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Ananya Panday

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Ananya Panday Calls It 'Biggest Moment Of Actors Life' As Amitabh Bachchan Showers Praise On Her

The actress received a rare and heartfelt praise from Amitabh Bachchan during her recent appearance on Kaun Banega Crorepati.

Ananya Panday is gearing up for her last release of 2025 with Kartik Aaryan. She will be seen in rom com Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri. Well, as the film nears release, the actors were seen gracing the popular quiz show Kaun Banega Crorepati. Ananya was seen receiving the biggest praise from none other than Amitabh Bachchan. The young actress took to social media to express her gratitude.

Thanking Amitabh Bachchan, Ananya Panday shared the same clip and wrote, “The biggest moment of any actors life I will cherish your words forever Amit Ji." Her mother Bhavana Panday also reacted with heart emojis. One of the fans wrote, “Biggest award for any actor. To receive this words from the best actor in the world." Another wrote, “Ananya Pandey is Diamond of Bollywood."

What Amitabh Bachchan said on KBC

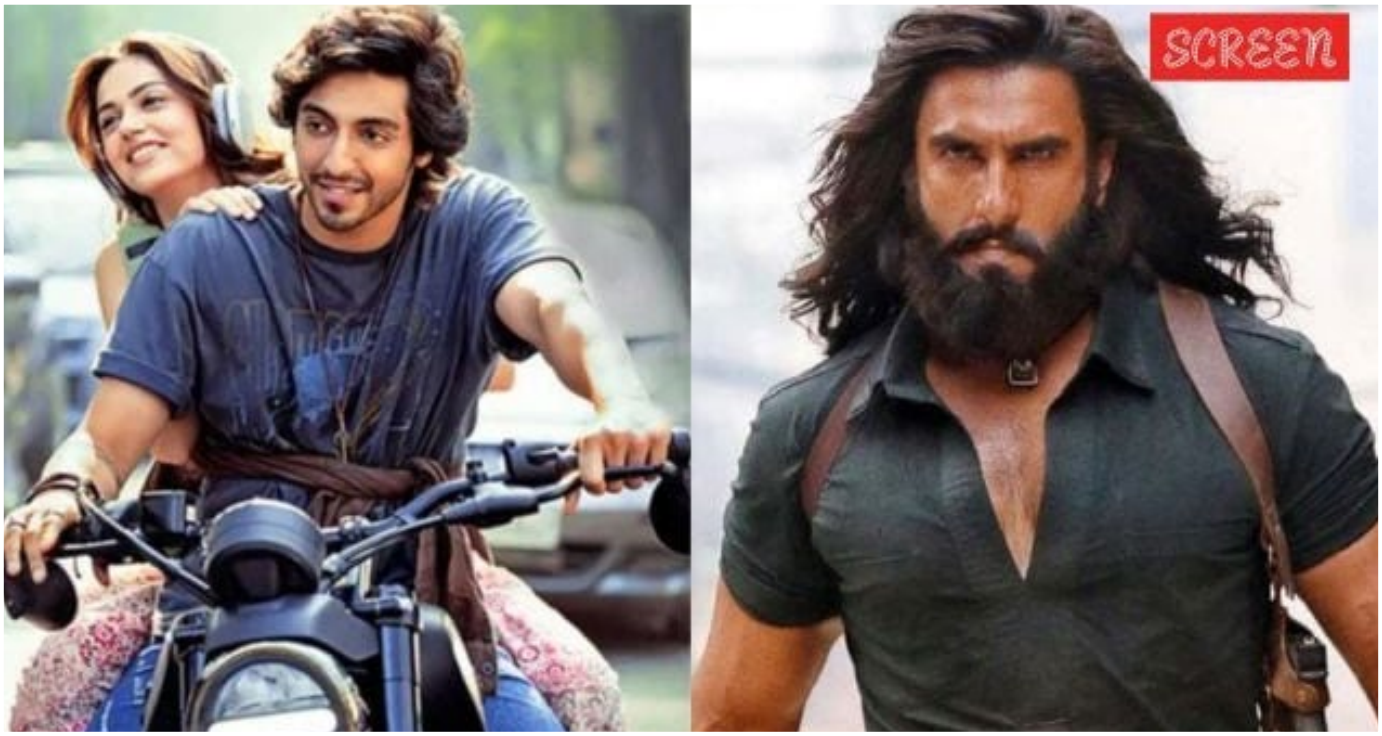
The actress received a rare and heartfelt praise from Amitabh Bachchan during her recent appearance on Kaun Banega Crorepati. Addressing Ananya on the show, Bachchan said, “Aur inke liye bhi humne kaha tha, inki ek film he, Kesari (Chapter 2). Jisme inhone kaam kiya tha humne kaha ki bohot bade bade kalakaar he usme aur sabne bohot achcha kaam kiya. Lekin itne bade kalakaro ke saath rehkar bhi Ananya aapne bohot khubi se apna role nibhaya." The complement was touching for Ananya. In the clip she shared online, her eyes welled up almost immediately, even before Bachchan praise was finished. “Jyada bolna nahi tha inko. Jis tarah se unki nazar gayi, unki look gayi… Wahi par kalaakar ki khoobi pata chalti he. Woh feeling maine aap mein dekhi," he added, explaining how her restraint and expressions carried the performance.

About Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri

The film is directed by Sameer Vidwans, who previously collaborated with Kartik in Satyaprem Ki Katha. Dharma Productions and Namah Pictures are the film’s producers, along with Karan Johar, Adar Poonawalla, Apoorva Mehta, Shareen Mantri Kedia, Kishor Arora, and Bhumika Tewari. Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri will be released in theatres on December 25, which coincides with Christmas. In addition to the starring pair, the film features Neena Gupta, Jackie Shroff, and Tiku Talsania in supporting roles.

Top 10 highest-grossing Indian movies of 2025: From Kantara, Dhurandhar to Saiyaara, worldwide box office collection and full hit list

'In almost every film, Shah Rukhbhai has done a lot of his own stunts.'



Highest Grossing Films of 2025. (Photo: IMDb)While the final tally of films released in 2025 will only be clear at year-end, the Indian film industry has already seen an overwhelming output. Over 1,500 films across multiple Indian languages have been released so far, yet only ten managed to dominate headlines by emerging as the highest-grossing Indian films of the year.

According to Sacnilk, a total of 1,519 films released in India in 2025 have collectively earned a gross of Rs 12,291.27 crore. Remarkably, the top 10 films alone account for Rs 4,443.42 crore—over one-third of the total box-office revenue so far. Among them, Dhurandhar, currently positioned third, continues to shatter records and shows strong potential to climb higher.

The films occupying the top 10 spots are Kantara: A Legend – Chapter 1, Chhaava, Dhurandhar, Saiyaara, Coolie, War 2, Mahavatar Narsimha, Lokah Chapter One: Chandra, They Call Him OG, and Housefull 5.

Kantara: A Legend – Chapter 1

2025 proved to be a landmark year for the Kannada film industry, with Rishab Shetty's Kantara: A Legend – Chapter 1 securing the top position. A prequel to the 2022 blockbuster, the film released on October 2 and went on to collect Rs 852.26 crore worldwide. Backed by Hombale Films—best known for the KGF franchise—the film was reportedly made on a budget of Rs 125 crore. While critical reception was mixed, its box-office performance remained extraordinary. However, with Dhurandhar crossing the Rs 600 crore mark globally, the top spot could soon be challenged.

Chhaava

One of the most talked-about Bollywood films of the year, Vicky Kaushal-starrer Chhaava released on February 14 and earned Rs 807.91 crore worldwide. The epic historical action drama, based on the life of Sambhaji, received mixed reviews but drew widespread praise for Akshaye Khanna's portrayal of Aurangzeb. Khanna is currently also earning acclaim for his role as Rehman Dakait in Dhurandhar. Chhaava was reportedly made on a budget ranging between Rs 90 and Rs 130 crore.

Dhurandhar

Released on December 5, Dhurandhar turned into an overnight sensation. Opening at Rs 28 crore, the Aditya Dhar directorial showed phenomenal growth, especially in its second week. In just 12 days, the film amassed Rs 634 crore worldwide. Made on a reported budget of Rs 225–250 crore, the film stars Ranveer Singh, Akshaye Khanna, Arjun Rampal, R Madhavan, and Sanjay Dutt in pivotal roles. If it sustains its current momentum, Dhurandhar is poised to surpass both Chhaava and Kantara: Chapter 1 to become the highest-grossing Indian film of 2025.

Saiyaara

Saiyaara emerged as the year's biggest surprise. Released on July 18 with minimal promotions and almost no media interactions, the Mohit Suri directorial defied expectations to become the highest-grossing Indian romantic film of all time. The film earned Rs 570.33 crore worldwide and opened to positive reviews, with particular praise for debutants Ahaan Panday and Aneet Padda. Its music also went viral across Instagram. The film was reportedly made on a modest budget of Rs 45–60 crore.

Coolie

Rajinikanth's Coolie was among the most anticipated releases of the year and was reportedly mounted on a massive budget of Rs 400 crore. Despite featuring an ensemble cast including Aamir Khan, Nagarjuna, and Soubin Shahir, the film failed to fully translate its hype into box-office success. Released on August 14 alongside War 2, it performed moderately, earning Rs 518 crore worldwid

War 2

Despite securing the sixth spot, War 2 is widely considered a box-office disappointment. The film generated immense buzz due to the pairing of Hrithik Roshan and Jr NTR and the success of its predecessor (War, 2019). However, critics panned its weak script and execution. Released on August 14, the film earned Rs 364.35 crore worldwide against a reported budget of Rs 400 crore.

Mahavatar Narsimha

Directed by Ashwin Kumar, Mahavatar Narsimha emerged as a sleeper hit. Presented by Hombale Films, the animated feature was made on a modest budget of Rs 40 crore and went on to collect Rs 326.82 crore worldwide. The film received widespread appreciation for its visuals and technical finesse, marking a rare success for Indian animation at this scale.

Lokah Chapter One: Chandra

Another regional success story was Lokah Chapter One: Chandra, produced by Dulquer Salmaan and starring Kalyani Priyadarshan. Released on August 28, the Malayalam film proved to be a massive box-office winner. Made on a reported budget of Rs 30 crore, it earned Rs 303.86 crore worldwide—over ten times its production cost.

They Call Him OG

The Telugu film They Call Him OG, starring actor-politician Pawan Kalyan, marked his second box-office disappointment of the year after Hari Hara Veera Mallu. While the film set a record for the biggest opening day of 2025 by grossing Rs 155 crore worldwide on its first day, collections dropped sharply thereafter. The film ended its theatrical run with a lifetime collection of Rs 295.22 crore, despite being made on a budget of Rs 200–250 crore.

Housefull 5

Rounding off the top 10 is Housefull 5. Despite facing heavy criticism for its vulgar slapstick humour, the film managed to earn Rs 288.67 crore worldwide. The comedy ensemble, starring Akshay Kumar, Abhishek Bachchan, Riteish Deshmukh, Jackie Shroff, and Johnny Lever, was reportedly made on a budget of Rs 225–240 crore.

Rank	Film Name	Domestic Net	Lead Cast	Release Date
1	Kantara: A Legend – Chapter 1	Rs 622.38 crore	Rishab Shetty	2nd of October
2	Chhaava	Rs 601.54 crore	Vicky Kaushal, Akshaye Khanna, Rashmika Mandanna	14th of February
3	Dhurandhar	Rs 411.75 crore	Ranveer Singh, Akshaye Khanna	5th of December
4	Saiyaara	Rs 329.73 crore	Ahaan Panday, Aneet Padda	18th of July
5	Coolie	Rs 285.01 crore	Rajinikanth	14th of August
6	War 2	Rs 236.55 crore	Hrithik Roshan Jr NTR	14th of August
7	Mahavatar Narsimha	Rs 251.3 crore	Animated film	25th of July
8	Lokah Chapter One: Chandra	Rs 157.01 crore	Kalyani Priyadarshan	28th of August
9	They Call Him OG	Rs 194.16 crore	Pawan Kalyan	25th of September
10	Housefull 5	Rs 183.38 crore	Akshay Kumar AbhishekBachchan Riteish Deshmukh	6th of June

AI FILMS ARE COMING: INDIA MUST ADAPT

'If we don't become part of this, if we don't embrace this particular technology, millionaire brands might go down, which we cannot allow.'

As India is set to see artificial intelligence-powered films on the silver screens next year, with some streaming platforms already releasing AI-generated series, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Secretary Sanjay Jaju said that the media and entertainment segment is going to be "hugely disrupted" in the coming years, in terms of content, production, scale, and talent & skill.

"We were at 2 per cent (India's share of the global industry) before the AI age. "It's a little scary to imagine where we would be in the post-AI age (with increasing use of AI in the industry).

"AI is truly a transformational force. I cannot imagine where it is headed, and one segment that is going to be hugely disrupted is going to be the media and entertainment segment. "There are songs being made on the fly.

"There are videos being generated out of AI, and it's very difficult to imagine and fathom where it is going to end and stop.

"If we (India) don't become part of this, if we don't embrace this particular technology, millionaire brands that are present here might go down, which we cannot allow," Jaju told the CII Big Picture Summit 2025.

With the growing prominence of AI, Jaju said the industry and the government are working to address the skill gap, for which the Indian Institute of Creative Technologies (IICT) has been established.

"Like IIT is for technology, and IIM is for management, IICT will provide an intersection of technology and creativity. Multiple states have asked for IICT to be present there," he said.

In a separate interaction with the media, Jaju said that the government's aim is to increase this contribution to at least 5 per cent of the global media and entertainment space.

This comes at a time when India's media and entertainment industry is valued at around $30 billion, and has the potential to reach $100 billion by 2030, according to the white paper Reimagining India's M&E Sector: A Call for Action to Build a Future-Ready, Globally Competitive Industry by 2030.

Globally, the industry is set to touch $3.5 trillion in revenue by 2029, at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 3.7 per cent from 2024. The white paper further stated that emerging markets, particularly in Asia, are expected to drive this growth.

Additionally, India's media and entertainment industry is expected to grow 2.6 times faster than the global market at a CAGR of 9.8 per cent.

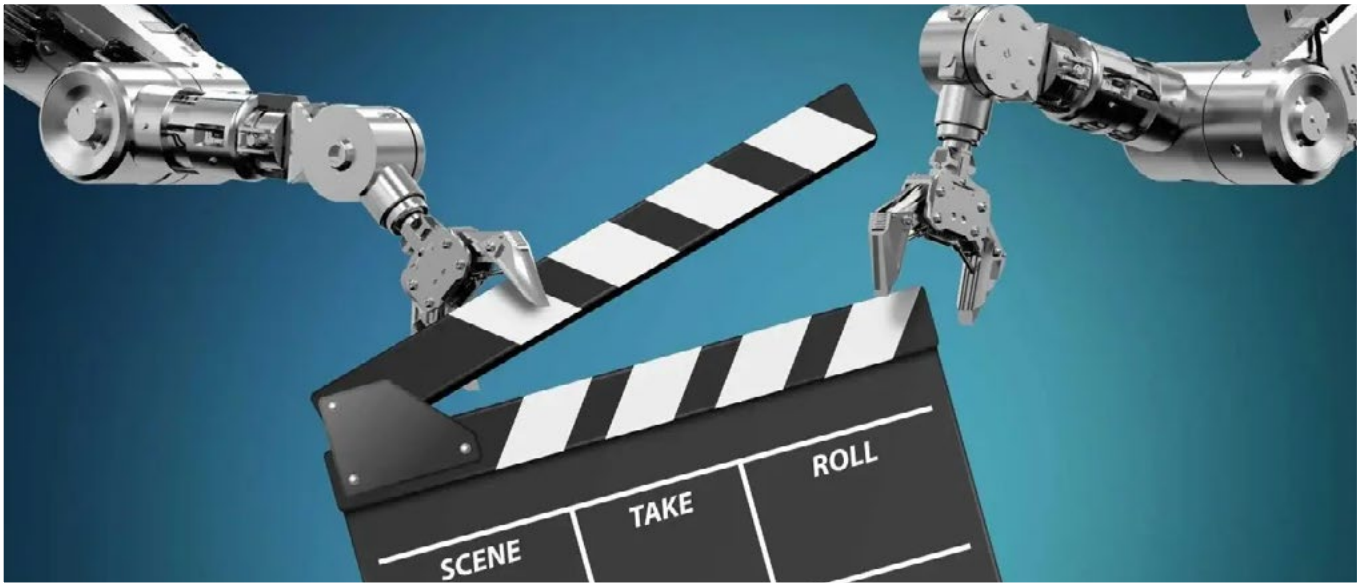
Gaurav Banerjee, managing director and chief executive officer, Sony Pictures Networks India, highlighted that AI has the potential to reshape workflows and improve efficiency, scale, and speed.

"AI will not define creativity. Human imagination will. India's natural strength lies in its people, not its tools," said Banerjee.

India needs to create the "Indian Premier League of creativity" to be able to push India's content on a global stage, Banerjee added.

"When we look at global creative economies, one pattern is clear, the countries that lead have invested deeply in specialised creative-arts education.

"The US has dozens of globally recognised film, design, and media schools; China, with more than 3,000 higher-education institutions, has rapidly expanded its animation, gaming, and digital-arts programmes over the last decade.



"India, too, has made progress. Today, we have more film, design, and media programmes than we did ten years ago.

"But as our ambitions grow, our capacity must grow even faster," he added.

Meanwhile, Gunjan Soni, country MD, YouTube India, said that over 100 million channels uploaded a video on YouTube last year, signifying that the boundaries between the creator and the consumer are blurring fast, and with AI making creation easier, this will only accelerate.

"AI is a powerful enhancer. Tools like auto-dubbing and AI editing are helping creators reach global audiences.

"Technology and storytelling are converging to create global, interactive experiences," she noted.

'Grammy's Coming Home This Year'

'On February 1, 2026, everyone in India, please light a diya. Because the Grammy is coming home.'

It's not the first time an Indian artiste has won a Grammy nomination.

But it IS the first time, an album of this magnitude -- that brings together 50 global artistes, and was conceived and executed within record time -- has been shortlisted to win a Grammy.

Delhi-born composer **Siddhant Bhatia's** album Sounds of Kumbha has been nominated in the Best Global Music Album category, alongside sitarist-composer Anoushka Shankar (a 14 time nominee) and Shankar Mahadevan-led Shakti Band.

Inspired by the devotion, the chants and timeless rhythms of the Maha Kumbh 2025, the album is a collaboration between Network18, HistoryTV18 and Universal Music India commissioned by the Uttar Pradesh government.

In this exclusive interview with Siddhant tells us how the universe conspired to bring together 50 artists from around the world, including Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Grammy winner Jim 'Kimo' West, Grammy-nominated Indian-American rapper Raja Kumari, V Selvaganesh, Madi Das, Ron Korb, Charu Suri, Kala Ramnath, Bhanumathi Narasimha, Kanika Kapoor, Pravin Godkhindito, and many more to create this historic moment for India.

Watch: Siddhant discusses the biggest challenge of making a project of this magnitude

For singer-performer Raja Kumari, winning the Grammy nomination a second time for Sounds of Kumbha is more than just a personal dream.

"God's timing is always divine," says the America-born artiste who was working on her album Kashi to Kailash when the opportunity came knocking.

"I remember I asked God. I told Mahadeva, 'I'm making this album for you and want it to reach the people who are meant to hear it. Please send me someone who can help me. And Siddhant literally called that same day," she confesses.

The 39 year old, who has sung the track Durga Trance alongside Siddhant, Kanika Kapoor and Siroyi, still gets goosebumps when she talks about her deep, personal connection with the track and the album.

Don't miss Raja Kumari's proud excitement when she exclaims, 'Watch out! The Grammy's coming home to India'.Recording Live Sounds At The MahaKumbh Mela

What makes the album interesting is that Sounds of Kumbha has used various sounds recorded live from the festival into the songs.

Raghav Mehta, who has composed and produced the tracks, explains how he took up the challenge: "When you're trying to record a single sound -- whether it's a temple bell, the fire from a havankund, or the oar striking the water from a boat on the Ganga -- you end up capturing a lot of other noises too. There's so much happening around you, so much energy, that isolating one clean sound becomes difficult."

"When I listened back, I realised we needed cleaner options -- something that sounded like fire without people talking in the background. But once things started falling into place, I discovered different textures and layers, and it stopped feeling like a gimmick. We weren't using sounds just for the sake of it; they became instruments in themselves," explains Raghav.

"What began as a challenge eventually added a sense of novelty to the tracks. If you listen to a track like Durga, it has recorded the havankund flame. Sangam carries the sound of the boatman on the Ganga.

"All these elements, which were difficult to capture at first, ended up creating an amazing experience in the final music."

Grammy-winning mixing engineer and record producer PA Deepak was delivering a speech at BITS Pilani when the Grammy nomination was announced.

"It was insane," he recalls, about sharing the historic news with 3,000 plus students.

For Deepak, who has also worked with A R Rahman and won a Grammy certificate of honour for Slumdog Millionaire, every album and nomination is special.

"We never make music with the goal of getting nominated," he clarifies. "So when we were nominated -- whether it was Slumdog Millionaire, Ricky Kej, or any of our albums -- it always came as a surprise. Each album is created step by step, like nurturing a baby.

