyay. His son Jayant is married to famous actress Moushumi Chatterjee. In September 1989 he travelled to Dhaka, Bangladesh to receive the Michael Madhusudan Award. He suffered a massive heart attack after returning from this trip and passed away on September 26. He won the Filmfare Best Music Director Award for *Nagin* and was the recipient of two National Film Awards for Best Male Playback Singer for *Nimantran* (1971) and *Lalan Fakir* (1986).

your say

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

INSTA LIKE

Medley of moments

Check out the best Instagram posts of the stars from recent times

@aliaabhatt: 2 years ago 3 girls came together with 1 dream There was only one place to go to make that dream come true; to 4 of the funnest dream-makers and storytellers in the business

Alia Bhatt is surely excited about this project and so are we. Can't wait for this one to begin.





@saraalikhan95: Happiest Birthday Abba 🍩🍩 Thank you for being my superhero my smartest friend 🤓 the best conversationalist 📚 the coolest travel buddy 🍊 and one of the biggest support systems Love you ❤❤❤

The delight on baby Jehangir's face as he's looking at big sister Sara melts our hearts.



@aslisona: Found the perfect spot to practice my new hobby - embroidery!

The joy of doing your favourite thing can't be described.



@deepika-padukone: Love, Friendship and Memories for a Lifetime…

Sweet memories are made of these. And sweet dreams too!



@sakpataudi: Today we thank all those who are invested with a share of the responsibility of our protection and wish them a very #happyrakshabandhan

Soha Ali Khan is making sure Inaaya learns the true meaning of **Raksha Bandhan.**

Readers send in their feedback *pg 70*

Shatrughan Sinha's racy rejoinders *pg 72*



IN THE MAIL

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



Best of the best: Dilip Kumar

1st Prize ₹1500

LAST OF THE TROIKA

Raj Kapoor left us first, then Dev Anand, and now the last great, Dilip Kumar too has passed away. Dilip-Raj-Dev formed an immortal troika and ruled the box office in their heyday. What a wealth of films they have left behind them. Anything by today's superstars pales in comparison to their work. They made movies great by their presence. It's better to watch reruns of their films than the trash which comes out nowadays.

Narendra Sanyal, Kolkata

DILIP KUMAR FOREVER!

Dilip Kumar was the best actor we had. His passing away truly means the end of an era. It won't be an exaggeration to say that he taught acting to a generation of actors and will continue to do so in time to come. His films will carry forward his legacy for future fans.

Rajneesh Saxena, New Delhi

DILIP *SAAB* NO MORE

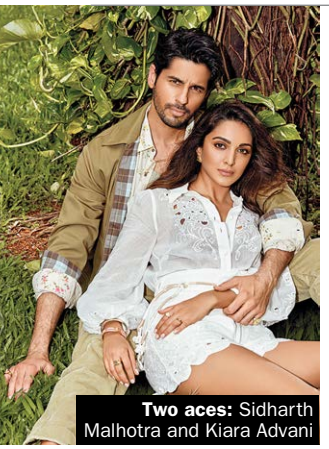
The passing away of the giant of Indian cinema, Dilip Kumar, saddened me to no end. I grew up hearing stories about him from my grandfather and father and the few films I've seen of his convinced me that he was an actor without parallel. Thanks *Filmfare* for carrying numerous articles in his remembrance.

Madhu Goel, Bareilly

END OF AN ERA

I can't believe that Dilip Kumar is no more. He seemed to have been suffering from various ailments in his old age and in a way his passing freed him from all that pain. As an avid fan, who has grown up watching his movies, I can vouch for the fact that he'll remain alive in our memory through his films forever.

