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RAJKUMMAR RAO

I'm Very Greedy And Hungry for work

PALAK JAISWAL

The Rejections Used To Shatter Me

TRINETRA HALDAR GUMMARAJU

I'm Grateful I'm Indian

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I JUST WANT TO BE ACTING FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE

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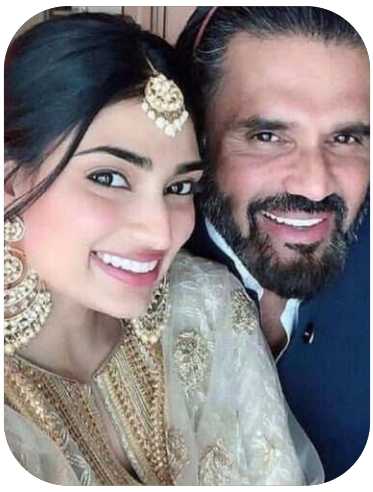
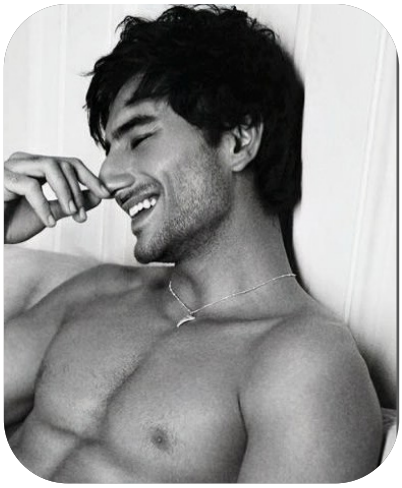
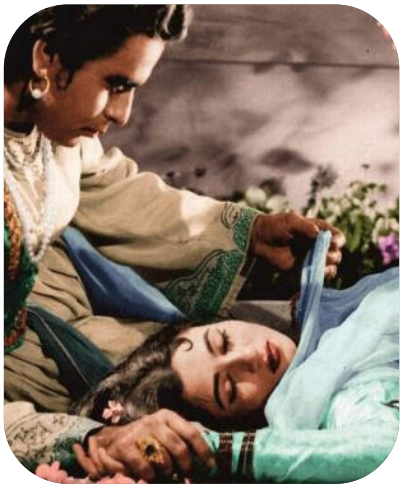






Seema Pimpley
Editor & Publisher

Bhumi Pednekar

I just want to be acting for the rest of my life.

Well, it's been a decade long journey and absolutely Filmfare has been a very integral part of it, right from my first award that I ever won for Dum Laga Ke Haisha, my first Filmfare to my last nomination for Bhakshak. I think the entire Filmfare family have always cheered me on, and they have always encouraged me. I've said this time and again that in the last ten years, I have lived my dreams many times. As a young adult when I thought of becoming an actor, winning a Filmfare trophy was one of the things on my bucket list and I've done it three times, which has been truly very memorable for me. I still have them in my living room for everyone to see on display because I'm so proud of them. I feel like in the last ten years I've evolved tremendously, there have been highs, there have been lows, but it's only been ten years. I hope that I'm acting till my last breath. I know it sounds very dramatic, but well I am a film actor. And you know when they say that, I hope my last breath is on a film set, I truly mean it because this is the only thing that gives me happiness, joy, and just mental peace.

Your project The Royals recently released on OTT, do you feel that's the way ahead...

I mean, I feel the digital world is very disrupted, it's an opportunity to create and tell stories that you might otherwise not be able to tell on celluloid. At least that's been a very clear distinction for me, where my digital choices are concerned. I haven't done a longer format show; absolutely The Royals is my first. But the experience is very different from film. I think on film, because you have two and a half hours or even less to give a story out, the way it's treated as opposed to a show. I love both mediums. By the end of it I'm an actor honestly, doesn't make a difference, where I'm acting. I just want to be acting for the rest of my life, I want to keep evolving with every character, I want to keep challenging myself , and I want to do things that are uncomfortable. Some might work out, some might not work out, but it's okay. I think that's the whole point. The whole point is that you celebrate success, and you celebrate failure, you learn from your failure, and you move on and there really isn't a bigger teacher than your failure.