"Working with Rahman sir for so many years has taught us to listen to everything as musically as possible."

"For example, as Raghav mentioned about the temple bell -- musically, it must match the pitch of the song. We can't use anything that's off-pitch. That attention to detail, listening to every element with musical precision, is my forte.

"Personally, I enjoy rhythm-heavy songs, but I also love something like Balakrishna, which has its highs and lows. Music shouldn't feel like one continuous flow of the same emotion. It needs variation -- rises, dips, and contrasting textures. That's why this album shifts from the trance energy of Durga to the gentleness of Balakrishna, and then to Kanika's Legend of Kumbha.

"We call it Sounds of Kumbha, but the Mahakumbh is far too vast to capture with just a few instruments or artists," Deepak shares, while adding how the album is one of its kind.

"We're grateful that so many musicians from around the world contributed to it with their whole heart."

The story of Kumbh

For Raghav, the most exciting part was to compose for the track Colors of Kumbh in which he got to sing and compose.

"I was wearing different hats -- not just a music producer, but also a songwriter. For me, that was really fulfilling," he says.

"Playing instruments alongside such amazing artists was another highlight," he adds while explaining how it transported him back to college.

"When you get to share studio time with someone like Jim Kimo West -- he's on the guitar and you're on the bass -- it feels incredible. It took me back to my university days when I used to play in bands. Jamming with great musicians brought that same energy back.

"In my usual work -- be it films, studio sessions or advertising -- everything has become quite disjointed. But this album was completely different. It felt organic. We jammed a lot, exchanged ideas constantly, and the whole process was like a conversation between artists. Honestly, it was the most fun I've had in a long time while making music.

"It was not just about creating tracks; it was also about storytelling, like why do we celebrate the Kumbh in India -- the history," Raghav says.

What Worked For Sounds of Kumbha

According to Deepak, who has closely followed the Grammy awards, the album had all the ingredients required to make it a global phenomenon.

"When you look at songs like Jai Ho or RRR's Naatu Naatu, their chances of winning came from diversity and the fresh musicality they brought. Hollywood produces so many scores every year, yet Jai Ho stood out because it ticked all the right boxes.

"I've been a Grammy voting member for about 18 to 19 years now, and from my experience, I can say that there is much more diversity today. In our own album, for example, you have a devotional track like Balmukunda and then something completely different like the Durga Trance, which is incredibly powerful. Raja Kumari performed brilliantly on that track, showcasing Durga's energy in a modern trance form.

"This album carries so many different energies and moods, and that variety gives it real strength. Just like when I mixed Rockstar, it wasn't only rock; it had many layers. Similarly, this album has a wide spectrum. People who don't enjoy fast music may connect with the slower tracks, and vice versa."

SONAKSHI SINHA AND ZAHEER ADVOCATE IN FAVOUR OF A SOCIAL MEDIA BAN FOR KIDS.

Sonakshi and Zaheer were asked to comment on Australia's social media ban for people aged under 16 and Sonakshi said that the ban should be implemented in India as well During a panel discussion, which took place in MET (Mumbai Education Trust) College, Mumbai, Sonakshi and Zaheer were asked to comment on Australia's social media ban for people aged under 16. Reacting to this, Sonakshi called it a 'very good thing', saying that the ban should be implemented in India as well. Pitching in, Zaheer shared that according to him, one does not always need to impose a ban; however, it is crucial to control what kind of content the kids are watching on social media.

Zaheer said, "You can do extreme things also. And you can ban things. But it's also that you can control it properly. Like in my house, when my niece comes over, she has an iPad, but it's very controlled in what she can use on the iPad. So, I think there's a way to control it. You don't have to. I mean, it's good."

Sonakshi was of the opinion that till the time a kid is unable to differentiate between right and wrong, they should not be exposed to social media.

"No, I think it's avoidable. Till a certain age at least. Till a child is old enough to understand the difference between right and wrong, and what is good, and what is bad. I think till that age, it should not be exposed to a child," the Heeramandi actress added.

"Yeah, and till then, also like you should really control it. Sometimes, you don't know what buttons, where they go. So, it's always good to monitor them when they are watching as well. I know it's a pain. If someone is watching for 2 hours, and you are watching with them. But someone should," Zaheer concluded.

Imran Khan reveals how much A-listers like Ranbir Kapoor and Ranveer Singh charge

After teasing his comeback for a long time, Imran Khan is all set to return to the big screen with Happy Patel: Khatarnaak Jasoos. The actor was last seen in the 2015 film Katti Batti. He has now opened up about Bollywood's casting process and reflected on the massive pay cheques of A-list stars such as Ranbir Kapoor and Ranveer Singh.

Imran Khan on Bollywood casting process

In an interview with Samdish Bhatia, Imran spoke about how casting decisions are made in Bollywood. He revealed that he was not the first choice for Matru Ki Bijli Ka Mandola, which also starred Anushka Sharma. Director Vishal Bhardwaj had initially approached Ajay Devgn for the role. However, Ajay exited the film during the preparation stage, and Imran was brought on board. According to Imran, Vishal did not cast him because he was the ideal fit, but because his presence helped secure a certain budget for the film.Speaking candidly, Imran said, "The approach to casting is all based on budget, even now. It has nothing to do with whether you're the right actor for the role. They're just thinking, 'How much money can I get with him?' That's how I ended up being cast in Matru. On my back, they could get X amount of money."

When asked about how much A-list stars earn per film today, Imran replied, "If you're an A-lister in theatrical films today, you're not earning less than Rs 30 crore per film. Anyone my age, Ranbir Kapoor, Ranveer Singh, Shahid Kapoor, they're not earning less than that. I'd be surprised if any of them are earning less."

Imran on his success after Jaane Tu...

Imran also addressed the dramatic shift he experienced after the success of his debut film Jaane Tu... Ya Jaane Na. The film became an overnight hit, and his fee increased exponentially. "When my first film released and became a hit, I went from being paid nothing to being paid multiple crores at the age of 25. Suddenly, you're being paid Rs 7-10 crore," he said.

By the time Jaane Tu... Ya Jaane Na was released, Imran had already completed three films but was paid very little for them. "The first film was Jaane Tu, which was my home production. The second was Kidnap, where they didn't want me and said, 'Yeh le Rs 5 lakh.' For the next film, I got Rs 7-8 crore. I suddenly thought, 'Did my acting really grow that much from my previous film?'" he recalled.

Imran further revealed that the biggest pay cheque of his career was Rs 12 crore. By the time he was 27 or 28, he had more money than he had ever imagined. "I was not hungry for money, and my friends were not earning anywhere close to what I was. That created a sense of disconnect," he added.

2025 May Be Movie Biz's Best Year

The industry is anticipating 2025 to deliver around Rs 13,500 crore in overall box-office collections, which would cement it as India's strongest box-office year after 2023..

With films across genres and languages hitting screens in December from Ranveer Singh's Dhurandhar to to Hollywood's Avatar: Fire and Ash -- cinema exhibitors expect the month's box-office tally to clock between Rs 1,500 crore and Rs 2,000 crore, setting it up as one of 2025's standout performing months.

The industry is anticipating 2025 to deliver around Rs 13,500 crore in overall box-office collections, which would cement it as India's strongest box-office year after 2023.

Multiplex chains, which struggled with footfall last year before Pushpa 2: The Rule reignited demand, have already expanded show counts to stay ahead of rising demand. PVR INOX expects the momentum to hold firm through the month.

"The December mopup could touch roughly Rs 1,500 crore, said Devang Sampat, managing director, Cinepolis India. Miraj Entertainment Managing Director Bhuvanesh Mendiratta pegs December's total closer to Rs 2,000 crore.

So far, October remains the year's highest-grossing month, with Rs 1,669 crore at the India box office, powered by Kantara: A Legend-Chapter 1, according to Ormax Media.

"Dhurandhar has become a phenomenon," said film trade analyst Girish Wankhede. "Every character from the film is catching on with audiences through social media -- with Akshaye Khanna's dance and performance going viral -- songs, and background score," he said.Off the back of this performance, industry watchers expect this year to surpass 2024's overall haul and top 2023's record Rs 12,226 crore. Cumulative collections for January-October are up 24 per cent year-on-year at Rs 11,077 crore, Ormax Media said, and the firm forecasts the year to close near Rs 13,500 crore.

"Audiences in 2025 have clearly shown a preference for films that combine strong direction, compelling storytelling, emotional depth and true theatrical scale," said Satwik Lele, chief operating officer, Mukta A2 Cinemas.

"Viewers are choosing movies that offer a complete big-screen experience rather than just star value. While this has brought audiences back in a big way, we believe the industry still has room to climb higher as storytelling and cinematic innovation continue to evolve."

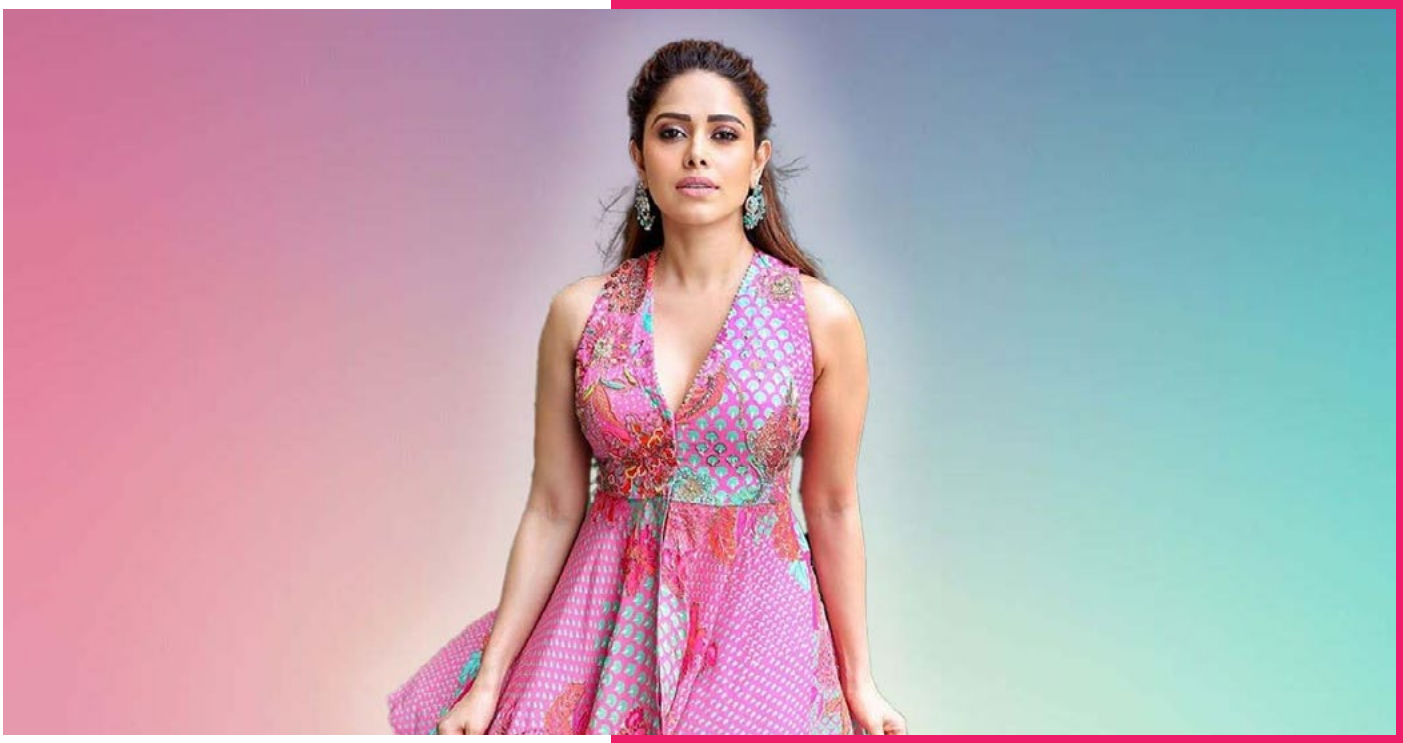
Industry executives said that with filmmakers experimenting across genres, regional cinema delivering more consistently, and producers honouring theatrical windows, there is ample scope to expand the overall box-office pie.

Why 'Homebound' is India's best shot at an Oscar in the New Year

Neeraj Ghaywan's award-winning credentials and Martin Scorsese's strong backing could turn the tide for Indian cinema at the 2026 Academy Awards. There is a strong possibility that 'Homebound' in the coming New Year would do what 'Lagaan' didn't more than two decades ago.

Homebound', independent filmmaker Neeraj Ghaywan's sophomore feature, landed a place on the shortlist for Best International Feature Film announced early Wednesday, following a feverish campaign in the United States in the run-up to the Oscar vote.The Hindi language film, which continues Ghaywan's exploration of social prejudices through the eyes of the country's youth, becomes only the first Indian film to make the Oscar shortlist for Best International Feature Film (formerly Best Foreign Language Film).When Ashutosh Gawariker's 'Lagaan' won the nomination for Best Foreign Language Film in 2002, the Oscar shortlist, first introduced in 2018, didn't exist. The only other Indian films to earn Oscar nominations for Best Foreign Language Film are Mehboob Khan's 'Mother India' in 1957 and Mira Nair's 'Salaam Bombay! in 1988.No Indian film,

however, has gone beyond the nomination stage in the Best International Feature Film Oscar category so far. Homebound is India's entry for OscarsGhaywan's 'Homebound', which stars Ishaan Khatter, Vishal Jethwa and Janhvi Kapoor, could reverse the trend of India's official entry to the Oscars falling woefully short in the past nearly two-and-half decades.There were huge expectations of critically-acclaimed Marathi legal drama 'Court' directed by Chaitanya Tamhane winning a place on the five-film Oscar nominations list in 2015. But that didn't happen despite the film's world premiere at the Venice Film Festival and Tamhane winning two awards in Italy, Best Debut and Best Film in the Orizzonti category. There haven't been such huge expectations built on India's official entry to the Oscars, often muddled in controversies, since then. Until now.Homebound', which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in May this year, swiftly generated enthusiasm among India's film lovers following its selection as India's official entry for the Best International Feature Film at the 98th Academy Awards. Hyderabad-born Ghaywan, who belongs to a Marathi Dalit family, a facet the filmmaker strongly avows and projects in his films, professes proven credentials as an award-winning director.Ghaywan's debut feature film, 'Masaan', set in the holy city of Varanasi, won two prizes in Cannes in 2015---Promising Future prize and the International Critics' Prize in Un Certain Regard category for fresh voices in world cinema.Unlike other Indian official entries before, 'Homebound' is driven by an Oscar campaign on steroids, managed by its major producer, Karan Johar and his Dharma Productions.All about the campaign for OscarsA corporate-run campaign helmed by Johar is currently aided by American filmmaker Martin Scorsese, who came on board as executive producer of 'Homebound' and mentor of Ghaywan during pre-production.Scorsese, whose backing can sway Oscar voters because of his towering stature in the American film industry and a tonne of Oscar wins and nominations for his films, has had a huge impact on the campaign of 'Homebound' in the run-up to the Oscar shortlist."Martin Scorsese hosted a Q&A with me in New York," says Ghaywan about the production team's Oscar campaign in the United States in November-December."We did a couple of screenings in New York, and then we did a lot of screenings in Los Angeles for over a month," he adds.Ghaywan describes Johar as "a rock" to the film. Johar's production and Scorsese joining in as executive producer and mentor, he says, are "a new thing" in Indian cinema. "This sort of certainty hasn't happened before. It means a lot for our cinema as well," he says.Johar and Scorsese especially, will have a lot of say in the next phase of the film's campaign before the nominations are announced next month. The Best International Feature Film shortlist on December 16 will be followed by the nominations - five films - on January 22. The 2026 Oscar awards ceremony will take place on March 15.The 15-film shortlist offers plenty of hope for 'Homebound'. The presence of three films on the shortlist with Palestine as a subject could lead to possible nomination for only one, the strong favourite being the Tunisian entry, 'The Voice of Hind Rajab' by Kaouther Ben Hania, who has one Best International Feature Film nomination ('The Man Who Sold His Skin' in 2021) along with a Best Documentary Feature nomination for 'Four Daughters' in 2024, before.Three more films -- Brazil's entry, 'The Secret Agent', Spain's 'Sirât' and Iraq's 'The President's Cake' -- have earned top honours at major international film festivals to claim a spot on the shortlist.Backed by a serious campaign, 'Homebound' could complete the five-film shortlist on January 22. if that happens, a strong story set in the Hindi heartland and powerful narrative about the dreams of Indian youth could propel 'Homebound' to the finish line, creating history for Indian cinema in 2026.



Nushrratt Bharuccha on owning her choices: 'Yes, I Am an Opportunist'

Nushrratt Bharucha wants to reframe the meaning of 'opportunist' and get rid of the unnecessary negative connotation attached to it, because everyone is motivated by personal gain. Actress Nushrratt Bharuccha., who is known to always speak her mind, shared her views on ambition and being labeled as an "opportunist." Addressing an event, Nushrratt accepted the label head on; however, she reframed its meaning with honesty and maturity.The Dream Girl actress was heard saying, "I'm an opportunist too. If I get an offer for a film I genuinely want to do, then why not? Of course, I'll go and say, 'Yes, I want to do it.' Everyone stands in line for a reason – because they want something. And that's not a bad thing." She pointed out that being an opportunist has an unnecessary negative connotation attached to it.

"Being an opportunist isn't wrong, but your actions while walking that path should be responsible. Only you know that, or you learn it over time. I've learned from my experiences, and if my values, my perception, and my thoughts feel right to me, then they are right for me," she added. Work-wise, Nushrratt was last seen in G. Ashok's Ufff Yeh Siyapaa.A unique comedy of errors shares the journey of Kesari Lal Singh (Played by Sohum Shah), a sheepish common man, who lands in a spiralling mess when his wife, Pushpa (Played by Nushrratt), leaves him, convinced he's been flirting with their neighbour, Kamini (Played by Nora Fatehi).

Nushrratt made her Bollywood debut with Jai Santoshi Maa in 2006. Later, she went on to make a name for herself in the industry with releases such as Love Sex Aur Dhokha, Pyaar Ka Punchnama, Pyaar Ka Punchnama 2, Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweety, and Dream Girl.

Expanding her horizons, Nushrratt recently has been exploring different genres with her movies such as Chhorii, Janhit Mein Jaari, Ram Setu, Akelli, Ajeeb Daastaans, Chhalaang, and Chhorrii 2.

Alia Bhatt calls saree India's little black dress; says she feels most comfortable and herself in the traditional drape

In an interview, Alia Bhatt called sarees the Indian version of the little black dress, highlighting their comfort and versatility, and her love for it.Alia Bhatt, like every other Indian, is obsessed with sarees. If you are of desi origins, at least once in your lifetime, or even multiple times, you would have raided your mother or grandmother's closet to steal one of their sarees to wear to an event or a festival. That is the rage of sarees in India.In a recent interview with Vogue, Alia highlighted this fact and characterised the traditional Indian saree as a versatile garment comparable to the western 'little black dress (LBD)' due to its comfort and adaptability. Let's find out what she said.

On December 18, Vogue Magazine posted a video from the latest instalment of Life In Looks starring Alia Bhatt, where the star revisited her style evolution, from preppy beginnings to her chai-dipped wedding saree.Talking about how her sarees for her character Rani from the film Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani became quite the rage, Alia said, "The sarees in India is our little black dress. It's really comfortable. It suits every occasion, and when you give it pop, and you give it colour, it becomes super fun."

She also reminisced that since her character in the movie would wear saris all the time, she really wanted to bring that out in the promotions, and that's what she did by actually creating a capsule collection. "We did like an online sale, and you know that money went to charity, and it crashed the website like it sold out in 3 and 1/2 minutes. That's how much of a rage the sarees became," she added.One of the other iconic drapes Alia has worn in recent times is her Sabyasachi Mukherjee-designed saree, which she donned on her wedding day to Ranbir Kapoor.

Talking about her wedding saree, the actor said, "I have said this time and again, but I feel so comfortable and so myself in a saree." While deciding on what to wear for the special day, Alia revealed that she had told Sabyasachi that she wanted to be comfortable and wear a gold and white-toned saree.

Then, the idea for her exquisite look was formulated. Sabysachi had suggested at that time that Alia wear a chai-dipped white organza saree, which she glamorised with statement earrings, choker necklace, mang tika, and more.

Saif Ali Khan says he's uncomfortable dancing at billionaires' weddings, and recalls being humiliated by his aunt.

From star-studded sangeets to extravagant destination ceremonies, film actors are often seen dancing to their hit numbers at billionaires' weddings. A recent example was Varun Dhawan, Janhvi Kapoor and Madhuri Dixit, among others, performing at Netra Mantena's wedding in Udaipur. However, in a recent conversation with The Hollywood Reporter India, Saif Ali Khan revealed that he is not comfortable dancing at weddings and recalled an incident in which his aunt humiliated him for doing so.