Kailash Bhatnagar, Nainital



Two aces: Sidharth Malhotra and Kiara Advani

2st Prize ₹1000

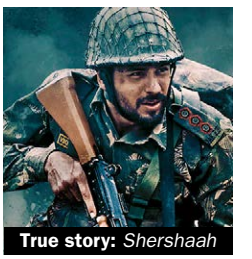
SIDHARTH AND KIARA'S *JODI* NO.1

After a long time a refreshing pair with amazing chemistry has been seen on screen. I loved the August cover of *Filmfare*. Sidharth Malhotra and Kiara Advani looked good together. And their replies in the cover story were straight from the heart. Captain Vikram Batra and the woman he loved, Dimple Cheema, are shining examples for us all. And Sidharth and Kiara played them to perfection on screen. One couldn't take one's eyes off them

Gautam Puri, New Delhi

SIDHARTH MALHOTRA'S CLASS ACT

It was so awesome to watch Sidharth Malhotra on a *Filmfare* cover. I am a huge Sid fan and was waiting for this day. He truly looked great in the pictures. Thank you *Filmfare* for this lovely August cover. He's been appreciated for his performance in *Shershaah*. It's great to see him picking up good roles.



True story: *Shershaah*

Yash Malhotra, New Delhi

DADDY'S GIRL SONAM

Sonam Kapoor Ahuja has been in London for so long now, we really missed seeing her paparazzi pictures. It felt good to read that she was living in her London home with husband Anand Ahuja and even shot a thriller called *Blind*. I saw some pictures of her being picked up by Anil Kapoor at the airport upon her return and both the father and the daughter got super emotional. Guess she is a total daddy's girl and it's adorable to witness that.

Neelam Kukreja, New Delhi

SRK AND SANJAY DUTT TO WORK TOGETHER?

I feel this is the most interesting piece of Bollywood news I have read in a while. Your last issue (August) carried details about a film being planned with Shah Rukh Khan and Sanjay Dutt. Being a fan of both I'm looking forward to it. Hope they start shooting soon.

Meghna Naidu, Bangalore

RANVEER SINGH'S TV DEBUT

Ranveer Singh is a fabulous actor and I can't wait to watch the actor on the small screen. Like Amitabh Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan, Salman Khan and Aamir Khan, he too will have his own show. I'm sure he's going to be wonderful in it. Thank you *Filmfare* for bringing all the scoop to us and keeping us informed.

Sanjay Patil, Kolhapur



Flying West: Alia Bhatt

ALIA BHATT'S HOLLYWOOD DREAMS

I read a news story in *Filmfare's* last issue (August) about how Alia Bhatt is trying her luck in Hollywood. Well, I just feel that this obsession of Bollywood actors trying to become a Hollywood star should end and they should try doing better content here. Or make the sort of content here that will be appreciated all over the world.

Hari Shukla, Indore



Gold standard: Aamir Khan

AAMIR KHAN'S WALK DOWN MEMORY LANE

I haven't read an Aamir Khan interview for a long time in *Filmfare* and hence was surprised to see one in your last issue (August). The actor has a very different aura which has always caught my eye. The way he spoke about *Lagaan* brought back memories of watching the film on the big screen.

Poonam Saini, Rewari

NUSHRRATT BHARUCCHA'S STEADY RISE

The actress has had slow yet steady progress in Bollywood and it was wonderful to know in the last (August) issue of your magazine that she will soon be seen in a solo lead film titled *Chhorii*. She's a surefooted actress who surely has the capability to carry a film on her shoulders. I wish her all the luck in her future endeavours.

Amar Rajput, Jaipur

RAKUL PREET SINGH'S CANDID CONFESSIONS

The last issue (August) of *Filmfare* had an engrossing interview with actress Rakul Preet Singh. She spoke about her grandfather and his last wish of visiting Pakistan but they couldn't go as the actress' father worked in the Indian Army. It made me think of how people still are so attached to where they came from despite the Partition. How I wish relations were better between India and Pakistan.

Akhilesh Jain, Bhopal

Just one Point



Legendary: Surekha Sikri

It was heartbreaking to know about Surekha Sikri's demise, what a lovely ode to the actress given by *Filmfare*.

Krishnan Bose, Bangalore

Congratulations *Filmfare* for tapping on Sidharth Malhotra and Kiara Advani's chemistry at the right time.

Vipin Gupta, Ranchi

I am an ardent follower of Bollywood fashion and the interviews with top fashion industry people in the August issue felt like paradise.

Snehal Pandya, Surat

Following *Filmfare's* social media handles is so damn entertaining, They offer a perfect amalgamation of fashion and films.