Theatres have been facing hurdles in pulling in people, what do you think is the main reason? And where do you stand on the OTT v/s theatres debate?

You know, one of the most heartbreaking things for me post pandemic has been that our theatres, the footfalls have really reduced. It breaks my heart. I started my career with films, in theatres, and I really hope that it never stops. One of the main reasons according to me is a problem where the affordability of the experience is concerned. It also breaks my heart to see single screen theatres completely die. I love the fact that we have multiplexes because it does service a certain segment of society, but I feel like we don't have enough options for everybody, in different segments, so that they all can enjoy what we are creating. See because by the end of it, art needs to be democratic, I keep saying that time and again, it needs to be accessible to everyone, and I

think that's what digital has done well.

But I do hope that if there is a change in the way theatres operate, I'm not an expert in it so I can't really give a very articulate answer to it, but maybe that could be one of the reasons. And I also feel a very big reason is what we are creating. I think audience behaviour has changed, but in India you don't really have anything else to do because cricket and Bollywood are so deeply loved. I feel like if we stop the disservice that we are doing with the kind of content that we are creating, and we all are a part of it, then I feel like maybe we can revive the culture of going to theatres because it's not like its dead pan India, it's more in the Hindi-speaking belt. And I really feel that us as an industry need to come together. There is such unity when you look at other languages and other industries, and I just feel like here, there is a disconnect, you know. We should be cheering each other's films on, we should really be going and celebrating each other's films, we should be supporting each other, because that's the only way we will change what's been done about a beautiful fraternity.

Talk about Royals and how was it shooting for the show? What's the kind of professional relationship you share with Ishaan Khatter?

Well, Royals was my chance to experiment with something that I have never ever done before. I haven't really done this genre, it was new for me, and as somebody who always likes challenges, I took this up as a challenge. The shoot experience was fun, you know I mean the genre as such, it's snackable, it's not something that really is meant to stimulate you deeply, but it's meant to give you a good experience, a good watch and I think Royals does that really well. And I had a great cast that I was working with, everybody on the show is just phenomenal. And I'm just happy that it's being widely watched.

Name directors who you'd like to work with in the future.

Oh, this list is so long. But let's begin with someone I adore very deeply, it's Mr. Sanjay Leela Bhansali. He's such a maestro, he has such a brilliant ability of just changing the actor that you are, changing everything that you are, and he's a risk taker. I think what he did with Alia in Gangubai, something that deeply impacted my craft and it's actually one of my most favourite performances. I love Karan Johar, I love Rocky Aur Rani, I have actually loved all of Karan's films, like all of them. I am a fangirl in many ways. I feel like the world that he creates , he's so true to his audience and Ranveer in Rocky Rani was just special, just so special. I would also love working with Payal Kapadia, I loved her film so deeply. And I really hope that she does a lot of projects, and she gets a lot of movies, because that woman is all grits and glory. Zoya Akhtar, even though I've worked in Lust Stories with her, I really hope that sometime in the future I get to do a longer format with her because that experience was one of the best experiences that I've had.

A role you'd like to do but haven't been offered till now?

A role I would like to do - I think I have not done, so I have a lot of patriotism in me and that's been the case since I was a child, and I was always very fascinated by stories from the freedom struggle. But I don't think there are enough women that are celebrated from back there, and I really hope that I get to do one of those stories. Because I really feel like the spirit that India has is because of what people from that generation left behind for us, and we are still reaping the benefits of it. And I would love to celebrate their stories of courage, or bravery, or glory, especially in the times that we're living in, I think we need more role model stories just to keep our nation united.

What would you call this phase of your life?