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Recalling an episode from his younger days, Saif said, "I was dancing at a wedding once in Bombay and my aunt, my father's sister, who is quite a regal lady, came backstage and said, 'Don't tell me you are dancing at this wedding.' So there is a bit of that. You can't, you know. But if you see yourself as an entertainer, and if there is no family connection or an aunt to humiliate you for doing it, then it's fine."

Saif explained that the discomfort often stems from blurred boundaries between being a guest and being a performer. According to him, context matters greatly. While some stages and large-scale events feel celebratory and respectful, others can feel intrusive. He believes the platform should treat actors like stars and not place them uncomfortably close to guests.Interestingly, Saif noted that his comfort level changes when such events take place abroad. He recalled performing at a wedding in Portugal, set in a beautiful villa with a proper stage. In contrast, he feels that performing at certain local weddings, particularly in more public settings, can be overwhelming. For him, it comes down to being discerning about how much of oneself an actor should give away.

The actor also spoke about how overexposure has changed audience perception. He said, "I feel now that people are going to events, being invited to film trials, and the next thing is a little alcove where everyone is standing and taking pictures, and you have just diminished yourself. People are not surprised to see film actors anymore. But I still think of someone like Ajay Devgn, who is slightly more private, and I am excited to see him in a film, excited to hear what he has to say, because a little distance has become a strong currency."While he acknowledged that performing at billionaires' weddings for hefty fees has long been part of industry culture, and that even his children do it, Saif admitted that it no longer aligns with his personal comfort zone. He clarified that this is a subjective choice and that many actors are perfectly at ease with such appearances. For him, however, it is simply not something he feels comfortable doing.

Saif Ali Khan's upcoming film

Saif Ali Khan will next be seen in Priyadarshan's upcoming film Haiwaan. The movie also stars Akshay Kumar, who will be playing the antagonist. It marks Akshay and Saif's on-screen reunion after over a decade and has already generated considerable buzz since its announcement. The film is expected to release in 2026.

STAR OF THE MONTH

Kaseesshree Khandelwal as main lead in the film "Who Killed Shraddha?" based on Shraddha Walkar murder case

MUMBAI: In a big break for Mumbai-based 24-year-old aspiring actress, Kaseesshree Khandelwal, director Maneesh F Singh has signed her on for his long-pending film "Who Killed Shraddha?".

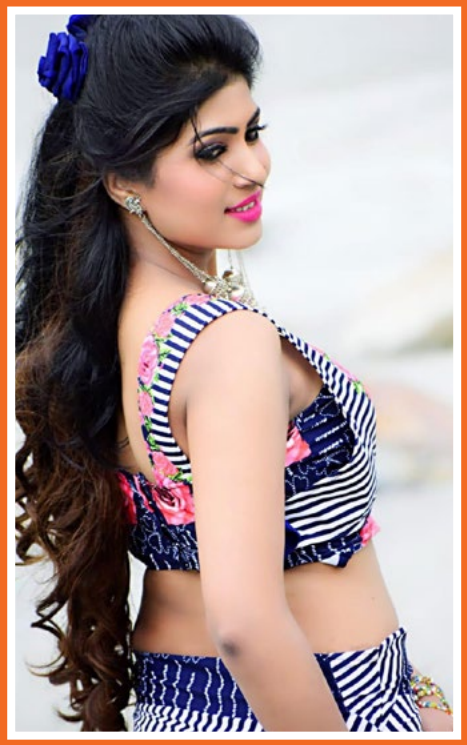
The director had announced the film earlier in 2023, inspired by the Shraddha Walkar murder case, but it was delayed as the charge-sheet was not filed and the police investigation was at a nascent stage. The production house could not proceed with the film as the entire matter was "under investigation".

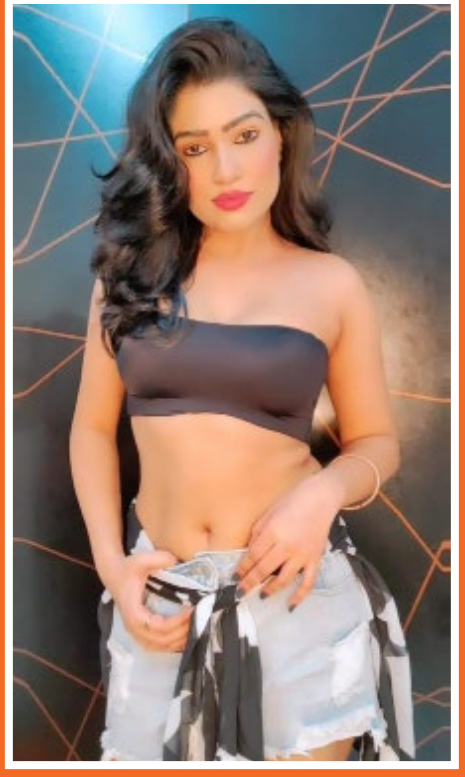
Speaking in Mumbai about the delay, Maneesh F Singh said, "The trial had not started. The investigation was at an early stage. The police were not ready to share any official information as the charge-sheet had not yet been filed in the court. Besides, the families of the accused as well as the victim were in court regarding privacy rights. So we had to put the film on hold".

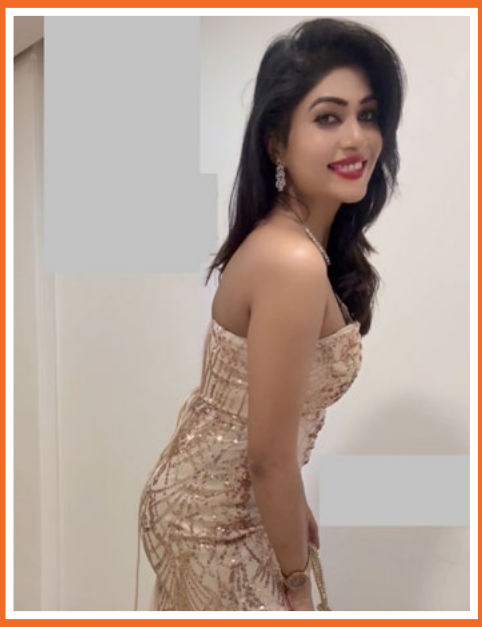
"I had decided to do the film, the script and pre-production work was ready, but we could not proceed because of legal hassles. Now things are more clear and we are going ahead with the shoot. I have already incurred a loss of more than Rs 2 crore because the film was delayed," Singh said.

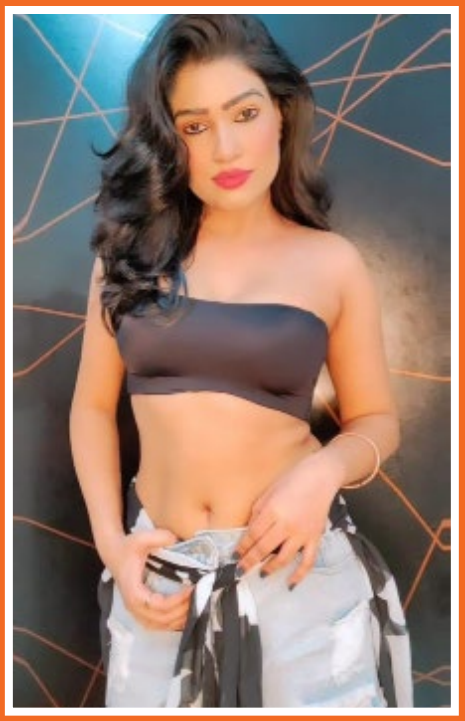
According to a press release issued by the production, Kaseesshree will play the main lead role in the film – that of Shraddha Walkar. One more female artiste is in a parallel lead, playing the role of a Tv journalist, who is the narrator of the story in the film. Yet another female artiste plays Aftab's second girlfriend whom he allegedly dated after meeting her on a dating website, while he was living-in with Shraddha Walkar.

Explaining the roles, Singh said the three are parallel leads as each role has its own place and space in the story. He refused to reveal who will play the role of Aftab, Shraddha's live-in boyfriend who allegedly killed her and hacked her body into several pieces, storing them in a specially purchased refrigerator for over two months.









Who is actress Kaseesshree Khandelwal?

Kaseesshree is a well-known model who has to her credit several ramp shows, hundreds of print and photo shoots, not to forget ad films.

She has also done two regional films, including one in Marathi and Tamil.

Presently, she has been signed on for the Trinity Purple Productions banner in a one year (18 months) exclusive contract, which includes two films and two web series or music videos, besides other related projects.

Kaseesshree Khandelwal is 24 years old and 5.7 in height and of slim build. Presently staying in Mumbai. She is an ex-Ms Maharashtra Queen runner-up and has participated in several pageants, winning titles and awards along the way.

Her hobbies include singing - she is a good singer and dancer and has done stage shows and events. Besides Bollywood dance, she is also a trained Indian classical dancer and has completed her basic training in Indian music.

Besides singing and dancing, Kaseesshree loves to cook and exercise. Travelling another stress buster for the upcoming star, she explains.

Neha Dhupia on being a part of Roadies: 'Mainstream actresses won't do reality shows'

Neha Dhupia discusses championing menstrual and maternal health, navigating postpartum changes. She also addresses the gender bias that existed on set and opens up about Roadies being her bold career choiceWith the sole aim of highlighting the importance of menstrual health, actress Neha Dhupia took the lead and launched the Go Flo Run initiative. She has also been a part of a breastfeeding campaign. In an exclusive chat with mid-day, the actress shared how maternal health became a cause for her when she embraced motherhood. She also opened up about work-hour balance and upcoming projects.

Neha Dhupia on health and fitness

Talking about how she dealt with postpartum depression and other changes after motherhood, Neha shared, "It's something you're not ready for. But I feel that life throws these curveballs at you. And health and fitness have always been important to me."When asked how she deals with outdoor shoots with no washroom facilities, she said, "I've been on Roadies. There's no washroom ever. But you work around it by finding the closest place or talking to production. I feel that actors are kind of subject to a little more care. I just initiate conversations around more hygienic places for all women on set. So that's how you change the narrative and change the voice. Just because a woman is on a period doesn't mean she should miss out on opportunities."

Neha Dhupia on gender bias

Recalling the gender bias that existed on sets earlier, the Perfect Family star said, "I started at a time where these conversations were not even had. Now the climate has changed so much, and I'm so happy that it did. When I started off, I felt like there was a lot more hierarchy based on gender. But now I feel that it's fair. Someone's need for emergency or attention is not divided based on gender, and it's so beautiful. The new people in the business don't come with fears."

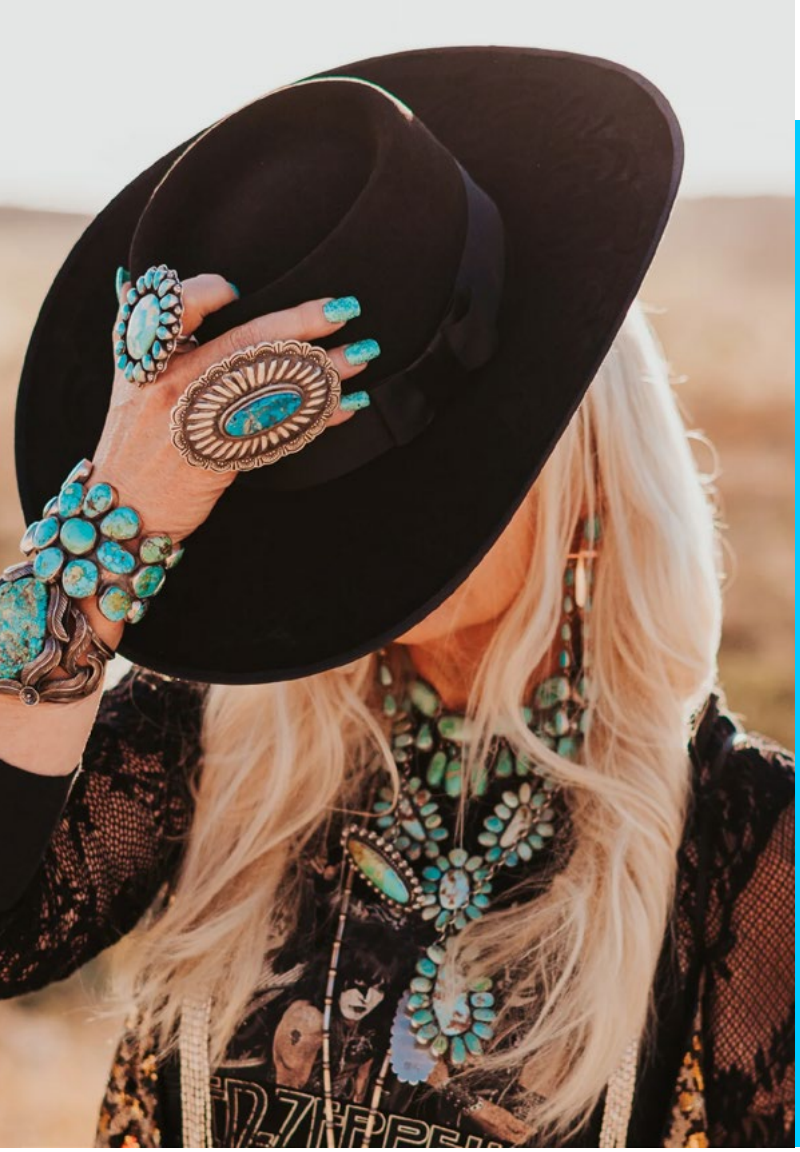
Neha Dhupia on career choices

Reflecting on her journey, Neha recalled how Roadies was a brave decision she made. "I was doing mainstream cinema and worked with renowned directors like Priyadarshan and Anees Bazmee. Most people at that time would have thought that a mainstream actress does not do reality shows. But that decision paid off for me. I know that a lot of people were approached then, and I am glad they picked me."

Neha on the work hours debate

Neha also shared her thoughts on the work hours discussion. When asked how long she has worked at a stretch, she answered, "The longest I've worked is 36 hours, and this was over two different things that I did. It was not on one set, as I was moving from one place to another to finish the backlog. I chose to do it, but I don't advocate it. Take rest, divide your day, and ensure you have enough personal time. But I think the definition of work hours completely changes when there is a shift towards family and kids. A cut-off point is a good place to actually start from."

On a parting note, she opened up about Single Papa and spoke about how men are sensitive and equally good at handling chores. "It's a very important thing. Men are also extremely sensitive and can look after home and kids when a woman is away. It's about us giving them chances as well. Society needs to make that shift, and in many nuclear families, men and women are equally supporting each other."



LIFESTYLE

Top 10 Western Jewelry Must Buy to Stay on Trend

Western jewelry is making waves i

If you love stylish, trendy accessories, now is the time to update your collection.

From statement necklaces to elegant rings, western jewelry offers a mix of bold, classy, and timeless pieces.

In this guide, we will explore the top 10 must-have western jewelry pieces.

Whether you want to enhance your daily style or find the perfect piece for special occasions, this list has something for everyone!

Why Western Jewelry is Trending

Western jewelry is all about bold designs, rustic finishes, and timeless appeal. Here's why it is a must-have:

Unique Styles – From cowboy-inspired pieces to modern boho designs, western jewelry stands out.
Versatile Wear – These pieces pair well with both casual and formal outfits.
High-Quality Materials – Many pieces come in sterling silver, turquoise, and gold-plated finishes.
Celebrity Influence – Many fashion icons are rocking western-inspired jewelry

Now, let's dive into the top 10 western jewelry must-buys

1. Sterling Silver Cuff Bracelets

Cuff bracelets are timeless., sterling silver cuffswith intricate carvings are a must-have. They add elegance and pair well with any outfit.

Style Tip: Wear a silver cuff bracelet with a flowy dress for a boho-chic look.

2. Turquoise Statement Rings

Turquoise rings never go out of style! Their vibrant blue-green shade adds a pop of color to your outfit. In 2025, large chunky turquoise rings are trending.

Style Tip: Pair a turquoise ring with simple gold or silver jewelry for a balanced look.

3. Layered Western Necklaces

Layering is a huge trend this year! Multi-layered western necklaces with beads, charms, and silver chains are a perfect choice.

Style Tip: Mix different lengths for a stylish, effortless look.

4. Boho Feather Earrings

Feather earrings add a touch of free-spirited western charm. Whether in silver, gold, or mixed metals, they are perfect for casual or festival looks.

Style Tip: Pair feather earrings with braided hair for a bohemian vibe.

5. Bold Concho Belts

Western jewelry isn't just about earrings and necklaces! Concho belts with large silver or turquoise details are a 2025 must-have.

Style Tip: Wear a concho belt with jeans or a flowy dress for a classic western look.

6. Horseshoe Pendant Necklaces

Horseshoe pendants are considered lucky and stylish. In 2025, gold-plated and silver horseshoe necklaces are a go-to accessory.

Style Tip: Pair a horseshoe pendant with a deep V-neck blouse for a trendy look.

7. Rustic Western Hoop Earrings

Western-style hoop earrings are bold and stylish. Look for engraved silver hoops, beaded hoops, or twisted metal designs.

Style Tip: Wear them with a leather jacket for an edgy western feel.

8. Stackable Western Rings

Stacking rings is a major trend in 2025! Mix silver, gold, and turquoise rings for a stylish, layered look.

Style Tip: Wear at least 3-4 rings on different fingers for a balanced look.

9. Leather and Silver Bracelets

Leather adds a rustic charm to western jewelry. Leather bracelets with silver studs, beads, or charms are a must-have this year.

Style Tip: Pair a leather bracelet with denim for a true western feel.

10. Engraved Silver Chokers

Chokers are back in fashion! Silver-engraved chokers with western patterns are perfect for 2025.

Style Tip: Wear a choker with a button-down shirt for a stylish, modern western vibe.

How to Style Western Jewelry

Western jewelry is bold, yet versatile. Here are a few styling tips to keep your look trendy:

Keep it Balanced – If you wear a statement necklace, go for minimal earrings.
Mix Metals & Textures – Don't be afraid to mix silver, gold, and leather for a unique look.
Layering is Key – Try layering necklaces, rings, or bracelets for added depth.
Pair with Western – Inspired Clothing – Denim, leather, and flowy dresses work well with western jewelry.

Final Thoughts

Western jewelry is a top trend Whether you love bold statement pieces or subtle everyday jewelry, there's something for everyone.

Sterling silver cuffs, turquoise rings, layered necklaces, and engraved chokers are all must-have items.
Mix and match different pieces to create your own signature style.
Western jewelry is not just a trend – it's a timeless fashion choice!

So, update your collection today and stay ahead of the fashion game.

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Samantha Won't Take Raj's Last Name

She is no longer Samantha Ruth Prabhu. She will be known henceforth as just Samantha.

Samantha married Family Man Showrunner Raj Nidmoru some days ago, but won't add Nidimoru to her name.

During her prior marriage to actor Naga Chaitanya, Samantha had briefly assumed her husband's surname and was known professionally as Samantha Akkineni.

This time Samantha wants to preserve her identity in the marriage.

In this, she is one with Deepika Padukone and Alia Bhatt who have retained their pre-marriage surname.

Samantha has gone a step further and done away with the surname entirely. She is no longer Samantha Ruth Prabhu. She will be known henceforth as just Samantha.

Post marriage Samantha will be seen in Director Nandini Reddy's film, Maa Inti Bangaram.

"Sam and I have always had a great work relationship and it's great to be working again together," Nandini tells **Subhash K Jha.**

You and Samantha are working on your third film together after Jabardast and Oh Baby.

Sam and I have always had a great work relationship and it's great to be working again together.

Maa Inti Bangaram is a story which will be entertaining and packs a punch as well.

Are you convinced that Shero has an attentive audience out there?

Speaking for the Telugu audience, they are always eager and ready to watch films that are entertaining and have an emotional connect as well.

While stars definitely have their pull I think the story is now slowly taking centre stage and that's why many small films also have done well.So whether it's a male or a female lead I think content is the decider today.

Is it increasingly tough to make cinema on your terms at a time when mythologicals and action films rule the box office?

Themes constantly keep changing over the years and that's really not the problem.

Today people have more avenues to watch content. Reels have massively changed viewing patterns and attention spans.

But as storytellers it's our job to adapt to the changing terrain, tell relevant stories in relevant budgets.

Only if producers survive will the industry survive. So some hard choices need to be made.

Who are the filmmakers who have inspired you?

There are many that I admire. But the filmmakers who influenced me massively in my growing years was definitely Mani Ratnam sir, K Viswanath garu and, of course, the great K V Reddy garu.

Apart from them, Kundan Shah's and Hrishida (Mukherjee)'s work are some of my favourite films.

Yash Chopra represented the glamour and romance of the big screen for me.

How do you view your journey so far?

Miles to go... so much to learn so much to unlearn.

When someone comes and tells me something in my film made them happy, touched them, I feel I did something right. But lots to learn and lots to do.

'I Won't Do Roles That Set The Wrong Example'

'I won't do anything I don't believe in just for money.'

He was the most difficult star to interview, and yet the easiest.

Once he trusted a person **Salman Khan** surrendered himself completely.

Having interacted with him earlier I knew the mask of diffident arrogance was just that.

Throughout the interview Salman was like a restless meteor zooming in and out of his thought processes as rapidly as his feet took him from one corner of the room to another.

"Awards don't concern me. I do one film and I move on to the next. My award is the success of my films," Salman said in this throwback interview.