Vaidehi Chiplunkar, Nashik

The life and times of the late Dilip Kumar were chronicled so nicely in your last issue (August). Thanks for that.

Lalita Paranjape, Jalgaon

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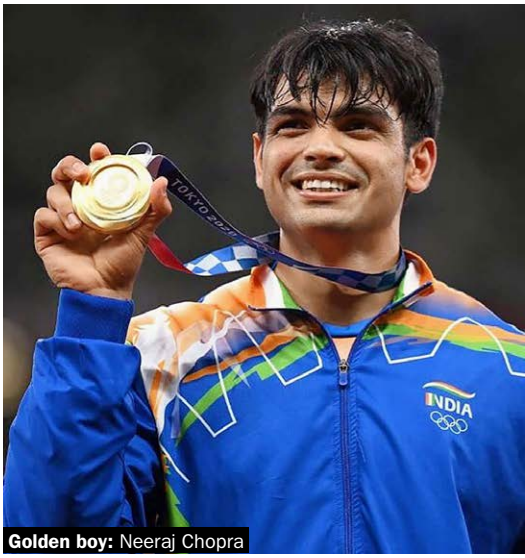
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PHOTOGRAPH: MEETESH TANEJA

Shatrughan Sinha's Rapid fire



Golden boy: Neeraj Chopra

Why are poor people not offered Lok Sabha tickets?

Bharat Kajaria, Mumbai

Because in today's time, everything comes with a price tag… and Lok Sabha seats? The less said the better.

Who do you think is the most honest person of all times in the film industry?

Dr Devki Yadav, Ratlam

Who else do you expect? Modesty doesn't allow me to take my own name. But I'm sure besides yours truly, there are a few others too who are also honest.

A man is never bad upon his birth. But it's his circumstances that make him good or bad. Your views please.

Prashant Shah, Mumbai

I think you're right to some extent. Life, karma, circumstances, scars, all these are intricately woven. It's not an exact science or for that matter rocket science – but something is shaping our destinies for sure. In short, it's our deeds that shape us into the person we become.

How to be positive, when life is so disturbed?

Neeraj Sabharwal, Chandigarh

By being grateful, kind, understanding, and hopeful in all circumstances.

After every Olympics we feel concerned about the state of sports in the country but conveniently forget about it soon after. Why?

Jaideep Sarkar, Kolkata

Life is moving very fast and we've a conveniently short memory. It comes from the selfish trait we all have. There are so many raging issues which we chose to forget, isn't it?

During this pandemic, I think TV was the only medium that kept the common man healthy, wealthy and wise. Your comment.

Tulsi Tankha, Ratlam

Predominantly TV, but how about radio, YouTube, Facebook and other social-media platforms, not to forget OTT.

Veteran actor Dharmendra is all set to romance on screen again. Kindly comment.

Amit Jain, New Delhi

My brother Dharmendra is still young at heart, is very talented and it's great news that he's coming back to the movies. Our friendship goes back years. He's been one of the most loveable, popular, romantic heroes, ruling our hearts. Don't forget he's a true gentleman and a fine human being too. I wish him all the success for his future endeavours.

Do you agree with the Buddhist philosophy that life is suffering?

Amit Jain, New Delhi

I totally agree with the Buddhist philosophy. In fact, all philosophies say that life is suffering. *Nanak dukhiya sab sansar...*

Do you agree that for India, 2021 has been a year of the sportswoman?

Jaideep Sarkar, Kolkata

Of course! Truly a matter

When Neeraj Chopra said that his gold medal is for the entire country, he made us all virtually share the podium with him. Your comments.

Prashant Shah, Mumbai

What an achievement! He's truly a man with a golden arm and his recent comments have shown that he has a golden heart as well. And now after his golden win at the Tokyo Olympics, he has made India feel proud and has won our hearts forever.



Steady aim: Avani Lekhara



Friend and brother: Dharmendra

of pride in an era of woman empowerment. And the latest example is Avani Lekhara, who won the gold for India in 10 meter air rifle at the Tokyo Paralympics. Our daughters have truly done us proud.