You know how in **12th Fail Vikrant Massey's** character keeps saying "restart restart", I think this phase of mine is best described with the word, restart.

What's love to you?

My Dogs.

Films that have inspired you...

Oh, I think one of the biggest inspirations for me has been Rang De Basanti. That film deeply impacted me as a teenager and a lot of who I am, activism. I would like to credit some part of my activism to Rang De Basanti. I love Casa Blanca, I'm such a die-hard romantic and that film is just so beautiful. Kabuliwala, again a film that I deeply love.

If not an actor, what would you be...

If not an actor, I think I would be in the public services. Anything to do with people, anything to do with bringing change, maybe I would be in politics. I don't know, but I just love working with people so much and I love fighting for what's right so much that I'm pretty sure that it would be one of these things.

What makes Bhumi angry?

What makes Bhumi angry... tokenism of any kind, specially when it has to do with feminism.

What makes you feel peaceful/ happy instantly?

What makes you feel peaceful... just praying, meditating, connecting with my god. There's nothing else that gives me instant peace and my puppies and just my sister and my mother giving me hugs.vv

'Randeep Hasn't Had It Easy But...'

'He surprised us by telling us he wanted to make a career in acting.' 'We were scared since we knew nothing of this profession but then, he landed a role in Mira Nair's Monsoon Wedding.' 'After seeing him holding his own on screen, we decided to let the boy pursue his passion.'

Mother's Day is special for Randeep Hooda and he usually commemorates the day with an Instagram post dedicated to his mother, Asha Hooda, who he describes as his 'Happy Place'.

"I have seen every film of Randeep's at least two times in theatres," Asha tells Rediff Senior Contributor Roshmila Bhattacharya. "On TV and OTT, every time I come across one of his films playing, I watch it till the end even if I have seen it countless times before."

'Randeep ran out with a stick, embarrassing me'

Randeep was a lovable child, and a naughty one too, but that didn't bother me because I have always believed that thodi si shararat (a little mischief) keeps the brain active and sharp. When he was around two, I used to teach in a school in Rohtak, Haryana, and Randeep would sometimes follow me to class, peeking out at the other children from behind my chair. The principal of the school was very strict and whenever he caught Randeep, he would reprimand him for disturbing my class. (Laughs) One day, he came home and Randeep ran out with a stick, embarrassing me. When my daughter Anjali was in Standard 1, I had sent her to Rai (a village and development block in the Sonipat district of Haryana) to stay with my mother since both my husband (Randeep's father, Ranbir Singh Hooda, is a surgeon) and I (Asha was a teacher and social worker) were busy and travelling extensively. We enrolled her at the Motilal Nehru School of Sports in Rai where she excelled academically, going on to become a doctor. When Randeep was in Standard 4, my husband decided to move to the Middle East and we sent Randeep to his nani's place in Rai as well, so that his studies would not be affected. He was admitted to the same school as Anjali. Only my youngest child, Sandeep, now a software engineer working with a bank in Singapore, travelled with us.

'He is an expert rider and owns horses in Mumbai'

While at MNSS, Randeep developed an interest in equestrian sport. We had deliberately opted for a sports school because back then, there weren't too many opportunities for children to engage in extra-curricular activities and we didn't want our kids to be cooped up at home.At MSSS, you have to compulsorily pick one sport: Anjali chose swimming while Randeep showed an interest in horse-riding. Today, he is an expert rider and owns horses in Mumbai. He has played polo and won many medals in dressage and show jumping. Besides horses, he loves all other animals too and often goes on

holidays to jungles, returning with loads of beautiful pictures which he has shot.

'He surprised us by admitting that he wanted to make a career in acting'

My husband's village is a 20-minute drive from Rai and he would often go there to visit his dadi. After his Standard 10, Randeep moved to Delhi where he completed his schooling at the Delhi Public School. After that, we decided to send him to Australia for higher studies. We believed that living abroad would give him better exposure and inculcate in him a sense of discipline. In Melbourne, we supported him till he graduated, then insisted that he work while doing his master's there. In those two years in Australia, he did a lot of odd jobs. Once he was back in Delhi with an MBA, he got some good offers, but he didn't want a 9 am to 5 pm job.