Though the media was largely hostile, audiences welcomed your new films.

I don't think the general public actually believes everything that's written about me. No matter what the crisis, I am always supported by my fans.

One doesn't have to shout from the rooftops to prove one is a good guy.

Everything is going right for you. Then why do you sound so unhappy?

We're all born with unhappiness. That's the one 'given' of existence. In school you get constantly berated by the teacher, you get out for a while, play cricket and feel better.

Then you land up with a wretched job, marry a woman whom things aren't okay with, worry about your children... People you love leave and die.

I was so shocked when Director Anant Balani died. I did my second film with him. He was a dear friend and I lost touch with him.

One of my schoolteachers also passed away recently. I wish I had met him. He used to beat me in school but I knew he intended well for me.

Has your career suffered a setback because of your legal problems?

Do I look like a jobless actor? If my career was in trouble, why would Sanjay Bhansali and Sooraj Barjatya come to me again?

Why would Raj Kumar Santoshi want to work with me?

They are probably as suicidal as you are?

Good one. I'm here. All my troubles are as temporary as my stardom.

Have you seen the calibre of these kids who're coming up? Have people seen how Hrithik Roshan dances? Even if I rehearsed for five years I wouldn't be able to do it.

You watch him in Koi...Mil Gaya. Now is his time. He's going to kick ass.

Tere Naam looks like one of your most difficult roles to date.

(Dismissively) What was so difficult about it? Unless you mean the wig. But then I can't say I was uncomfortable wearing it. Because I'm comfortable with anything in life.

Though I hate wigs and disguises I had to be long-haired in the first half and go bald in the second half. The last time I wore a wig was for Sooryavanshi.

Were you disappointed when Sanjay Bhansali didn't cast you in Devdas?

Not at all. NOT AT ALL. I don't want to play any character which can influence the young generation wrongly.

In fact, my warning about Radhe to the audience is, do not follow his wrong actions in life but learn from his mistakes.

I want to do roles with a heart, a clean heart at that.

There was a time when heroes gave their life for love.

But most of the time when people kill themselves for love, it happens on the spur of the moment.

Once that moment is through you can't put the clock back.

So yes, I won't do roles that set the wrong example. I was offered Baazigar. I didn't do it.

So this star who has the image of a rebel won't do any role that compromises on morals?

That's correct. I won't do anything

I don't believe in just for money. As for the image, whom have I hurt in real life? If I've hurt anyone it's me. My family feels the pain, yes. But not as strongly as me.

That's why it's very important for an individual to love himself first. Only then can he be loved by others.

But you don't love yourself. You're always hurting yourself.

How am I hurting myself? As for those who damn me, that will go on, because of who I am, and the bad press that I seen to attract. I think I matter to people.

They won't write about truckdrivers who meet road accidents every day. But my car and my accident mattered. Because I was in the car.

It wasn't a hit-and-run. There was no running away. Why did a simple road accident become 'culpable homicide'? They sent me away.

Do you know from the time I was 6, I know those people who own the laundry and the bakery where the accident happened? Did anyone bother to find out how much pain that accident caused me? Did anyone take the driver's statement?

What I see are people climbing onto my shoulder to scream , 'See, we put him in. We're the good guys.'

Why do you want to put me down? To pull yourself up? Hold my hand, and I'll take you where you want to go.

Why are you so misunderstood?

When someone says that to me doesn't it mean he has understood me? Those who write about me don't know anything about me.

The honest truth about me is, I keep on growing. I'm not a stagnant person. I keep moving. Sometimes I fall.

But you fall harder than others.

How do you know that? At one point I'd get upset about the way I was perceived. No more. Does anyone know how much it troubles me to think about the mother of the person who died in the accident?

How much much does it take to write a page-long article kicking Salman's ass? I don't have problems with what mediapersons write. Because they don't know me.

Your defiant attitude has cost you heavily in terms of a media image.

There's no defiance. I'm very clear about my priorities. You want me to talk about my personal life. I won't. Because my personal life isn't only about me.

I've no right to talk about an issue that involves another person. Today I may be upset with someone. But I 'm not capable of permanent grudges, no matter how much that person has wronged me.

I don't want to lash out at that person and spoil the person's image. If I decide to open my mouth I'll be heard. Because I don't talk.

Well, if you don't talk, you end up looking like a monster?

To whom? My fans are with me. My career is doing fine. Look, I may have have ****ked up in life. Everyone makes mistakes. But if you keep publicising my so-called wrong, you're only setting the wrong example.

Where's your conscience when you keep playing up negative aspects of my life when I'm supposed to be a role model for youngsters?

There are two kinds of people who are alone in the world -- the honest and the brave.

I'm honest enough to face up to my mistakes. But I'm also very clear about my priorities.

I smoke and drink in real life. But I won't do these on camera. I do smoke in Tere Naam. But that's because the character is like that.

I was once asked before a press meet why I smoked I ironically said, "Because it's cool. Go ahead put it on camera. Destroy a whole generation."

They call me a brat because they can't comprehend the sense I make. A fool and an intelligent man will always have a problem in being understood.

Would you endorse alcohol or cigarettes?

You know they've repeatedly come to me with offers. But no thanks.

Why the media hostility towards you?

I never had a fight with the media. I never believed the media can make or break me, only God can do that.

You've starred in some of the biggest successes in the post-Bachchan era....

...And that's just the beginning. Do you actually feel I've lost out on anything? Awards? They don't concern me. I do one film and I move on to the next. My award is the success of my films.

You say four of the biggest? I think I've done about 90 films out of which about 9 haven't been hits.

Don't you think being media savvy has helped some of your colleagues considerably?

Everybody is made differently. Some other star has a different approach to his career. But most actors who take this profession too seriously are fooling themselves.

Any star who thinks cinema will collapse without them or that he'll never go has a serious problem.

This industry has been around longer than all of us. How many superstars have come and gone? They forget birth is an accident. Death is not.

Those who say they'll make their own destiny should just go ahead and try. Let God laugh.

Let any star or director try to make a film on his own. A film is team work. What a star appears on screen is a grand illusion created by a group of capable technicians.

But most stars get carried away by that illusion.

You know, I laugh when people say 'X' star has changed after success. Actually he was this 'changed' person all along. He was being nice only to make his way up.

The survivors are the ones who stay the same before and after success. I don't think I've changed in any way after becoming a star. I know there are people who don't like me.

I've seen no reason to justify my behaviour ever.

I don't need to. Those who know me know what's right. And the media can write and say what it likes.

'I Was Becoming A Mini Dilip Kumar'

'Dilipsaab was an interesting mix of spontaneity and stylised acting.'

Meenakshi Seshadri may have recently returned to Dallas, USA, to spend some time with her family, but she says, "I am so glad you have asked me to talk about being directed by Dilipsaab in the movie Kalinga. I would like to commemorate Dilipsaab on his 103 birthday on December 11."

The actress, who is looking stunning these days, abetted by a recent upskill in her makeup and wardrobe game, rewinds to the time when she was being directed by the legendary actor in his passion project, Kalinga, a 35-year-old film that has yet to grace the big screen.

"Working with him was memorable," Meenakshi says . "Honestly, I don't think I deserved that. He could have chosen anybody; I'm honoured that he wanted to work with me."

Did Dilip Kumar approach you to play the leading lady in his debut directorial venture, Kalinga?

Dilipsaab wanted to work with me.

I was chosen for Kalinga as per the director's requirement.

Then, of course, the producer Sudhakar Bokade went ahead and completed all the formalities.

It must have felt good to have Dilip Kumar select you among all your contemporaries.

I am a very philosophical person. It never occurred to me to compare and figure out why I was selected and not somebody else.

But I was extremely excited because Hindi cinema has this classic triumvirate -- the trio of Raj Kapoor, Dilip Kumar and Dev Anand.

I had just completed two home production films for Devsaab -- Sachhe Ka Bolbala and Main Tere Liye -- and he himself had directed the former.

Also, though I've never worked with Raj Kapoorji, I have worked with almost everybody else in the Kapoor family.

So to get an opportunity to work with Dilipsaab as a director in his official (laughs) maiden directorial venture was a big honour.

How would you summarise the experience of being directed by Dilip Kumar?

Despite being a legend, he never made me feel like a Ginny-come-lately.

Dilipsaab made me feel like I was special and that was the reason he had cast me in his movie.

That gives me a lot of confidence.

I was overwhelmed and humbled by his appreciation.

Kalinga was launched in the early 1990s, when you were already a well-established actress. Did you have a good role in the film?

It was around 1991 when Kalinga was mounted for production.

It is a multi-starrer but I was very happy with my role.

It's never been discussed as to what my role was because unfortunately the film just...

You can amend that right away and share details of your role here.

I played a tribal queen in the film, Jo chhai hui hai wherever she goes. She speaks in a regional dialect.

Dilipsaab wanted to show that this tribal queen has psychic powers, and when she gets the psychic powers, the colour of her eyes change.

So we got special contact lenses made for me, and did multiple look tests.

In those days, look tests were a rare feature in Hindi films. He also wanted me to do a tan makeup.

Dilipsaab was so particular about every detail concerning my character.

I wore Indian tribal gear, they were lehengas, and kurtis, and he got them designed by Leena Daru, the ace designer for these kinds of costumes. She had worked with Rekha throughout her career.

All my scenes in Kalinga were really good. Every scene had author-backed dialogue. It was an unbelievable role.

Wasn't Sunny Deol originally cast opposite you before opting out because of dates and being replaced by newcomer Amitoj Mann?

I believe Dilipsaab was looking at different options, but finally he decided to work with a brand new face.

Had you met Dilip Kumar before he cast you in Kalinga?

The first time I met Dilipsaab was at the release of Subhash Ghai's Vidhaata (1982). I had just been signed on for Subhashji's Hero (1983).

I was overwhelmed so I was very quiet.

His wife Saira Banuji was very warm and accepting.

She went out of her way to make me feel at home. I have also visited their home in Pali Hill (northwest Mumbai).

As a young girl in the 1970s, were you familiar with Dilip Kumar's classics from the 1950s and 1960s?

I had seen several significant Dilipsaab films even before I joined the movie business. I saw Azaad, Naya Daur, Ram Aur Shyam, Daastaan, Madhumati...

What was your assessment of his acting talent?

In my opinion, Dilipsaab was an interesting mix of spontaneity and stylised acting.

I see that combination in many greats, not only in Hindi films but also in Hollywood.

They come across as very natural but there is an attitude. A performer's visage. That's what Dilipsaab had.

Of course, he is known for his excellent dialogue delivery. In fact, both Dilipsaab and Devsaab would want me to talk like them (laughs).

During Kalinga, Dilipsaab would enact how he wanted me to perform a certain dialogue; I was becoming a mini Dilip Kumar!

Did you have conversations with Dilip Kumar about your role?

He treated me like a peer, even though I was way junior to him. That set the tone of the relationship on and off the sets.

I bowed down to his experience and knowledge during the shoot but would argue if I did not agree or if I felt it should be done in a different way.

Dilipsaab was the epitome of perfect behaviour.

Yes, he did take his time -- he wanted perfection but he planned well.

He was very passionate about the project. It's very unfortunate that it never got completed.

How was he as a person?

When I met him, the quality I admired instantly was his control of the language. His speech was beautiful in real life too.

He also had a great sense of humour.

For me, he always had a smile on his face. He was very pleasantly disposed towards life.

But I think I spoke more with Sairaji than him whenever we met.

How much did you shoot for Kalinga?

We shot a beautiful romantic song in the hill station of Mercara in the Coorg area. We shot a lot in Rajasthan as well.

Unfortunately, the film's making did not continue.

I have no idea how much of the movie has been shot.

Why did the film get shelved?

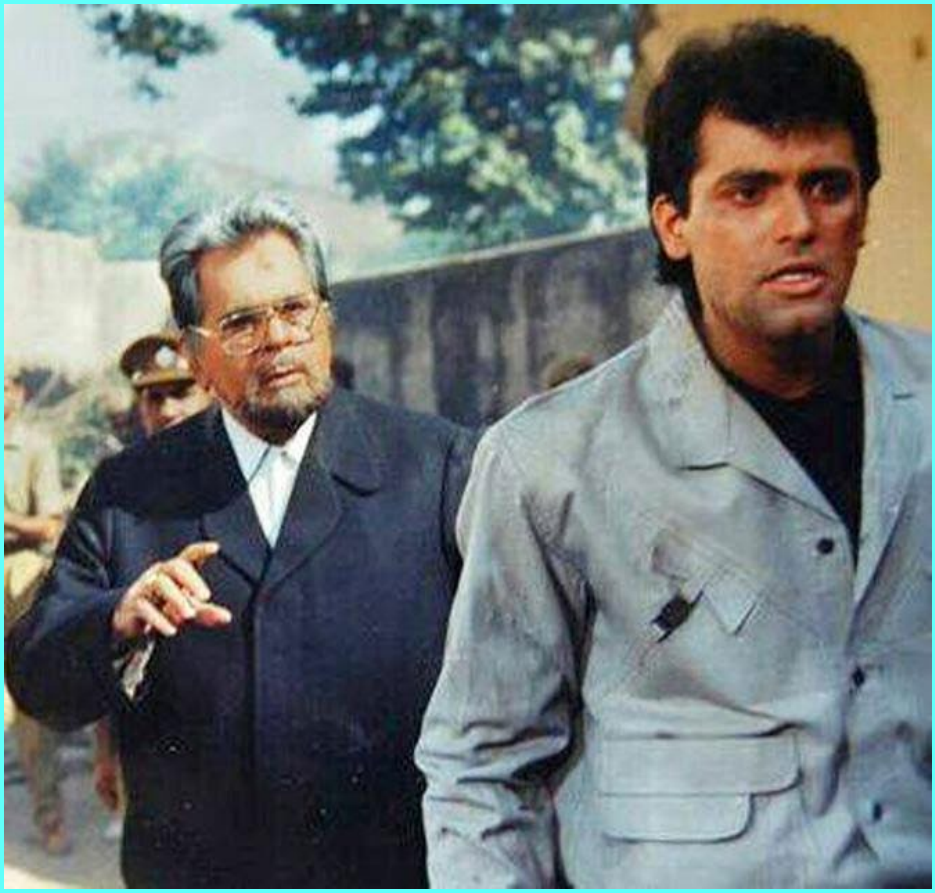
Nobody told me why it got shelved.

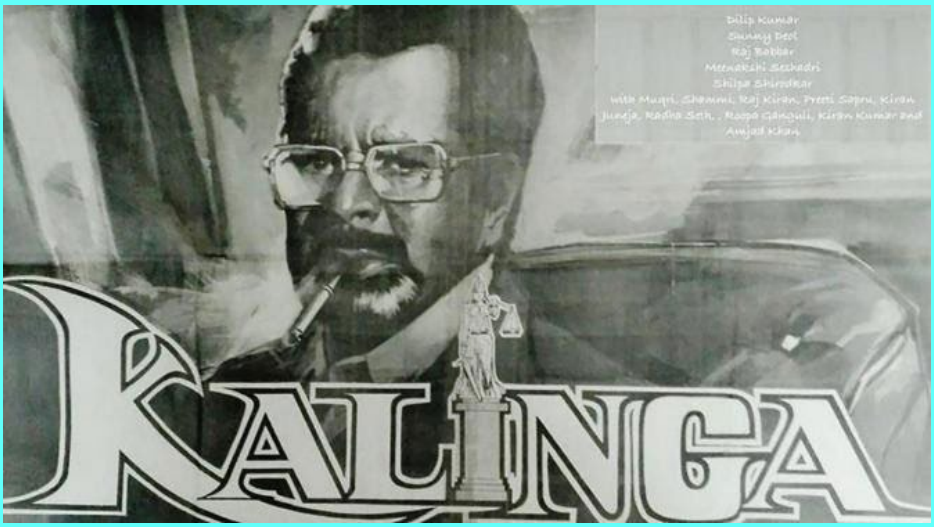
The production went into doldrums; I don't know why.

Schedules got cancelled, payments didn't get made.
Finally, Dilipsaab said that it looked like it was untenable to continue with the film.

Were you paid your dues?

I was paid for whatever work I did. But following that, when the film stopped, payments also stopped.





By this time, you were probably in the process of shifting to America after your marriage.

No, that happened later, in 1995.

At that time, I was still connected to the movies and also doing my classical dance performances on stage. I had also re-enrolled for my master's programme in college.

After Dilip Kumar's death, Producer Sangeetha Ahir, who was married to the late Sudesh Bokade, said she would release the film. Were you contacted?

Not at all. I don't know of this. Once I got married and left for the USA, it was hard to even think of reviving the movie.

Any last words on Dilip Kumar's legacy?

I think Dilip Kumar's legacy is way greater than just a Kalinga. What he has achieved and what he has left for younger generations to follow is priceless.

Watch him in Mashaal when he is crying 'Koi hai!' on the road. Sunny kind of did that in Ghayal.

Dilipsaab has done tremendously difficult roles and scenes.

Working with him was memorable. Honestly, I don't think I deserved that.

He could have chosen anybody; I'm honoured that he wanted to work with me.

'Ikkis Encouraged Me To Be Braver'

'The army and all the people we did spend time with, they emphasised the kind of impact Arun Khetarpal has had on one, the Indian Army and two, just the country as a whole.'

Raj Kapoor's great grandson and Amitabh Bachchan's grandson **Agastya Nanda** finally makes a big screen debut with Sriram Raghavan's Ikkis.

"Hearing about such bravery at such a young age inspired me because I realised how little I had done with my life and seeing the kind of courage he showed at that age encouraged me to be braver in my life,"

What did the brief life of your character Arun Khetarpal teach you about mortality and immortality?

The army and all the people we did spend time with, they emphasised the kind of impact Arun Khetarpal has had on one, the Indian Army and two, just the country as a whole.Every place you go to they honour him with his photograph.

I think that understanding of what he really meant to people came to me during my training time, the period before we started shooting.

That wasn't challenging, but a massive, massive responsibility.

What was it like working with the late Dharmendra?

It was the biggest privilege and most memorable moment of my brief acting career because he's worked with four generations of my family and being the fourth one was, it doesn't really happen often.

I'm just grateful that that did happen with me though I didn't get to share much screen space with him because the story didn't require it.

When you see the film, you'll realise why we can't share too much screen space, but it was such a lovely experience.

What are your expectations from Ikkis?

I don't want to hold any expectations. I feel we tried to make the best film we could. It's up to the audiences whether they feel it is a good film or not.

But I feel deeply satisfied with the amount of effort we put into it.

I think there was no shortcut in trying to make this film. So I hope people enjoy it and feel deeply inspired by it.

Ikkis feels like your real beginning as an actor, what was your reaction when the role came to you?

I was extremely keen to get started, but the film did take time.

It took almost three, four years to get completed.

It was an extremely enjoyable process, but I think we encountered a lot of obstacles along the way, whether it was logistically or creatively, but we're just happy now that the film's done and we can release it soon.

Did Director Sriram Raghavan give you a lot of room to interpret the character?

Since we were portraying a real life hero, there isn't much room for improvisation.

We had to kind of go off of what factual knowledge we knew about him, about the events he went through.

And there was a lot of emphasis on being as authentic as we could.

Having said that, there wasn't so much document on what he was like as a personality.

So maybe there we were allowed to explore a bit more, but still try to stay true to the nature of who he was.

What was your reaction when you were first offered Ikkis?

The main excitement was that I signed this film when I was 21 years old. I think that was my first connection to the story.

Hearing about such bravery at such a young age inspired me because I realised how little I had done with my life and seeing the kind of courage he (Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal, Param Vir Chakra) showed at that age encouraged me to be braver in my life.

'Dhurandhar Is Not Just A Project For Me'

'It feels like the universe gently whispered, 'Pause, don't rush away yet, there's a story waiting for you here'.'

Sara Arjun is thrilled about her Bollywood adult debut Dhurandhar doing so well at the box office.

Yet, she's not new to Hindi cinema.

Sara has been working since the age of one, in films like Ek Thi Dayan, Jazbaa, Jai Ho and Ajeeb Daastaans.

"Because I started acting so young," "a new language never felt like a barrier. It felt like a new doorway every time."

How did Dhurandhar come your way?

Dhurandhar came at a very unexpected moment in life.

I had just finished my studies in boarding school, and was settling back to city life.

I was sure that I wanted to pursue acting.

My father (actor Raj Arjun) was preparing to send me to the Lee Strasberg Film Institute for an acting course. That was supposed to be the next chapter of my life.

But destiny had written a different script for me.Around that time, I got a call from (casting director) Mukesh Chhabra sir's office saying they wanted to audition me.

That one audition became many, but I never gave it much thought, as I never knew till the last minute what exactly I was auditioning for.

With each round, I explored different emotions, and went on for a few months.

How did you get selected?

The last audition Mukesh sir took himself.

I lost myself in the scene that day, so much so that I came out of that room with tears in my eyes.

Then, this film chose me.

What does Dhurandhar's success mean to you?

Dhurandhar is not just a project for me; it feels like the universe gently whispered, 'Pause, don't rush away yet, there's a story waiting for you here.'

I always had a gut feeling that I would be successful -- not that I've got there as yet -- but I would question how I'll get there.