In your view, who is more beautiful – Jaya Prada or Hema Malini?

Ram Sridhar, on email

Both are beautiful and fine human beings. I've worked with both these elegant ladies and have remained on cordial terms with them all these years. So don't trap me into judging their beauty, please. Keep me out of the contest.

If money is the root cause of all evil then wouldn't that mean capitalism is evil?

MD Salim, Kolkata

Money brings out the worst in people. Controlled capitalism should be good. However, who is monitoring those controlling capitalism? In that sense, capitalism is evil.

Aamir Khan divorced Kiran Rao, Bill Gates divorced Melinda Gates, Jeff Bezos divorced MacKenzie Bezos, these are some recently popular cases of celebrity divorce after their rather long associations. Seeing their ripe age and well-off family stature, what purpose does the divorce serve besides sharing their fortunes? What examples do they set for society?

Nusrat Ara, Ara

Why do you want to interfere in somebody's private life? These are some of the most popular and loved couples. People have certainly looked up to them as role models but they shouldn't continue their relationship just because of that, isn't it?

How can we escape from the prison of thinking?

MD Salim, Kolkata

One can't escape thinking. But yoga, meditation, hobbies, learning a new thing, all these are great stress busters and help us escape over-thinking. They have certainly worked for me. I hope they work for you too.

(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.

1st Prize

We all know that natural uncooked food is more beneficial. Yet why do we go for cooked, overcooked, deep fried and processed food which does not deliver its worth. Your views.

Varsha Shah, Kolkata

Our tongue is fond of deep fried and processed and fattening food. I'm sure you must have heard that what appeals to married men is either generally speaking illegal, immoral or fattening or married to someone else. Coming back to fattening matter – everyone loves variety, especially forbidden food that is more tempting and irresistible. Plus, everyone wants instant gratification, just like instant coffee.

2nd Prize

What is that one thing you've learnt from your parents/elders which has been an important lesson you have passed on to your children?

Chenar Kanagat, Bangalore

Besides always being humble and kind, always be rooted and not forget your humble beginnings. And always practice the mantra in this competitive world – aim at being better than the best or being different from the rest.

Win!
CASH PRIZES

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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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NOISE CULTURE

Sidharth Shukla passed away recently. At 40, the fit and handsome actor was too young to die. His colleagues in the industry, as well as his fans expressed their shock, sorrow and solidarity wth his family over social media. But the solemnity of the situation was marred by a certain section of overzealous people who see a conspiracy in everything. They started demanding a probe into the death and soon the hashtag demanding justice for the late actor started trending. His poor parents, who were already struggling with his untimely loss, had to actually make a statement to the police saying there was no foul play involved in his death, and he wasn't suffering from depression. One's heart goes out to them that they had to take such a step at such a time. They did it because they wanted to avoid the social media circus which was fast coming to town. It's a pity that we have become such a society where one isn't allowed to mourn in private. That the media, in its mad rush towards TRPs picks up the conspiracy theories from social media platforms and sensationalises them further. Now, street gossip becomes legit and is even more widely discussed. The whole thing rages on like an uncontrolled wildfire, scarring several in the process.


Sidharth Shukla


Raj Kundra and Shilpa Shetty Kundra

Shilpa Shetty Kundra's husband Raj Kundra and the actress too have been feeling the brunt of a social media maelstrom. Whether Raj Kundra is guilty or not will be decided by the due process of law. He's still in police custody, his trial has yet to begin. But the millions of questions that are being asked on social media have been taking their toll. Already there are rumours of Shilpa getting separated from her husband, never mind the fact that she has yet to give an official statement about the whole affair. What annoys one further is the fact that she's constantly being probed on whether she knew about the whole shady deal. Why is a wife always questioned when a husband comes under a cloud?

How's having an opinion on everything healthy? Even if you have an opinion, why do you want to share it with the world? Why do these champions of truth and justice make noise only when there is a celebrity involved? Why can't they ask hard-hitting questions to the government? Why not fight for better roads, low-priced petrol, better mass transport, better drainage system, better hospitals, colleges? Isn't it better to fight for something that directly affects your life, rather than abstract non-issues...

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