He had started modelling while in Melbourne and was doing amateur theatre in Delhi. He surprised us by telling us he wanted to make a career in acting. We were scared initially since we knew nothing of this profession but then, he landed a role in Mira Nair's Monsoon Wedding. After seeing him holding his own on screen, we decided to let the boy pursue his passion. Eventually, it's his life and he should live it his way. So he came to Mumbai, even though we had no family or friends here, to make a career in the movies. What followed was a long struggle but Randeep did not turn to us for financial help. He did commercials to support himself financially, working with Naseeruddin Shah's Motley Theatre Group and doing theatre workshops with him to polish his acting skills.

'We saw D in Rohtak'

His career took a turnaround when Ram Gopal Varma spotted him and signed him for three-four films, launching him as the lead in his 2005 crime thriller, D. We saw D in a local theatre in Rohtak. It was a packed house and the crowds were unbelievable. There were some local politicians in attendance too and excitement was high as he was apna chhora (our local boy).

Randeep gave a very good performance and everyone was congratulating us after the show. We were so proud and happy to see the craze for him, a craze that continues to this day. There have been many more wonderful performances since and it's hard to pick a favourite because I love them all. I have seen every film of Randeep's, including the recently released Jaat, at least two times in theatres. On TV and OTT, every time I come across one of his films playing, I watch it till the end even if I have seen it countless times before. I was particularly impressed with Swatantrya Veer Savarkar. Randeep not only plays the titular role in this 2024 biopic, but has also co-written, co-produced and directed the film which called for a lot of hard work, research and dedication. He devoted two years to it, as an actor, going through a gruelling weight loss journey and even shooting with a fractured knee.

A match in Manipur

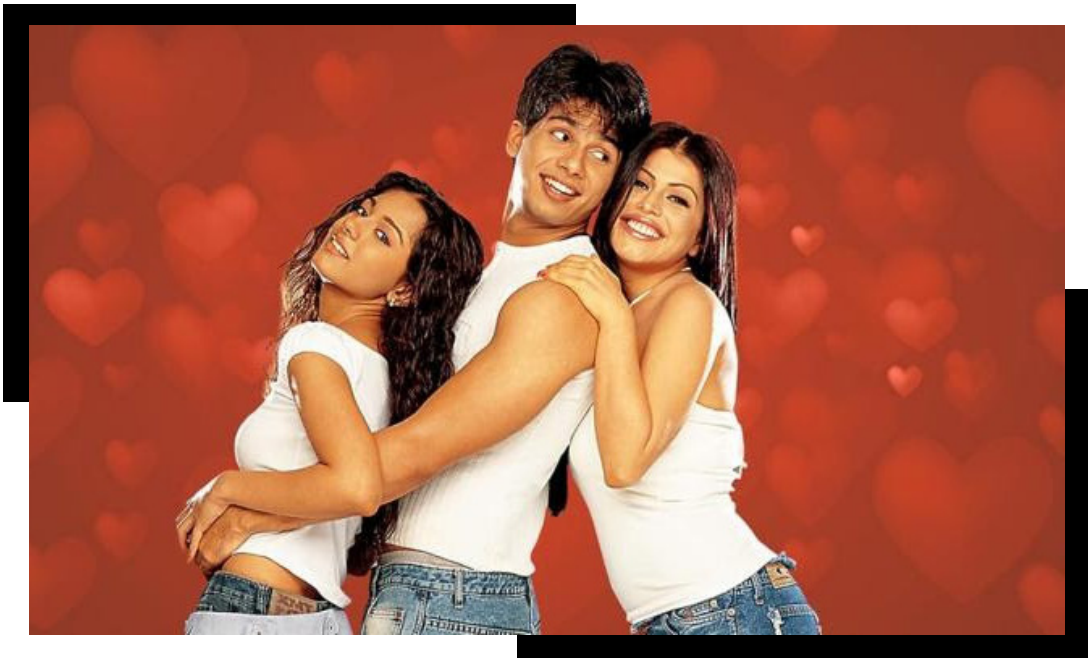
Every parent makes a lot of sacrifices and goes through the grind hoping their children will do well in life. We are fortunate that all three of our children have done so well. Randeep hasn't had it easy but today, when we see our boy so successful, not just in films, but bringing so many positive changes in his village and state too, it makes his father and me so proud. And now, he is not alone, he has found a perfect life partner in Lin Liashram.