What was it like for you to work with that astonishing cast?

Working with this incredible ensemble has been nothing short of a blessing.

With Ranveer Singh, there's a certain electricity that never leaves the room.

He shows up with his whole heart every single day.

He has this limitless fire, but it never overshadows anyone.

Instead, it warms you, grounds you, and makes you feel like you belong there.

He lifts the entire set without even trying.

His empathy, his generosity, the way he treats people... you learn just by observing him.He never leads with seniority, he leads with sincerity.

That's what makes you admire him even more. For me, watching his process up close was such a gift. He made me feel

safe, supported, and understood.

Madhavan described Director Aditya Dhar as a 'monk'.

Aditya sir is the calm centre of all the storm and magic.

You started working as a baby! What are your memories of those days?

When you begin working at the age of one-and-a-half, memories don't stay as single incidents, they stay as feelings.

There are countless moments from those early sets.

I remember the softness with which people treated me.

I remember my parents standing behind the monitor.

For me, work never felt like work because I was never made to feel like I carried any responsibility.

It was the most fun thing in the world! It still is.

Do you regret missing out on a normal childhood?

No. My parents never let my work touch my school life, my friends, or my playtime.

I grew up exactly like a normal child, running in the garden, going to a regular school, visiting friends...

You've worked in a number of languages. How has that helped you evolve as a person?

That's been one of the most enriching parts of my journey.

Because I started acting so young, a new language never felt like a barrier. It felt like a new doorway every time.

Also, it gave me a chance to explore and learn about different cultures at a young age.

Every industry I've worked in has its own rhythm, its own culture, its own heartbeat.

Stepping into these different worlds taught me that emotion has no language.

For me, the excitement isn't about switching languages, it's about discovering new ways of telling a story.

What are your dreams for the future?

I don't have a specific dream because I feel they can become limitations.

I like challenging the universe to give me more and more.

What I truly want is to keep moving, step by step, keep growing, keep learning.

I want to work with people whose art I admire.

At the end of the day, all I want is to create work that reaches people and stays with them.

'Hema-Dharam's Was The Most Dignified Second Marriage'

'One of the dignified aspects of their relationship is that Hema reportedly told Dharamji that she would never disturb his first family.'

Simplicity remained Dharmendra's greatest charm.

"Dharmendra was a brilliant actor, but an even better human being,"

The most important role in Dharmendra's early career is often said to be Bandini. Would you agree?

He first caught people's attention with Shola Aur Shabnam. That was also the first film in which he appeared topless in a scene though that had nothing to do with the film's success.

But he was definitely noticed.

Bandini probably drew more attention because it was an acclaimed film made by Bimal Roy, a master filmmaker.

In Bandini, he wasn't really positioned against Ashok Kumar and Nutan, both highly regarded actors, but he managed to make a lasting impression in that small role.

But if I truly want to highlight Dharmendra the actor, I would point to his later films, Phool Aur Patthar.

Anupama is one of his most under-rated performances. I loved him in Mera Gaon Mera Desh, which has many similarities to Sholay. Dharamji himself told me this.

He was superb in Pratigya and Chupke Chupke.

Even Ghazab, a moderate success in which he played a double role -- one of them a ghost -- is highly under-rated.

Then, there's Apne I genuinely felt he deserved all the Best Actor awards that year. Unfortunately, he didn't get any.

In your book, you briefly touched upon Dharmendra and Meena Kumari's association. Could you talk about that?

During my research, I read something about Meena Kumari, and also spoke to someone, whose name I cannot reveal.

Both sources shared the same perspective: Dharmendra was simply an anchor for her.

It was she who entered his life with that particular emotional angle.

They worked together in several films, but only Phool Aur Patthar succeeded.

Baharon Ki Manzil, Majhli Didi, Chandan Ka Palna flopped, Purnima did moderately well.

She needed someone during that phase of her life, and he, being a good-hearted person, became that someone.

Jeetendra and Dharmendra worked together in over 12 films. Yet, not everyone knows about it.

That was the era of multi-starrers, and both actors were extremely saleable. They worked multiple shifts in a single day.

Dharmendra had a strong action image, and Jeetendra appeared in masala-style action dramas.

Jeetendra was quite amused when I told him they had done so many films together because 'most of them were flops'.

Apart from Dharam Veer, they didn't have a single major hit. The later films, Hum Sab Chor Hain, Dharma Karma, Sone Pe Suhaga, Jaani Dost, even The Burning Train were box office failures.

They were not known as a famous pair like the way Dharmendra-Amitabh Bachchan or Dharmendra-Shatrughan Sinha were, despite having only a few films together.

You have written that Asha Parekh once requested Dharmendra not to drink on set when he was shooting with her.

Yes, Ashaji herself told me this. She mentioned that he used to be a little afraid of her. Incidentally, her pairing with Dharamji was one of the most successful ones at the box office.

They had consecutive superhits like Aaye Din Bahar Ke, Shikar, Mera Gaon Mera Desh, and Aya Sawan Jhoom Ke.

Samadhi, which was Dharamji's home production, was another success.

Ashaji told me, 'That simple boy from the village never really changed' and that was true.

Tell us about Hema Malini and Dharmendra's relationship, personally and professionally.

Their marriage took place secretly. (Journalist) Bharti Pradhan stumbled upon the information by chance because her family shares the same priest as Hema's.

The priest hadn't realised that she wasn't just a journalist, but a journalist with considerable influence in the industry.

One of the dignified aspects of their relationship is that Hema reportedly told Dharamji that she would never disturb his first family.

For years, there was a bit of tension, which was understandable.

But when Hema had an accident (in 2015), Sunny (Deol) went to Mathura to see her. Hopefully, things are fine between the families now.

It is perhaps the most dignified second marriage I have ever seen, not only in films, but also in life.

Dharamji himself told me once that his first wife Prakash Kaur was looking for a match for Esha at that time.

Their work relationship began with their early films and deepened during the making of Sholay.

Their first proper meeting was at a premiere where Shashi Kapoor was present.

On the sets of Sholay, he began bribing the junior members of the unit so that certain shots could be prolonged. He used to give them small signals, and money because he wanted to spend more time with her.

There must have been many emotional upheavals.

I remember a headline from when I was in school, 'Hema To Marry Jeetendra.'

I was a Jeetendra fan too, largely because of the songs in his films, and I remember being quite happy about that announcement.

Eventually, people intervened and made them understand because Jeetendra was already engaged at the time.

What does Dharmendra's death mean to the Hindi film industry?

Dharmendra's death means a colossal loss to everyone, his friends, family, fans, cinema and to what is known as good natural acting, which does not get shackled by method acting.

He just flowed seamlessly into every role, whether it was a ghost, a politician, a professor, a dacoit, a criminal, a don, or a commissioner.

Dharmendra was a brilliant actor, but an even better human being.

'In A Relationship, We Must Help Each Other Grow'

Vijay Varma reflects on all things love after starring in the old school romance film, Gustaakh Ishq.

He tells "I believe in a respectful, thoughtful courtship."

How would you evaluate your career so far?

My journey has been steady and honest.

I have tried to grow with every role, stay grounded, and keep learning.

The love I've received makes me feel I'm moving in the right direction, but I also know there's so much more to explore.

If anything, Gustaakh Ishq has pushed me to raise my own expectations and evolve even further as I have stepped out of my comfort to try something new.

I'm enjoying being instinctive about my choices and my career.

You seem at home playing the aspiring poet in Gustaakh Ishq, quite a change of image from your other roles.

I have enjoyed stepping into this new role, especially because my fans had been wanting to see a different side of me.

I have always been drawn to the beauty of poetry, the way it lets you pour out emotions so honestly and delicately.

I grew up watching actors who carried that kind of emotional depth so effortlessly, and it left a lasting mark on me.

So feeling all the love and appreciation has been incredibly meaningful.

Gustaakh Ishq feels very old world and quaint. What was it like for you to enter this world?

It felt calm and beautiful.

I have seen the best of both worlds.

I was there when letters, postcards and landline phone calls were the main form of communication.

Now, we can video call anytime.

While filming, I often thought about how, even without modern technology, people still turned to one another.

Immersing myself in that timeline, I realised how much time there was to truly discover and understand people.

I had the space to invest in my character, Pappan, and build his chemistry with Minni and Baba through genuine interactions.

I think I can honestly romanticise living in such an era, away from the hustle, bustle, and noise of social media.

I enjoy making gestures, big or small, based on what makes my partner and me feel comfortable.
I believe in a respectful, thoughtful courtship.

In a relationship, I think we must help each other grow and move forward, while treating one another with genuine love and respect.

What was it like working with Naseeruddin Shah? Did he offer you any insights on acting?

Working with Naseer sir is one of the best things I'll take away from this film.

Collaborating with an actor of his caliber and stature is rare and truly precious and I'm grateful for the chance.

During the shoot, we had long conversations, many chais and meals. We spoke about our mutual love for the craft of acting.

I even drew his sketch, and he graciously posed and signed on it.

Manish Malhotra turns producer with this film. Is he as good at this as he is in dressing up people?

Absolutely! Critics and audience alike have hailed Manish's creative lens.

He brings the same attention and eye for detail to producing as he does to fashion.

He understands emotions, aesthetics, and storytelling in an instinctive way.

Watching him produce the film with such clarity, childlike enthusiasm and audacity made me appreciate him even more.

In the era of Chaava and Animal, where does Gustaakh Ishq fit in?

I think Gustaakh Ishq stands on its own because it leans into emotion, poetry, and human connection, something quieter but deeply felt.

At a time when everything is loud and high octane, this film gives you space to pause and reflect.

It's rooted in relationships, longing, and tenderness.

So rather than fitting into the same lane, it creates a lane of its own.

What do we see you in next?

My new series Matka King is on the way.

Hansal Mehta and I will start a new project in December.

There are a few projects I'm reading.

'Rajinikanth Never Jokes About His Superstardom'

Chaalbaaz Director **Pankaj Parashar** rewinds to the time he spent with Rajinikanth in Chennai, before the film released in 1989.

Among his many memories of the Thalaiva is one of how one day, past midnight, Rishi Kapoor wanted to eat Chinese.

When the filmmaker pointed out to him that all the hotels would have closed, the actor told him, 'Call your friend, Rajinikanth.'

Pankaj recounts, "Rajini sir took us to a restaurant which had downed its shutters. But when the waiter, peeping through the glass, saw it was Rajini sir knocking, he threw open the door and we were welcomed royally. All four chefs were woken to attend to us."

We celebrate Rajinikanth's 75th birthday on December 12 with interesting anecdotes from the sets of Chaalbaaz.

First meeting at Film City Studio's makeshift canteen

Growing up, I watched a lot of Rajini sir's films.

We would get video cassettes of his South films dubbed in Hindi, which were an entertaining watch.

We would toss a cigarette up in the air and try to catch it between our lips, like we had seen him do on screen.

Later, I would often do it at the shoot of Chaalbaaz with Rajni sir sitting next to me.

I was mostly unsuccessfully and he would have a good laugh.

His trademark gimmick with googles was also much imitated.

His first Hindi film that I watched was T Rama Rao's Andhaa Kanoon, a thrilling ride with Rajini sir aptly cast as the avenger, Vijay Singh.

Our first meeting was in Mumbai, at Film City Studio's makeshift canteen for the stars.Vinod Khanna sir, Rishi Kapoorji and Rajini sir were sitting there when I walked in, a handi of biriyani which had come from someone's house was kept on the table.

I knew Vinod sir, having directed him for a few days in a film that eventually did not get made, and walked up to him to say, 'Hello'.

> 'Whether it is Rajini sir or Shah Rukh Khan or Dilip Kumarsaab, these stars are blessed with a cosmic energy.'

Suddenly, all three jumped to their feet, and turning, I saw that Sridevi, who was also at the studio shooting for Roop Ki Rani Choron Ka Raja, had entered the room.

Bowing courteously, they greeted her with a 'Hello ma'am'.

Smiling shyly, she responded with a

> 'It's a phenomenon that is hard to describe, but it makes you fall in love with them.'

muttered, 'Hello'.

After she left, everyone agreed unanimously that she was a powerhouse talent.

'I never met Rajini sir for a narration'

The production process of Chaalbaaz is every director's dream, but one not many get to live it.

I was lucky that A Poorna Chandra Rao decided to produce this remake of Ramesh Sippy's Seeta Aur Geeta with me as the director.

I was spoilt silly, sent me to a holiday home to write, while he decided the stars and got their dates.

I never met Rajini sir for a story sitting or a narration because there was no complete script.

Kamlesh Majumdar and Kamlesh Pandey had written 70 per cent of the dialogues and we had blocked off the script, but that was it!

When I flew down to Chennai, there were two guys waiting for me at the airport and I was driven to a five-star hotel.

At the studio, all I had to do was concentrate on my work.

Someone would be sitting with a book, keeping track of the production.

He would note down who came at what time, details of every shot taken through the day, and the like, and give me a report every evening.

Since the mind was relaxed, the shoot was fantastic!

"Aaj Sunday hai, din mein daaru peena ka din hai' was my contribution'

Both Sridevi and Rajani sir improvised on the Chaalbaaz set.

Take, for instance, the now-iconic scene where Rajini sir ends up drinking gaslet

(kerosene) instead of daaru (liquor).

He was the one who had insisted on adding nimboo (lime) and namak (salt) when mixing his drink.

When you see the scene, you will see the jump cuts, not very common those days.

Sridevi, in answer to his query in the film, 'Manjuji, iss mein kya hai ji?' (What's in this, Manjuji), came up with the line, 'Iss mein bahut badbuwali cheez bhari thi, to maine phek di ji (There was some very smelly stuff inside so I threw it out).'

She also suggested the jadhoo (broom) in the flower vase remark.

'Aaj Sunday hai, toh din mein daaru peena ka din hai (Today is Sunday, the day to drink)' was my contribution.

Rajini sir suddenly asked me to think of a drinking song from a yesteryear movie which would convey his good mood as he sat down to his Sunday drinking session. I remembered how up North, my buddies would say that Sunday is special because you are home and can drink during the day.

I suggested, 'Aaj Sunday hai, toh din mein daaru peene ka day hai'; din being the operative word.

Twenty-five years later, when I was in Delhi, I heard four of my North Indian buddies crooning the same line and had the pleasure of telling them it was 'my line'.

'When we were shooting the Chaalbaaz climax, Rajini sir was reading Autobiography Of A Yogi'

There were other instances when Rajini sir proved what a spontaneous actor he is.

Like offering Sridevi the hand towel on his shoulder, when Manju asks for the cloth covering the thali she has brought him.

Or his crack about Anju at the police station, 'Maine bola tha na yeh crack hai (Didn't I tell you she was crack).'

I believe that whether it is Rajini sir or Shah Rukh Khan or Dilip Kumarsaab, these stars are blessed with a cosmic energy.

It's a phenomenon that is hard to describe, but it makes you fall in love with them.

Rajesh Khanna had it the most, but lost it after a while.

But while Shah Rukh, with his irrepressible sense of humour, will joke that it as his 'superstar luminosity' when you point out that the light falling on him from behind is creating a halo, Rajini sir never jokes about his superstardom.

In fact, on the occasions when I would visit his home to discuss the next day's scenes, he would talk about his early days and how God has been really kind to him.

'He told me that I would make a film on Babaji'

He is a very spiritual guy, and when we were shooting the climax of Chaalbaaz in Goa, he was reading a book.

It turned out to be not pulp fiction as I had assumed, but Paramahansa Yogananda's 1946 classic, Autobiography Of A Yogi, which recounts his search for his guru, and his teachings on Kriya Yoga.

Rajini sir himself is a devout disciple of Mahavatar Babaji and has even visited his cave, as I discovered.

He had told me back then that I would make a film on Babaji.

Almost 20 years later, I directed Banaras: A Mystic Love Story.

The 2006 film is about a girl's search for the answers to the mysteries of life, death and the human psyche, with Naseer (Naseeruddin Shah) playing Babaji.

I have not approached Rajini sir for any film after Chaalbaaz, but we have met at the airport around three-four times, once when I was with Jeetendraji.

A few weeks ago, I met him at IFFI, Goa.

He was just entering, surrounded by around 20 security guards, but even in the melee he saw me and smiled.

I was surprised that he recognised me as his Chaalbaaz director even after all these years.

I wanted to tell him about my film on Babaji, but it was too chaotic with all the crowds around, and I didn't get an opportunity. Maybe I will go to Chennai one of these days and meet him to tell him about Banaras.

'When Rishiji insisted on paying, Rajini sir smiled, "You can try"'

Talking of Chennai brings back a fond memory.

During the shoot of Chaalbaaz I was staying at Hotel Taj, but one evening, I had gone to Hotel Chola where I bumped into Rishiji.

We got chatting and past midnight, he suddenly said he wanted to eat Chinese.

Being a foodie, Rishiji would naturally want a fine dine restaurant.

When I pointed out to him that all the restaurants would have closed, he said, 'Call your friend, Rajinikanth.'

Those were landline days, and surprisingly, Rajini sir was game.

He said he would drive over and was there at our hotel in half an hour.

He took us to a restaurant which had downed its shutters, but when the waiter, peeping through the glass, saw it was Rajini sir knocking, he threw open the door and we were welcomed royally.

All four chefs were woken to attend to us.

Rishiji got his Chinese dinner and we chatted till 4 am.

While leaving, Rishiji insisted on paying.

Rajini sir smiled and said, 'You can try.'

When Rishiji offered, the owner folded his hands, stating firmly 'No sir, we cannot accept money from Rajni sir or his guests.'

That's Rajinikanth for you, an extremely modest and unassuming superstar, loved by millions, who will always shine bright.

'Villains Are The Most Interesting To Design For'

Before designers made their foray into Bollywood, film outfits would be tailored.

Madhav Agasti has designed outfits for over 400 movies in the last 50 years, including several iconic looks like **Mogambo** and Shahenshah.

He has also created outfits for Presidents and prime ministers.

In his memoir, Stitching Stardom For Icons, On And Offscreen, Mr. Agasti looks back at his career, and discusses tailoring for the greats.

"My journey is from a small town in Maharashtra to dressing up film legends, prime ministers, and Presidents. I've lived a life stitched together with hard work, faith, and gratitude,"

"I have never called myself a designer because I will always remain a tailor -- one who tried to bring dignity to his craft and insistence on the perfect fit."

You had a good bond with Amrish Puri and designed his costumes for Mr India's Mogambo and his Indiana Jones audition.

Amrishji was like an elder brother to me. He was strict on the outside, but with a big heart.

I made many of his costumes, but Mogambo became iconic.

We discussed that look so many times.

He wanted something grand, but not cartoonish. The golden uniform, the collar, the detailing -- we built it, piece by piece.

'Every film had its challenges, but Mr India, Sadak and Gandhi were the toughest.'

When he was auditioning for Indiana Jones And The Temple of Doom, I made his costumes for a look test taken by Steven Spielberg.

He called me later and said, 'Madhav, they loved it!'

That joy in his voice was priceless!

You have designed for other screen villains too like Gulshan Grover's Bad Man (Ram Lakhan) and Sadashiv Amrapurkar's Maharani (Sadak).

Villains are the most interesting to design for!

You get to play with personality, texture, and imagination.

For Bad Man, we wanted Gulshan Grover to look dangerous yet stylish -- sharp lines, bold colours, swag.

For Maharani, it was a challenge.

The character was complex -- part feminine, part menacing. We used rich fabrics but aged them, added subtle distressing. Small details made the character unforgettable.Amjad Khan was a true friend. I once insisted on visiting a village called Dongaon in Maharashtra for a political event.

The whole village gathered to see 'Gabbar Singh'! He met everyone with warmth, sat under a tree, had chai, and told me, 'Now I know where your humility comes from.' I'll never forget that.

You designed Amitabh Bachchan's look in Shahenshah.

Shahenshah faced delays due to the political situation.

Balasaheb Thackeray played a pivotal role in getting the film released.

When I finally saw Amitabh Bachchan on screen in that iconic outfit, it made the wait worthwhile.

Why did you give up designing for films?

Amrish Puri's death was a personal loss for me.

We had shared so many years, so many stories, so many fittings.

After he passed away, I lost interest in designing for films. It didn't feel the same anymore.

I realised I had done everything I wanted to do in cinema. It was time to focus on personal clients, on tailoring, on creating timeless pieces rather than chasing films.

But even today, whenever I see Mogambo on screen, I feel emotional.

It brings back everything -- the laughter, the arguments and the friendship.

Yash Chopra helped you find a footing in the film industry.

Yes, Yashji played a very big role in my journey.

I had done some work for one of his assistant directors, and Yashji happened to notice the fit of a jacket I had made.

He gave me a chance to work on costumes for most of his films.

He liked my discipline -- I was always on time, never argued, and delivered exactly as he wanted.

Tell us about your working relationship with actors like Sanjeev Kumar, Girish Karnad and Amol Palekar.

Sanjeev Kumar was not just a fine actor, he was a wonderful human being. Very simple, very sincere. I designed many of his costumes.

At a dressing trial of a tuxedo for late veteran actor Amrish Puri

When he passed away, it felt like losing a dear friend.

The day of his funeral was on the same day as the inauguration of my second shop. I couldn't bring myself to celebrate, so I postponed it.