His wife is a cultured girl with a sweet voice. Lin is a model and actor herself who has her own eco-friendly jewellery brand. She has opened a restaurant too. Initially, we had wanted a Haryanvi bahu for our son but when we saw how khush our ladka was with Lin and she with Randeep, we were happy to give them our blessings. The wedding was in Manipur, following all the rituals of the bride's family. We had taken along our wedding finery, but ended up wearing the traditional clothes given by Lin's family.

The wedding itself was an experience with 10-12 priests chanting mantras and hymns solemnly, invoking the Gods, There were so many people, and yet it was all so quiet and regal with no DJ playing loud music. When we had first visited Mumbai, we had stayed for six-seven days with Randeep in a one BHK flat. Once he settled down here, we kept returning to the city, but since my husband was still working then and I was busy with my social work -- I was director of the Haryana State Electricity Board -- we couldn't stay longer than a fortnight even when he moved into a bigger place. It was only six years ago, after my husband retired, that we moved here for good and now live with Lin and Randeep. Life couldn't be better.

'Ishaan Has Been Advised To Do Herogiri'

> 'When Shahid, Ishaan and I are together, it is a madhouse because we are all performers.'



"I am happier watching them dance than dancing myself," **Neelima Azeem** says proudly, referring to her sons, Shahid Kapoor and Ishaan Khatter.

She reveals much more about her star sons "My sons are similar in the way they walk and neither has worked with an eye to the box office."

My Sons, Shahid Kapoor, Ishaan Khatter

Though the divorce was by mutual consent, I was worried the subject may be a little too close to home and might upset him

When Shahid was seven, he acted in a series whose title I can't recall, but the episode was called Child Custody.

His parents, played by Anita Kanwar and Kanwaljeet Singh, are divorced and in court for the custody of their child.

There was a scene where the judge awarded custody to the father. When the mother informs the child that he will have to wait till he is 18 before deciding whom he wants to be with, he hugs her tightly and bursts into tears.

By then, Pankaj (Kapur) and I had separated. Though the divorce was by mutual consent and there had been no ugliness, I was worried the subject may be a little too close to home and might upset him.

But even when Pankaj and I were together, Shahid had lived in Delhi with my parents and me, his aunt, uncle and cousin Meghna. He would come to Mumbai once a year, on his birthday, to meet his father, who had moved here to pursue a career in acting.

When Shahid was 10, I shifted to Mumbai as well, to work as an actress and was waiting for him to finish his school term before he joined me.

During those eight-nine months, I would fly down to Delhi frequently. When he started shooting for Child Custody, I would accompany him to the shoot and was amazed to see how professional he was for a child of his age, discussing technical aspects like lighting and colour blocking with confidence.

Five minutes before the final heart-wrenching scene was canned, Shahid was playing football outside but as soon as he faced the camera,

he broke down, beautifully bringing out emotions hard for a seven-year-old child to understand. Looking at the performance, so natural and evocative, I knew he was a gifted actor.