Girish Karnad and Amol Palekar were brilliant minds -- they brought theatre discipline into cinema. Working with them was like attending a masterclass in storytelling.

Rakesh Bedi, Johnny Lever and Paresh Rawal have spoken very highly of you.

Rakesh Bedi has been a client and friend for decades.

Johnny Lever is full of energy. He would always come for outfit trials with a big smile and make everyone laugh in the shop.
Paresh Rawal is a perfectionist. He knows exactly what he wants and appreciates craftsmanship.

They have all achieved so much, and yet remained humble.

You worked with the Kapoors too, as well as Dev Anand, Dilip Kumar and Pran.

The Kapoors were like royalty -- full of grace and warmth.

Dev Anand was pure class, very particular about the details.

Dilip Kumarsaab carried quiet dignity. Dressing him up felt like dressing Indian cinema itself.

'Mr India needed imagination, Sadak needed sensitivity and Gandhi demanded historical authenticity.'

Pransaab wore every outfit with pride and precision.

You have worked on over 400 films. Which was the toughest?

Every film had its challenges, but Mr India, Sadak and Gandhi were the toughest.

Mr India needed imagination, Sadak needed sensitivity and Gandhi demanded historical authenticity.

You did not take credit for Gandhi.

Yes. I worked on some of the Indian costumes. I didn't take credit because at that time, I needed the money.

When I saw the film later and recognised my work, that quiet satisfaction was enough.

You once visited your hometown Mehkar in Maharashtra with Rajesh Khanna.

Rajesh Khannaji was larger than life. The people in Mehkar couldn't believe it! He met everyone like an old friend.

Later he told me, 'Now I see where your roots are.' That line meant everything to me.

That's my journey -- from a small town in Maharashtra to dressing up film legends, prime ministers, and Presidents.

I've lived a life stitched together with hard work, faith, and gratitude.

I have never called myself a designer because I will always remain a tailor -- one who tried to bring dignity to his craft and insistence on the perfect fit .

Besides actors, you have stitched clothes for politicians like Farooq Abdullah, Ghulam Nabi Azad and L K Advani.

Each of them had a distinct style.

Farooq Abdullah liked elegance, sharp, and simple lines.

Ghulam Nabi Azad preferred classic Indian wear, always very neat.

Advaniji was very particular -- the fit had to be perfect. No compromise.

When you work with such people, you understand discipline in a different way. They value your time, they respect your skill, and they never forget your work.

For a star, you dress the character. For a politician, you dress the person.

An actor's look changes with every film -- it's part of the story. But a politician's clothes become his identity.

So with politicians, you have to think long-term -- comfort, respectability, and consistency. The colour, the fabric, even the pocket placement, everything carries meaning.

Balasaheb Thackeray helped you a lot.

Balasaheb was one of a kind -- sharp, witty, and deeply loyal to those he trusted.

He had a keen eye for detail.

He knew fabrics, cuts, even the fall of the cloth.

Over time, our bond grew personal.

He respected hard work, and once you earned his trust, he never forgot you.

His support gave me courage in my early years in Mumbai.

You have made clothes for Maharashtra politicians like Sharad Pawar, Vilasrao Deshmukh, Narayan Rane, Gopinath Munde.

Each of them had a distinct personality and dressing style.

Narayan Rane liked crisp tailoring, very structured and clean.

Gopinath Munde was more traditional. He preferred comfort and simplicity.

Sharad Pawar had a commanding presence; his clothes had to reflect authority.

Vilasrao Deshmukh was a true gentleman -- warm, grounded, always smiling.

For me, stitching for them was not just work. It was a matter of pride to represent Maharashtra's leadership through my craft.

You stitch clothes for Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis even today. He wrote the foreword for your book.

Our association goes back many years to Nagpur.

When I requested him to write the foreword for Stitching Stardom, he immediately agreed.

He understands the value of tradition, of work done by hand. His words in the book mean a lot to me and my family.

You have dressed Presidents and prime ministers.

It was a great honour.

Narasimha Raoji was simple and dignified.

President Pranab Mukherjee and Ram Nath Kovindji were gentle and respectful.

Designing for such leaders felt like serving the nation through my craft.

How did you start your tailoring career?

I was born in Nagpur. I left home to find work and learn the craft seriously.

I went wherever there was opportunity, from Gwalior, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Kolkata -- each place taught me something new.

In those days, survival was a challenge.

I didn't have money or contacts, just my hands and a pair of scissors.

I used to work long hours in small tailoring units, learning, observing, understanding what customers liked.

Sometimes I slept in the shop itself. But I never complained.

My first visit to Mumbai was not to settle down. I came to see how the tailoring business worked in a big city.

I wanted to understand the difference -- the fabrics, the finish, the customer's taste.

After that, I went to Calcutta because at that time, it was a big hub for tailoring, especially for films and theatre.

I wanted to polish my skills, so I would observe senior cutters and how they shaped the garments.

Calcutta gave me that refinement.

How did you start tailoring for Bollywood?

When I came back to Mumbai, I had nothing, just my bag and my scissors.

I lived on the streets.

Soon, I got a job in a famous tailoring shop.

Slowly, through word-of-mouth and the support of a few film stars, I started my small shop.

One day, I got a chance to work on a full costume, and that changed everything.

The production team liked my work, and soon I started getting calls from assistant directors and stylists.

Danny Denzongpa was one of the first big stars I personally took measurements for.

I was nervous -- my hands were shaking! But Danny was very kind and humble.

After I made his outfit, he came back and said, 'Perfect fit.' That gave me so much confidence.

Sunil Dutt came to the school you attended in Nagpur as a chief guest. He also inaugurated your first store in Mumbai.

That's a very special memory. The school's management wanted Sunil Dutt as chief guest for their annual day.

I had worked with him in many films, and that's why I requested him to come to Nagpur. He agreed instantly.

Duttsaab also inaugurated my first store in Dadar (north central Mumbai).

You worked in the South Indian film industry. Was it difficult?

Very difficult. The South industry had its own ecosystem, its own teams and traditions.

I didn't know the language or the people.

What worked in my favour was my discipline.

Once they saw the quality of my work and the respect I had for deadlines and detailing, they accepted me.

After that, I started doing regular projects for Tamil and Telugu films.

They are very professional. Once you prove yourself, they stay loyal.

'I Didn't Want To Do Bigg Boss, But...'

JioStar's South Unbound event served as the launchpad for several new original projects on the streaming platform. The occasion brought together the hosts of the region's Bigg Boss shows.

Mohanlal has anchored Bigg Boss Malayalam since its inaugural season; Nagarjuna, took over as host of Bigg Boss Telugu from its third season; Vijay Sethupathi has been steering Bigg Boss Tamil since its eighth season.

The event in Chennai was attended by movie legend-MP Kamal Haasan and former movie producer and Tamil Nadu's current Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin. Kamal Haasan hosted the first seven seasons of Bigg Boss Tamil.

"Today, stories are truly screen-agnostic. They travel with the viewer. The audience has become the platform. When that happens, the relationship between the medium and the message changes forever," Kamal Haasan told the gathering.

"Stories do not belong to any screen; they always travel with the listener and belong to people."

"A film rooted in coastal Karnataka folklore like Kantara can electrify the whole country. A Malayalam mystery like Drishyam, where an ordinary man outwits an extraordinary power, crosses borders effortlessly. A Telugu saga like Baahubali or Pushpa becomes everyday vocabulary from Mumbai to Malaysia. And from Tamil Nadu, the relentless manhood of Vikram or the tender courage of Amarnath shows that what truly travels are not budget but sincerity."

JioStar turned the spotlight on South India's creative boom at a glittering Chennai gala, declaring a Rs 4,000 crore (Rs 40 billion), five-year commitment to supercharge the region's media-and-entertainment ecosystem.

Mohanlal shared insights on the evolving landscape of South Indian digital storytelling.

"This is helping all the budding artists, directors and producers who have good content. We are from a small state, Kerala, and it makes us very happy to see us doing extremely well. Thank you very much.""I have completed seven seasons of Bigg Boss. It is not a drama, but a beautiful show of positivity. There is a lot of criticism, but the show carries a lot of entertainment, emotion and discipline. It can inspire and bring people together. I'm lucky, it's like an addiction and I have signed on for another two years. Most contestants who leave the show become stars," Mohanlal added.

"When I heard about the Rs 4,000 crore plan," Nagarjuna said, "I thought it's a fantastic opportunity for young talent."

"Content is King. I didn't want to do the first season (of Bigg Boss) at all, but I got addicted to it. I am really enjoying it. What makes me happy is that even contestants eliminated in the first week become stars -- they come to me and say they've bought their first car or first apartment."

JioStar showcased a content lineup that includes an adaptation of the Hindi series Aarya titled Vishakha starring Kajal Agarwal, and new originals Kaattaan starring Vijay Sethupathi and Pharma featuring Nivin Pauly.

On the movie front, Lucky The Superstar and Kenatha Kaanom were announced.

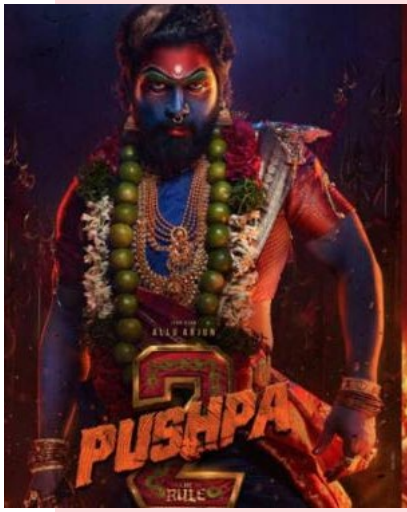
The streamer's South Unbound showcase also gave a sneak peek at what's next for the platform. Returning scripted series include Kerala Crime Files Season 3, Save the Tigers Season 3, Heartbeat Season 3 and The Good Wife Season 2.

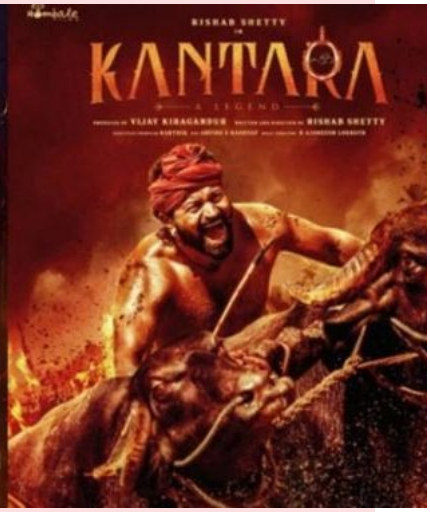
A fresh batch of originals is on the way: Cousins and Kalyanams, Moodu Lantharlu, LBW – Love Beyond Wicket, Resort, Secret Stories: ROSLIN, Lingam and Vikram on Duty.

On the reality front, Bigg Boss rolls out in Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada, while new formats like Comedy Cooks, Mad for Each Other, Second Love Debut and Roadies gets its first Telugu production.

Why OTT Wants To Dub South Films

'For OTT platforms, securing dubbed rights often makes greater business sense, enabling them to serve diverse regional audiences more effectively.'





With the rise in prominence of pan-Indian films and streaming platforms focusing on sustaining subscriber stickiness, dubbed rights for South Indian films are expected to rise up to 10 per cent next year as they attract eyeballs beyond their mainstay markets with compelling storylines and talent.

For prominent South films like S S Rajamouli's RRR, Rishab Shetty's Kantara, action-thriller film series KGF, the Allu Arjun starrer Pushpa: The Rise and Pushpa 2: The Rule, the Hindi-dubbed rights are as high as their original-released languages, said a producer on the condition of anonymity.

Apart from major pan-Indian South Indian film releases from prominent actors, the producer expects the general dubbing rights to rationalise, which significantly rose after Pushpa 2: The Rule's release last year.Earlier, the dubbed rights of South Indian films were considered 'library fillers' or inexpensive content acquired to keep channels running round the clock.

Over the last two to three years, South films have become a mainstream content category in Hindi-speaking markets, as per industry experts.

This has resulted in dubbing rights for South films expected to grow in the range of eight to 10 per cent in 2026, according to an industry expert.

Multi-language packages now routinely see higher value than single-language deals for mid-tier titles and top-tier releases, the industry expert added.

Industry estimates indicate that revenue from the sale of dubbed streaming and satellite rights has more than doubled over the past seven years, said Chandrashekar Mantha, partner, media and entertainment sector leader, Deloitte India.

The surging popularity of South Indian stars has also reshaped production strategies, prompting studios to design slates that pair leading talent from both the South and Bollywood to maximise appeal across a truly pan-India audience.

This also comes at a time when streaming platforms are focusing on the Southern region to attract new subscribers, with a larger content slate for the region.

"For OTT platforms, securing dubbed rights often makes greater business sense, enabling them to serve diverse regional audiences more effectively," said Mantha, adding that the demand for Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada-language content continues to grow, driven by compelling storytelling and strong viewer engagement."This strategy can lift pricing by 12 per cent to 25 per cent, depending on the strength of the content," Mantha added.

But even as streaming platforms like Prime Video, JioHotstar, and SonyLIV are scaling South-origin content, the contribution of South-language dubbed films has decreased this year compared to 2024.

According to Ormax Box Office Reports, dubbed films accounted for 32 per cent of the overall Hindi box office in 2024, generating a total gross of Rs 1,453 crore (notably, Rs 886 crore of this was contributed by Pushpa 2: The Rule alone).

However, Sanket Kulkarni, head, business development, theatrical, Ormax Media, said that the share of dubbed films in 2025 (up to November 16) has fallen to 11 per cent, reflecting a marked reduction in reliance on dubbed titles as a driver of Hindi box office performance.

Even so, dubbed South films remain a low-risk, high-yield bet for OTTs, with the incremental cost of dubbing being small, and films often seeing higher watch-time per rupee than many originals, said Raghav Anand, partner and leader, media and entertainment, EY-Parthenon.

"OTT platforms, seeking high-repeat and high-completion content, have pushed up dubbing rights values for Telugu and Tamil titles by 30 to 50 per cent compared to 2021-2022.

"Producers increasingly close bundled multi-language rights upfront. For big-budget films, dubbed rights can now contribute 15 to 25 per cent of total non-theatrical revenue," he said.

Platforms like Prime Video and ZEE5 consistently see Hindi-dubbed versions of RRR, KGF, Kantara and similar blockbusters top their most-watched lists in North and West India, in some cases outperforming original Hindi films on completed watch hours and subscriber impact, he noted.

Streaming platforms will still invest in high-impact originals to build brand identity, , he said, while dubbed films offer one of the most cost-efficient return on investment levers for platforms today, on a title-by-title basis.

Bigg Boss 19's Malti Chahar opens up on casting couch encounters: 'Even a father figure tried to kiss me'

Malti Chahar discusses her unsettling experiences in the entertainment industry, highlighting the subtle nature of casting couch culture.

Malti Chahar, who was recently seen on Bigg Boss 19, has opened up about facing uncomfortable and unsettling experiences during the early phase of her acting career, shedding light on the subtle ways casting couch culture operates in the entertainment industry. Malti Chahar opens about terrible casting couch experiences

In a podcast conversation with Siddharth Kannan, Malti discussed her experiences with indirect advances from industry insiders and explained why drawing clear boundaries became essential for her survival and self-respect in the profession. She clarified that casting directors were never part of the problem, but recalled an instance involving a filmmaker who crossed professional limits. "They never say things directly. It's always hinted," she said, describing how such situations are often masked as casual or unspoken expectations.

Recounting one experience, Malti said that after attending a narration session with a well-known South Indian producer, she was later sent his hotel room number. She chose not to respond and deliberately avoided the meeting. When the producer later implied that she should understand how the industry functions, she said she pretended not to grasp the suggestion. "We never met after that," she added. The actor also recalled another incident that deeply disturbed her. What began as a seemingly innocent side hug during a farewell at a meeting turned into an unsolicited attempt to kiss her. Calling the moment shocking and inappropriate, Malti said she immediately stopped the person and severed all ties. The incident affected her further because she had looked up to the individual as a father figure. "That taught me never to put anyone on a pedestal," she said, adding that she confronted him before walking away permanently.

Malti talks about how she managed casting couch incidents

Speaking about how she protects herself in such situations, Malti noted that one's conduct often sends a message. She explained that discipline, clarity in communication and body language play a key role, though she acknowledged that standing firm can sometimes come at the cost of lost opportunities.

The OTT Battle Is For Audiences And Their Time

Only firms that have scale in content and a technology engine that drives its discovery and monetisation can compete,' explains Vanita Kohli Khandekar.

Ever since it got into streaming in 2007, Netflix has broken every rule in the media industry playbook.

It has dropped entire seasons of original shows in one go, kept advertising out of its originals like Squid Game, Stranger Things or Bridgerton yet priced itself at less than a third of cable TV in the United States.

With 302 million subscribers and $39 billion in revenues in 2024, it is the largest standalone streaming player in the world. There are, however, limits to pay-driven growth.

Now, as it seeks to scale up, Netflix is becoming more like the legacy media players it took on. It introduced ad-supported programming and has gotten into sports.

Its co-Chief Executive Officer, President and Director Ted Sarandos even has a leading role in the merger drama unfolding in Hollywood currently.

Paramount Skydance, the $29 billion (2024 revenues) studio behind Titanic, Forrest Gump, and the Mission Impossible films, among others, had made three unsuccessful bids for rival Warner Brothers Discovery (WBD) by October 2025s

The last one was at $58 billion. Soon Netflix got into the game. On Friday, December 5, it announced a deal to acquire WBD at a price of $83 billion.

Just two days later, on December 8, Paramount launched a hostile takeover bid with an offer of $108 billion.

WBD, which made a revenue of over $39 billion in 2024, is a good firm to have.

It owns TV studios that have churned out huge hits like The Big Bang Theory, film studios that created Harry Potter, The Lord of the Rings and, more recently, Barbie.

Its biggest attraction for Netflix perhaps is HBO Max, the service behind Game of Thrones, The White Lotus and other iconic shows.

There might be some overlap but HBO Max's 128 million subscribers are coveted by everyone. Then there are Warner's linear networks like TNT and Discovery.

These were part of the deal with Paramount but not with Netflix. Warner's estimated earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation, or Ebitda, from streaming and films for 2026 is $3.3 billion.

Netflix is paying 25 times that, says a note from Media Partners Asia.

Paramount has come back with an offer that is 32 times that. Compare that to the much larger Disney, which is trading at 11 times its Ebitda of $19 billion.

Almost every analyst and commentator is questioning not the logic but the price at which this deal is being discussed.

Over the last two decades, most media mergers have disappointed -- they have ended up destroying brands and wealth because cultures simply don't match even if the 'synergies' look good on paper.

If it wins, Netflix has lined up $59 billion in debt, says Media Partners Asia. And if Paramount does, it will raise huge amounts too.

Both these firms are capable of building more programming IP or intellectual property and a bigger business in less than half the money they plan on spending.

Sure, acquisition could speed things up but at what price? What is this really about?

It is a battle for survival.

After legacy profit engines like TV decline, artificial intelligence (AI) enters the content stream to crash costs and revenues, tech-media has gobbled up all there is -- the guys who will remain, bloodied but standing are the ones with scale.

Funnily enough, this game began with Netflix and streaming. It is now playing out in its full glory.

Think about it.

The Internet and streaming have democratised entertainment, helped niches and long tails.

But it has also consolidated distribution and audiences to a point where it is

impossible to succeed if your show/story doesn't work across audience clusters globally.

The companies that own the largest distribution platforms -- Google with YouTube, Meta with Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp, Amazon with Prime Video/ Music, Apple -- are the ones that will rule the media game.

The battle is for audiences and their time; it doesn't matter what country, language or format they are on.

And only firms that have that scale in content and a technology engine that drives its discovery and monetisation can compete.

Watch Slow Horses, Ted Lasso, Shrinking, Tehran, Severance, Down Cemetery Road, Bad Sisters on Apple TV. These are some of the best shows I watched this year.

Each of them is superbly written, cast and produced, setting a bar that most streaming services will find hard to match.

Apple TV makes a loss of reportedly a billion dollars a year. For a $416 billion corporation that is a rounding-off error, say analysts.

That is one end of the business.

At the other end is YouTube, TikTok and others with millions of hours of video and shorts.

At over 2.85 billion users, YouTube is the new TV, and it combines a bit of everything that legacy media offers.

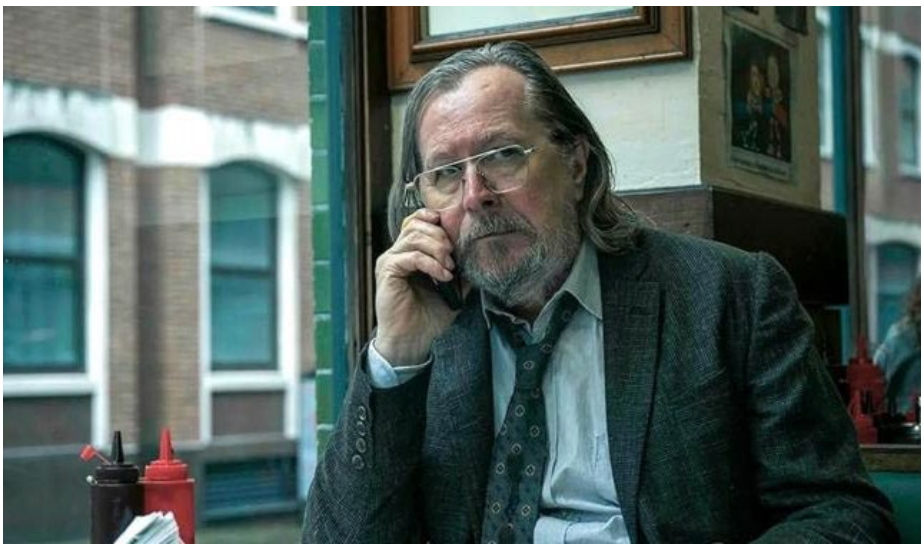
To compete in this landscape, scale is crucial, which is what Netflix and Paramount are seeking to build, albeit at too high a cost.

If Netflix and Warner combine, it creates a player with an estimated $70 billion in revenue. If Paramount and Warner do, that figure is $79 billion.

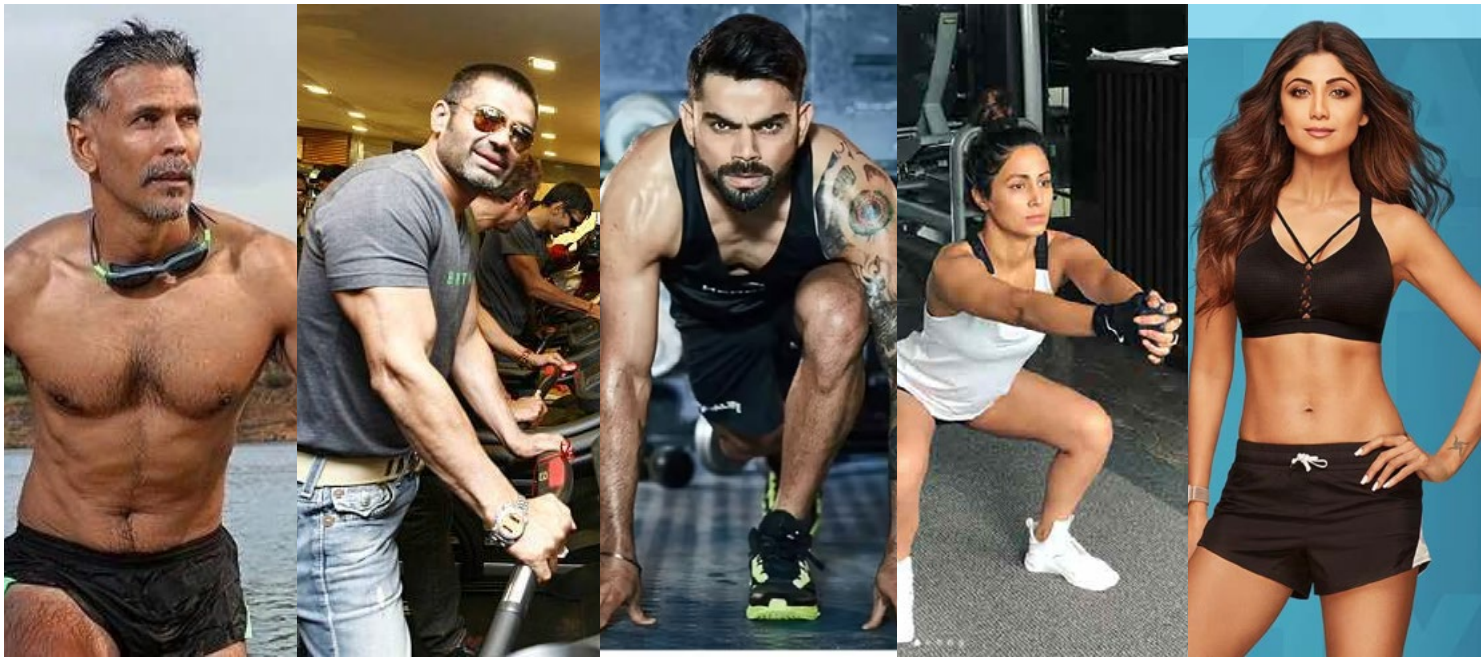
Either combination would be globally ahead of YouTube ($61 billion) and The Walt Disney Company, which excluding parks and experiences, is at $58 billion, according to the Media Partners Asia note. (These figures take into account proforma 2025 revenues for relevant streaming and studio businesses only).

Now imagine what could happen if Apple, Amazon or Meta with their gargantuan size got into the game.

There is enough material here to start writing a new version of HBO's Succession.



Fitness Secrets Of Celebrities To Inspire You This New Year 2025: Sunil Shetty, Hina Khan & Other Inspiring Fitness Heroes



As we step into 2025, the journey to better health and fitness continues to inspire millions worldwide. What better way to ignite your motivation than by learning from those who have mastered the art of physical and mental well-being?

India is a country that massively follows actors, sportspeople, and other celebrities. And why not? I mean, getting inspired by their fitness regime is like doing yourself a favour. In this article, we spotlight five remarkable fitness heroes who have not only achieved incredible personal transformations but also empowered others to prioritise health and fitness.

From their workout routines to their diet secrets and mindset strategies, these individuals offer invaluable insights to help you reach your goals. Get ready to be inspired and take a step closer to your healthiest, fittest self in 2025!

Make These 5 Celebrities Your Fitness Heroes This New Year 2025

Here are five fitness heroes and their health secrets to inspire you:

1. Fit At 50: Shilpa Shetty!

Many people aim for that kind of body at 50. Shilpa Shetty is one celebrity who has always encouraged people to do yoga to enhance their physical appearance and align their minds and soul. Her approach to fitness is both novel and profound; she advocates for accepting fitness as a joyful celebration of the body's potential and its uplifting effects on the mind rather than as a routine chore.

Shilpa Shetty Kundra, an active supporter of holistic well-being, highlights the importance of a balanced lifestyle and clean nutrition in attaining general health. In a recent Instagram post, she suggests that beginners start with easier core-strengthening exercises and work their way up to more intricate routines like hers.

ToneOp Fit's Live Yoga Sessions offer the perfect blend of convenience and flexibility with live yoga sessions tailored to your busy schedule. Experience holistic well-being as you master asanas, pranayama, and meditation with expert guidance, all from the comfort of your home!

A few yoga poses to work on your mental and physical health ar

Child's Pose (Balasana)	Calms the mind and stretches the lower back and hips.
Downward-Facing Dog (Adho Mukha Svanasana)	Boosts circulation, strengthens the body, and reduces stress. Read this blog to discover more benefits of Adho Mukha Svanasana.
Tree Pose (Vrikshasana)	Improves balance, focus, and mental clarity.
Bridge Pose (Setu Bandhasana)	Relieves stress, strengthens the back, and opens the chest.
Seated Forward Bend (Paschimottanasana)	Eases anxiety and stretches the spine and hamstrings.
Warrior II (Virabhadrasana II)	Builds strength and endurance while improving concentration.
Corpse Pose (Savasana)	Promotes deep relaxation and mental clarity.

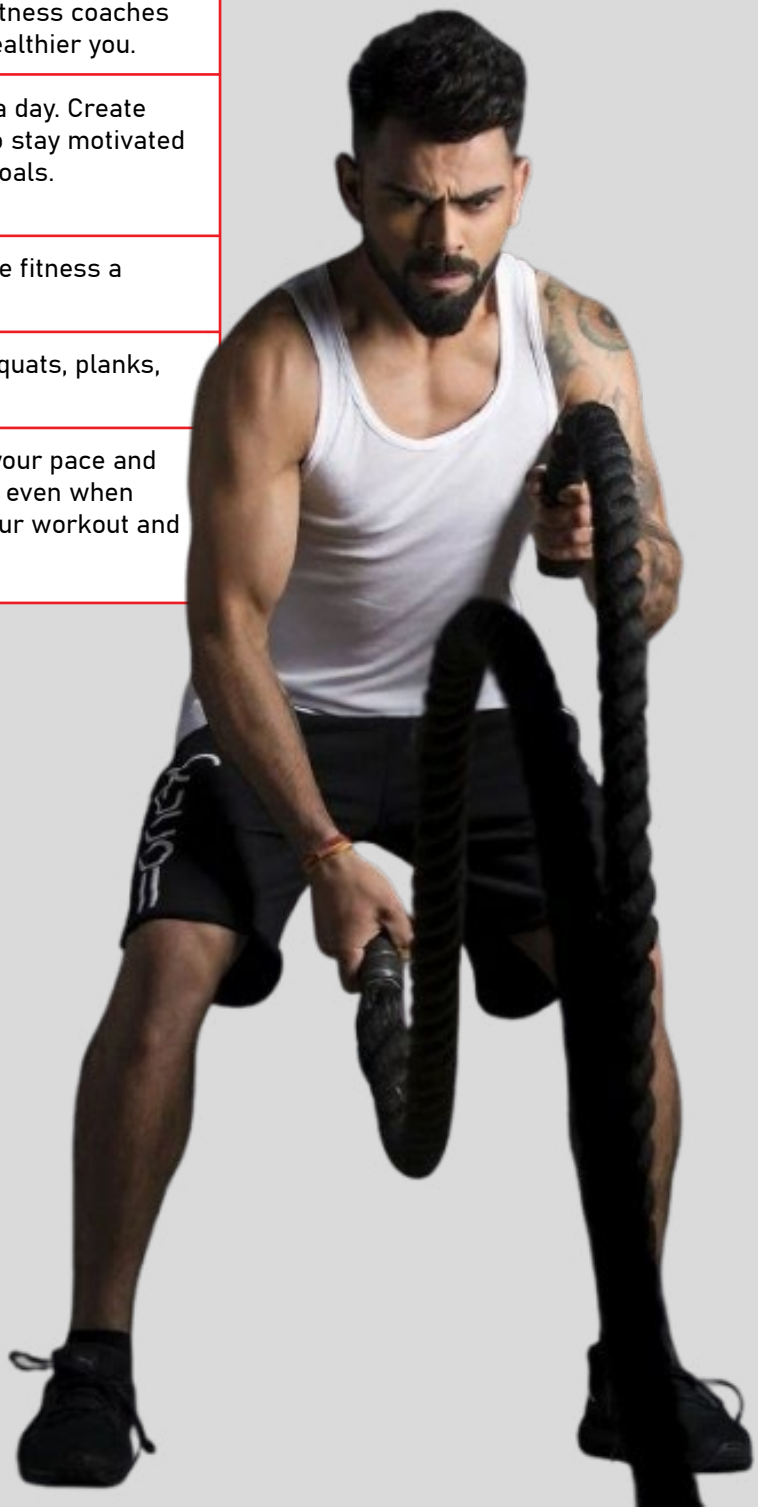
2. The On-Field And Off-The-Field Charmer: Virat Kohli

No better person than Virat Kohli, who sets an example for maximum success and longevity. The man who brought the Indian cricket team soaring victories that made the whole nation go crazy after him. But everything comes at a price. What price, you ask? Would you be okay eating the same thing every single day? Having cheat meals little to none? No parties, early bedtime and rigorous training? That is the real Virat Kohli. To shine on the field, he follows a rigorous diet and fitness plan off the field. Virat Kohli spends around four hours on the field, running around, and then bats for 3-4 hours, leading the chase with his mastermind tactics.

Virat Kohli spoke to a Sky Sports interviewer in 2021 and said, “I told myself, 'If you want to play cricket at the highest level, this is not the way you can manage.' From the next day onwards, I changed everything about my diet and the way I trained. From then on, it was an obsession,". He made a complete shift in his diet and training regime. 2012 was the year he decided to change; 2025 could be yours.

As a beginner, take these tips into consideration this New Year 2025:

Sign Up For Toneop Fit Diet + Fitness Plan	Let expert dietitians and fitness coaches pave the way towards a healthier you.
Set Realistic Goals	You can't be Virat Kohli in a day. Create achievable fitness goals to stay motivated and gradually set higher goals.
Consistency Is Key	Stick to a routine and make fitness a lifestyle choice.
Work On Your Strength And Flexibility	Indulge in exercises like squats, planks, squats, push-ups, etc.
Quit Alcohol And Smoking	These factors slow down your pace and harm your body internally, even when you are consistent with your workout and healthy eating habits.



3. The Brave Sher Khan: Hina Khan

Who doesn't know Hina Khan? If you didn't, you might have recently come across her on social media. Like a great warrior and the tag Sher Khan gave to her, Hina Khan is fighting stage 3 breast cancer. The actress has been updating us on her journey since receiving her diagnosis. Under her doctor's supervision, Hina continues to work out even throughout her chemotherapy sessions. That should be enough motivation to get on your fitness journey this New Year 2025.

Struggling with something so dangerous takes a toll on your mental health, too. And it's not just you who is suffering; your loved ones are a part of this challenging process. Even when you are focusing on your physical health, mental health is not to be ignored. Your body, mind and soul should be in alignment.

Below are some exercises and their benefits Hina Khan included in her workout session:

Dumbbell Sumo Squats	They target the muscle groups in your lower body and lower back and improve balance by activating your core muscles.
Cable Rows	This exercise focuses on your shoulder muscles, improves grip strength, develops core stability, prevents injury pain and more.
Inchworms	They mainly focus on increasing flexibility in your hamstrings and strength in your shoulders and chest.
Cable Chest Flies	This exercise strengthens the chest, shoulders, and arm muscles and activates the abdominal and spine muscles.
Bent-Over Rows	This workout prevents the overdevelopment of the pushing muscles of the upper body.
Wrist Exercises With A Dumbbell	These types of exercises strengthen the wrist muscles from straining during heavy workloads.
Leg Extensions	They help to strengthen the knee joint, amongst other major benefits.
Shoulder Presses	Develop shoulder muscles and gain upper body strength by doing this exercise.

4. Age Is Just A Number With Sunil Shetty

These days, 30-year-olds look like 18-25-year-olds, and I know the goal is to look as young as Suniel Shetty at 63. With the lifestyle all of us have with our packed schedules, staying active has become the nigger challenge. A famous podcast of Suniel Shetty talking about his secrets to looking fine is making the rounds on social media, where he talks highly of his diet, training, and healthy habits for good health as the reasons for his fitness.

Suniel Shetty reveals his secret of staying young. He mentioned that 80 per cent of the diet, 10 per cent of training, and 10 percent of habits are included. The actor stated that he adheres rigorously to the schedule of waking up between five and six in the morning. He likes to work out first thing in the morning. Additionally, he is committed to sleeping by 9 or 10 p.m. to give his body proper rest. He further added that he sticks to home-cooked meals and that he rejects all 'whites' in his food, such as white rice, sugar or salt.

ToneOp It's Balanced Diet Weight Loss Plan can help you curate personalised meal plans that you can cook at home and get on a fitness journey with our expert dietitians. With New Year 2025 approaching, we are not getting any younger and now is the time to get on a health and wellness journey.

Here are a few tips to work on in 2025:

Balanced Diet	Eat a variety of whole foods, including fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and healthy fats.
Stay Hydrated	Drink plenty of water throughout the day to maintain energy and metabolism.
Get Enough Sleep	Ensure 7–9 hours of quality sleep each night for recovery and overall health.
Exercise Regularly	Aim for at least 30 minutes of physical activity daily, including cardio, strength training, or engaging in ToneOp Fit's Home Workout Sessions.
Manage Stress	Practice mindfulness, meditation, or hobbies to keep stress levels in check.
Avoid Sedentary Habits	Take breaks to move around, especially if you have a desk job.

5. Fit and Fabulous At 59, Milind Soman

Milind Soman has been the highlight of our screens since his modelling and acting days. The book Keep Moving, written on him, unveils various aspects of his life. He mentions that he has been the same weight since he was 19, 80-81 kilograms. That's 40 years. He does not follow a diet; most people eat way too much. So, portion control is an important phenomenon when it comes to maintaining a healthy body weight index, which has helped him be active," says Milind.

Even in the years that he gave up swimming to take up modelling and a lifestyle that involved hard drinking and smoking, Milind managed to keep his body as strong as steel wire. It was in 2004, when Milind heard of a marathon in Mumbai, that his sportsman's heart began to beat again. The 2023 Pankh Marathon has been the latest testimony of his active lifestyle.

Some key tips we can concur from his fitness regime to develop a healthy lifestyle in 2025 are:

Seasonal Fruits And Vegetables	Rather than buying expensive fruits and vegetables that are not in season in the name of diet, try filling your plates with seasonal fruits and veggies to attain the maximum benefits for your health. Check out this blog to discover the best foods for the winter season!
Portion Control	Eat smaller portions of every meal, try to calculate your calories and maintain a healthy calorie intake.
Keep Moving	Whatever your age may be, keep moving! Don't work yourself up more than your body can take. Sign Up With ToneOp Fit's 360° Transformation Plan to get 3-coach support for your health and wellness.
Find A Balance	Even if you are not following any diet, it is important to find a balance between healthy and guilty pleasure foods. Eat healthy 80% of the time, and maybe you can indulge in foods that you crave 20% of the time.
Eliminate Laziness	In some of his interviews, Milind Soman blames laziness as the biggest enemy when it comes to getting on a health and fitness regime. So, no more being a snob!

The Final Say

Celebrities frequently act as strong fitness role models, motivating millions of others with their commitment to well-being. Their inspirational tales of consistency, discipline, and transformation emphasise how crucial it is to put one's physical and mental health first. They inspire fans to embrace better lifestyles and challenge themselves by sharing their fitness journeys, routines, and advice.

Through creative exercises, well-balanced meals, and tips and tricks, these celebrities demonstrate that reaching fitness objectives requires dedication and perseverance. Their impact serves as a reminder that anyone can become the protagonist of their own tale and begin a life-changing fitness journey with the correct mindset this New Year 2025

FAQs

1. What is Milind Soman's fitness routine?

Milind Soman's fitness routine is a blend of running, bodyweight exercises, and a holistic approach to health. He said, "Every day, I spend 10 to 12 minutes exercising. I eat anything I feel like eating; I don't stick to any diet. The key is to avoid stress."

2. How does Shilpa Shetty stay fit?

Shilpa is well-known for her healthy eating choices and is a fervent supporter of natural foods. She loves making desi khana, which employs a lot of ghee, natural fats, seasonal veggies, and natural sources of sweetness for added health advantages, but she prefers to avoid highly processed foods.

3. How has fitness made Sunil Shetty look young beyond his age?

Sunil Shetty maintains a youthful appearance at 63 through a disciplined fitness routine and healthy lifestyle choices. His regimen includes a combination of cardio, weight training, functional training, yoga, and meditation, which keeps both his body and mind in peak condition. He emphasises the importance of diet, attributing 80% of his youthful look to healthy eating habits, such as avoiding processed foods and focusing on whole, nutrient-dense meals.

UPCOMING STAR, BHUPESH RASEEN EMERGING AS A POWERFUL VILLAIN IN BOLLYWOOD

Hindi Cinema has always been a land of great villains. Many of these villains have also enjoyed a lot of fan following. The tradition of villainy in Hindi cinema owes a lot to the folkloric traditions that abound in plentiful images of highly stylized images of larger-than-life villains.

There were days when the Hindi film industry villains relied on loud laughs. Bhupesh Raseen who performed calmly as a villain and surprised many by playing "Yusuf Khan" in the film, "Tiger of Rajasthan". With his performance, he break new ground that villains can also look calm, but still conceivably turn to be a powerful antagonist with the powerful expressions & performances. He made everyone question how thin the lines are between good and evil.

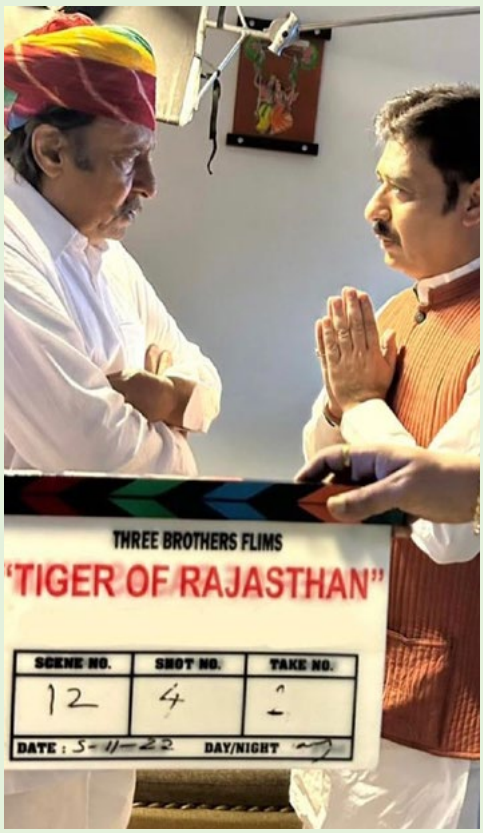
Bhupesh Raseen is an actor who raised the menace meter, delivering chilling performances that truly redefine the modern Bollywood villains. His performances making antagonists feel real and dangerous. He played a powerful antagonist who thrives on influence and manipulation rather than brutal actions.

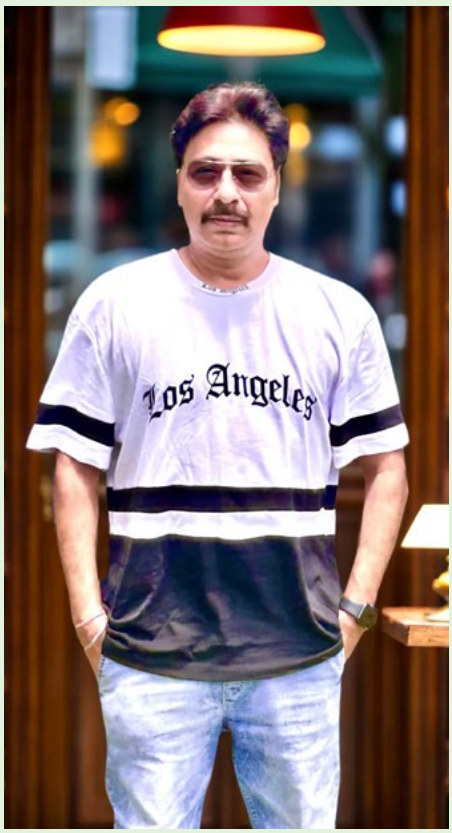
Bhupesh Raseen, who playing pivotal roles in Films & Webseries, has a connection with India's first superstar Rajesh Khanna. Rajesh Khanna and actor Bhupesh Raseen had been closest friend and soul brothers. Rajesh Khanna used to confide in his true friend & soul brother, Bhupesh. Bhupesh Raseen was used to be by the side of Rajesh Khanna always. Their relationship grew over two decades into a bond that went beyond blood ties. Bhupesh Raseen was always used to be by the side of Rajesh Khanna. Bhupesh Raseen is going strong in Hindi Cinema day by day. While talking to Global Movie, Bhupesh said, "with the blessing of Kakaji (Rajesh Khanna), my film career has started & taking off. My soul brother, Superstar Rajesh Khanna is always blessing me from up heaven. I can still feel Kakaji's presence with me and he is guiding me as my mentor & well-wisher."

Bhupesh played an important character "Bashir Hussain Zaidi-Diwan of Rampur" in KC Bokadia's 'Sardar: The Game Changer' and now KC Bokadia roped him in his upcoming webseries-serial project "Sanskar". Bhupesh Raseen expressed gratitude to Producer & Director-KC Bokadia for trusting him and roping him for an important role in his upcoming webseries-serial project "Sanskar".

Hindi Cinema Actor, Bhupesh Raseen has acted in the film, 'Tiger of Rajasthan' as a Villain. While talking to Global Movie about the film, Bhupesh Raseen said, "Tiger of Rajasthan was inspired from the real incidents and the dramatic conflicts and emotional turmoil indeed related to the audiences. From the bottom of my heart, I would like to thank the audience and film fraternity for appreciating my performance in the film."

Bhupesh Raseen has done cameo role in 'Nanak Naam Jahaz Hai' and 'The Rise of Sudarshan Chakra'. Both the films have been released and Bhupesh has earned appreciation for his performances. Bhupesh said "he is blessed to be a part of the devotional & family drama film, 'Nanak Naam Jahaz Hai'. Bhupesh has acted in T-Series Bhakti Sagar music videos, as the lead actor with playback voices of Udit Narayan & Suresh Wadkar." Bhupesh Raseen is keen on doing versatile roles. Bhupesh said, "As far as my roles are concerned, I like to perform as a villain, but open to do good character roles as well. I wish to perform in various genre cinemas including action, drama, comedy, suspense thriller."



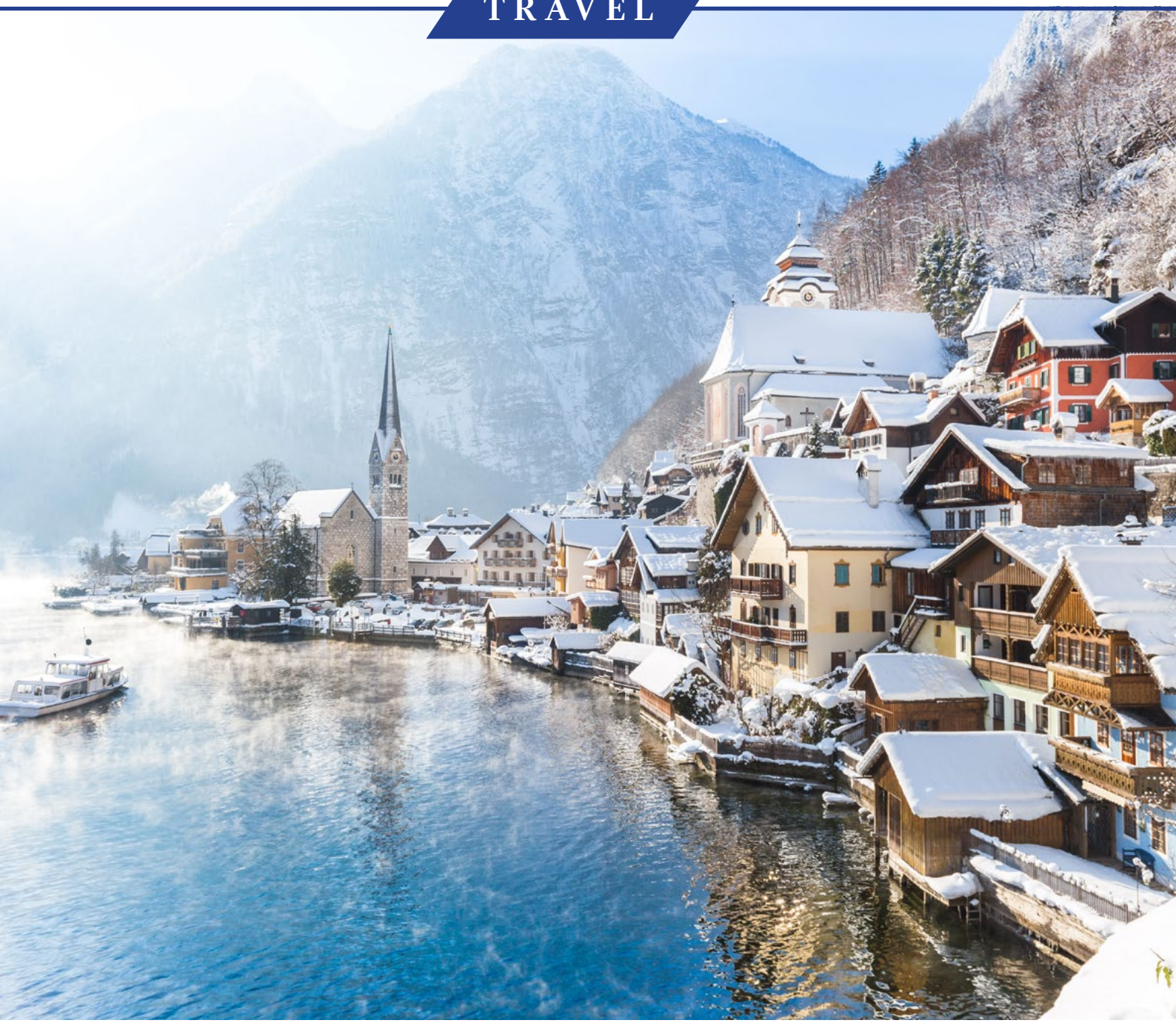


While talking to Global Movie, Bhupesh said, "The scope and style of the villain has evolved in Indian cinema, from the larger-than-life classic villains to the sleeker contemporary ones who enjoy popularity comparable to those of the lead heroes. Now Hindi Cinema's villains didn't rely on loud laughs, exaggerated cruelty, or dramatic monologues. Instead, the scariest antagonists are the ones who stay calm, composed and dangerously quiet."

Hindi Cinema Actor, Bhupesh Raseen said "One of my favourite Hindi movie villain is Gabbar Singh from 'Sholay.' Played by the legendary actor Amjad Khan, Gabbar Singh remains one of the most iconic villains in Indian cinema. His menacing laughter and powerful dialogues, left a lasting impact. Amjad Khan Sahib's portrayal of Gabbar Singh truly made him an unforgettable and larger-than-life antagonist in Bollywood history. Further Pran Sahib & Amrish Puri Sahib were two legendary pillars of Indian cinema, especially remembered for redefining powerful iconic villains to character roles. While they belonged to different generations, both carved a niche for themselves by redefining the role of the antagonist in Hindi Cinema, transforming villains into unforgettable cinematic legends. Later, Pran Sahib, Amjad Khan Sahib & Amrish Puri Sahib seamlessly transformed into a beloved character actor in films proving their incredible range. I wish to follow the footsteps of these legends."

Bhupesh said, "Hindi cinema has redefined villains, with powerful actors. The advent of digital streaming platforms has further revolutionized the portrayal of villains, offering long-format series that allow for character development unseen in the constraints of cinema's runtime. Antagonists are now, as central to the story as the protagonists, with their complexities and contradictions fully explored." Bhupesh further added, "while performing each & every character, actor has to live with it. I am in line with this. I never act, I simply bring out the real animal that's in me. Being an actor, my job is to express emotion as freely as possible. That's how you get connected with the audience. I will try to do my part well and God will do the rest. That's what I strongly believe."

Bhupesh is exploring South film industry and recently approached by few south film makers, says a source. He will soon be doing a Hollywood Film, 'Vampire vs Rawhide' as a villain. While talking to Global Movie, Bhupesh said, "A lot can go wrong when it comes to representing evil on screen. In cinema, villains have gone through it all – from excessively dramatic dialogue deliveries to nuanced portrayals of loneliness and a disturbed psyche. The journey of Bollywood villains from the caricatured evildoers of yesteryears to today's complex antagonists highlights the industry's growth and maturity in storytelling. One should be careful while selecting the role. I am also careful & selective."



The Best Winter Destinations in Europe

Winter in Europe is like a snow globe coming to life. The fantastical scenes of Christmas markets, the smells of roasted nuts, and the snow flocked chateaus make a dreamy scene. But the best part? Visiting Europe in winter time usually means you can find cheaper flights, accommodation, and less crowds.

Having many winters in Europe under my belt, I've selected my top 15 Winter destinations. I tried to narrow it down to 10, but there were just so many magical places that I had to include.

Whether you're after the Christmas spirit, a charming, snowy landscape, or a frolic through a castle, this guide to the best places in Europe for the colder months has it all. From the best places to go for Christmas or if you're wanting an escape this is the best of Europe.

Grab a hot drink and get ready for the best cities and places in Europe to spend winter in.

1. Zermatt, Switzerland

The falling snow was mesmerizing as I sat by the window, overlooking the quiet town below. Not a car in sight or a soul walking around – only skiers gliding down well worn paths. I was in Zermatt, Switzerland and the ever looming Matterhorn had yet to be seen. After days of not seeing this incredible mountain, the clouds finally parted, the snow lifted, and she stood proudly.

This beautiful and romantic city is one of the prettiest in Europe. It offers plenty of winter activities and is the perfect place to relax. I had one of my all time favorite stays in this charming place and I will remember it for years to come.

2. Strasbourg, France

There is no city in the world that transforms into a Christmas wonderland quite like Strasbourg. Every single window and lane is decorated from nearly top to bottom with lights and even stuffed animals. It's a gingerbread town come to life with the half-timbered houses and the lively Christmas markets, shopping, and the traditions of German Christmas markets spilling over from the nearby country. Check out my full guide for what to do in Strasbourg for Christmas. Since you're in the area I suggest taking a short trip over to Baden Baden, Heidelberg, or The Black Forest in Germany for the traditional markets.

3. The Austrian Alps

In the summer months you'll find miles of green and the sound of bells on cows as they roam the wide open hills. But winter frosts the ground and makes everything feel like a wonderland. The rough peaks of the alps are truly an incredible sight and the tall steeples from the churches in the towns below make you feel like you're stepping back in time.

My favorite towns in the alps are in the Wilder Kaiser area. I absolutely love the towns of Zöll, Ellmau, Going, and Kitzbuehel.

4. Lake Como, Italy

If you're wanting a warmer spot and lower prices for your European travels in winter then Italy is a great choice. The famous lake is perfect for wine lovers and those that want to get away from the crowds. Take a boat ride out on the water or visit nearby towns like Bellagio and Varenna. There's also an incredible light show that occurs from mid December to January 6.

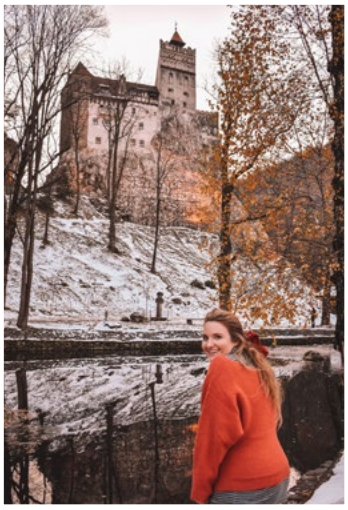
5. Rothenburg Ob Der Tauber, Germany

Rothenburg is a fully walled city dating back to the 12th century. If you're wanting the true romantic experience of traditional Christmas markets in Germany then look no further. Colorful buildings topped with snow are a real life fairy-tale setting. Here you'll find the German Christmas market museum so you can learn all about the traditions of this world famous tradition. Check out my full guide to Rothenburg here.

6. Transylvania, Romania

The home of Dracula is the perfect place for winter or Halloween vibes. You'll find surprisingly picturesque countrysides and incredible true stories of Vlad the Impaler, aka Dracula. Be on the look out for hidden gems in these pretty cities such as catching a traditional Romanian wedding. There are castles galore as well as some of the best food I've had. Plus it's very inexpensive, the people are wonderful, and the history interesting.

I recommend visiting Sibiu, Sighişoara, and Braşov for true Romanian traditions and beautiful surroundings. This underrated country is full of winding streets, stunning architecture, and delightful natural beauty making it worth the visit.



7. Iceland

The shoulder season in Iceland is amazing. A bit chillier, but so much more room to roam. Your chances of seeing the Northern Lights are much better in the winter (and fall). You'll fly into Reyjavik but PLEASE, please make sure you get out of town and explore the diverse landscape Iceland has to offer. The crowd-free waterfalls

Take a break from the cold and jump in a warm geothermal pool. And there's more than just the Blue Lagoon! Check out Hotpot Iceland to find out where a Hotpot is (a thermal spa or pool) near you.

I recommend heading there in early winter to be able to enjoy as much of the landscape as possible.

8. Maastricht, The Netherlands

Yes, you can of course visit Amsterdam, but consider heading to the cheery town of Maastricht. As one of the oldest cities in Holland you'll find a vibrant city with medieval architecture and historic cobblestone streets. I recommend taking a walking tour and warming up at a pub or over some divine waffles. “Pinky” is one of the best waffles I've had in my life! Located on the Southern tip of The Netherlands you can easily pop over to Liege, Belgium for some French cuisine.

9. London, England

I know what you're thinking: that it will be freezing and miserable. But London isn't really known for having particularly great weather. And London DECKS out its holidays like none other. Oxford Street is a feast for the eyes. There are string lights on every corner, bows as big as cars on shops, and you can skate in front of one of the prettiest buildings in the world. It's fantastic. There's even a Christmas market happening in Hyde Park.

Check out more winter wonderlands in London.

10. Prague, Czech Republic

Prague is a beautiful city no matter the season, but winter brings out some of the best in this city. A light dusting of snow covers the Old Town Square and the traditional Christmas markets make for the perfect backdrop. There are multiple markets throughout the city so you can go hopping from shop to shop for handmade goods and eat hot and delicious trdelinks.

11. Lucerne, Switzerland

I know, I know, another place in Switzerland? Yes. It truly is just that pretty. This impressive but small city is full of intimate cafes with soft lighting and delectable food. The covered bridge is the oldest in the world and stretches over the lake. Flanked by snow-capped mountains, filled with medieval architecture, and a beautiful lake setting, this peaceful town is wonderful when you're all bundled up.

Lucerne lends itself as a great getaway for those that want to relax or explore.

I had such a hard time narrowing down cities in Switzerland for Winter, but if you're looking for one more, check out Bern!

12. Copenhagen, Denmark

The Danish have a whole word and really, lifestyle, for the feeling of coziness: hygge. There's no better place to warm up by the fireside with a nice glass of red and a sheepskin throw as you chat over the weather. You can also get your fill of delicious seafood at Torvehallerne or gaze at the colorful buildings on the docks of Nyhavn. Copenhagen even takes it a step further and offers a winter culture month, Wondercool, which occurs in February and includes concerts in unusual venues, art shows, and culinary events.

There's quite a lot to see and do in Copenhagen so here's my guide to the top 15 things to do in the city. I also recommend taking a day trip over to Malmö, Sweden.

13. The Black Forest, Germany

The big cities are full of bright lights and beautiful Christmas decor. But you can't beat the natural and awe-inspiring beauty that is the Black Forest in Germany. It's inspired fairy-tales and stories throughout the centuries. The vastness of the mountains and the dense evergreen trees make for a beautiful scene. There are winter activities such as skiing and hiking or you can go into the nearby town of Sasbachwalden for coffee and cake. From here you can visit nearby Heidelberg, Strasbourg, and Baden Baden.

14. Rovaniemi, Finland

It's time to embrace the cold and head far north to the snowy wonderland of Rovaniemi. What better way to get into the holiday spirit than visiting the official home of Santa Claus? Located in the Arctic Circle this is one of the best places to go on a husky ride through a maze of evergreen and white. If you don't mind the cold temperature then this is the best way to spend your winter holiday.

15. Chamonix, France

One of the most gorgeous places in all of Europe with the tallest mountain in Europe, too! Mont Blanc towers over the picturesque town of Chamonix The Alps are stunning, especially covered in snow. But the town of Chamonix is bursting with great French culture and cuisine. This is the perfect place to enjoy winter activities or cozy up by the fire!

There are so many beautiful places in Europe it can be hard to choose, you might just have to move here. Like I did!

GLOBAL MOVIE

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January 2026

TAROT

Loveena Crystal Gaze

(Tea and Coffee Cup Reader, Tarot card reader)

ARIES
(March 21- April 19)

Angels are showering positive energy, Universe is bringing major changes in your life and Career. Keep going, Dont quit before miracle occurs. Love life will be interesting .

Angel msg - Magical energy is Surrounding you, Soar with happiness.

TAURUS
(April 20- May 21)

Universe is blessing you in your Career with new opportunities. Have faith, better things are coming your way. Wish fulfillment period ahead.

Angel msg- Fly high, don't descend, Angels are guiding you towards your dreams.

GEMINI
(May 22- June 20)

Work is interesting and full of Surprises. A trip out of town for career will be beneficial. Smooth road ahead. Deals will be Signed. Parents need your care and attention.

Angel msg - your desire is coming to fruition. Angels are Surrounding you.

CANCER
(June 21-July 22)

Time has come to collect your rewards from Universe. Angels are blessing you with success, happiness, prosperity. Sunshine days ahead for you. Love will bring surprises for you.

Angel msg- Success in business ventures is indicated. Universe is blessing you with Abundance.

LEO
(July 23- Aug 22)

Your Angels want you to know that a happy flow of Abundance is heading your way. You deserve this.Enjoy the blessings. Travel abroad is indicated for you. Money flow will be good.

Angel msg- A happy move to a new home is in the works bringing positive new energy.

VIRGO
(Aug 23- Sept 22)

Angels are helping you by giving you strength and courage and wrapping you in their protective embrace. Universe bestows generosity on you. Happiness awaits you now.

Angel msg- New blessings and love are coming your way. Ask and you shall receive from Universe.

LIBRA
(Sept 23- Oct 22)

Investments in property are highlighted. A longed for wish comes true. Finances are favorably highlighted. Celebration period ahead. Travel abroad for work is indicated. Welcome the new dawn in your life.

Angel msg- Miracles happen to people just like you. Love life blossoms.

SCORPIO
(Oct 23- Nov 22)

Trust in Angels, happiness awaits you. Your dreams are blooming very fast and will come to fruition. Positive energy will attract new clients. Let go of old energy. A property related deal will be finalized.

Angel msg- Heaven is sending you divine love to take away all your setbacks and troubles.

SAGITTARIUS
(Nov 23- Dec 21)

Rough phase is over, All your dreams will be fulfilled. Release your doubts to heaven. Stop worrying about finances. Embrace your hearts desire.

Angel msg- contracts will be Signed bringing financial gains.

CAPRICON
(Dec 22- Jan 20)

Aura is energized for financifinancial. Aim high,keep charging ahead. Doors are opening for you. Sudden travel plans are foretold. Keep charging ahead.

Angel msg- Your wishes are coming true.

AQUARIUS
(Jan 21- Feb 18)

Miraculous Solutions will come your way. All blocks, barriers will be removed from your life. Have faith in your creator. Visualise your dreams.

Angel msg- Make a wish and enjoy its manifestation.

PISCES
(Feb 19- March 20)

Something that you have been wishing for is on its way to you now. Your prayers for financial Abundance and security have been heard. Angels are helping you get what you need. Finally all setbacks are over in your Career.

Angel msg- Time for changes and new beginnings.

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