He auditioned for Ishq Vishk, but was rejected because he was too skinny

I'm a popular actress myself, with a huge fan following, who back then was constantly in the news for my performances, dancing, looks and charm. My career took a backseat after Shahid, and then Ishaan, was born. I got busy bringing up my children and later, spending time with my grandchildren. Now that they have all grown up, urged on by my sons, I want to get back to acting and dance. Pankaj too is a talented and famous actor, well established in the Hindi film industry now, but Shahid has never sought our help.

He's a self-made actor who has done everything on his own, even going to auditions alone. He was cute then, with lovely expressive eyes and a smile to die for, and quickly bagged big commercials like Pepsi and Close-Up, along with music videos. Several filmmakers were waiting for him to grow up. Ramesh Taurani wanted to launch him after seeing him in the Aryans' music video Aankhon Mein and he auditioned for Ishq Vishk, but was rejected because he was too skinny. He bulked up and went back for a second audition, this time landing the film. I would visit the sets often and was impressed with his talent, energy and charisma.

'Neither sons have worked with an eye to the box office'

Ishaan is also a fine and charismatic actor, who, since his debut, has raised expectations and got a lot of love. My sons are similar in the way they walk and neither has worked with an eye to the box office.

Ishaan enjoys working with mainstream filmmakers. At the same time, he is not big on success and wants to collaborate with directors with whom he can grow as an actor irrespective of whether they are from a different cinema or school of filmmaking.But he was afraid he might have to turn down the coveted project because he had already signed Dhadak. I asked him to speak with Karan Johar, Dhadak's producer, who generously told him he would not stop him from working with Majid Majidi and despite giving him a break, let him be introduced by another filmmaker. I was stunned when I saw his performance in his first film, it wasn't that of a debutant. Beyond the Clouds was followed by Dhadak, a serious mainstream Bollywood film with songs, dance and tragic drama.

'Haider marked a turnaround in Shahid's career'

When Shahid entered the industry, there weren't too many opportunities for Indian actors to collaborate with directors from other cinemas like Majidi. Ishq Vishk also made him a popular star in Bollywood's mainstream and as a senior actress, I appreciated Vivah's Indian and sensitive Prem and Jab We Met's soft and empathetic Aditya.

The double role in Kaminey left me awe-struck while Chup Chup Ke proved my boy had a knack for comedy too. Then some of his regular commercial films which had him as a chocolate box hero flopped and I think that's when he made a conscious decision to do something bold and out-of-the-box.

Haider was an eye-opener and marked a turnaround in his career. Over the last decade, we have seen him in a procession of diverse roles, from Tommy Singh in Udta Punjab to Kabir Singh, from Farzi to the more recent Deva which is doing very well on Netflix.

Jerseyis another favourite, a masterful performance, with so much finesse and subtlety. Like Beyond the Clouds, I have watched Jersey 10 times already, both being my favourite performances. I would have seen Haider 10 times too had there been more screenings and if it was streaming on OTT. Today, Shahid has found his own niche with a strong understanding of the technicalities of his craft and Bollywood's biggest and best should exploit this powerhouse of talent more.

'When Shahid, Ishaan and I are together, it is a madhouse because we are all performers'

Ishaan has been transitioning effortlessly from the British miniseries A Suitable Boy to a Bollywood horror comedy Phone Booth, from the war drama Pippa to the American Netflix limited series The Perfect Couple.

The Netflix show The Royals has just started streaming and his senior co-star, Zeenat Aman has praised him highly, calling him a 'rising superstar' to watch out for. While he has impressed in the company of fine actors from other cinemas in intelligent films and shows, Ishaan has often been advised to keep one foot in commercial Indian cinema which gives him a chance to sing, dance and do some herogiri. The Royals are right up the street. He will also be seen in Neeraj Ghaywan's Homebound, an emotional drama, very different from The Royals. I will accompany Ishaan to Cannes where Homebound is premiering and walk the red carpet with him.

Earlier, I had gone with him to London and Istanbul for the screenings of Beyond the Clouds. More recently, we took a mother-son trip together for Singapore Tourism. When Shahid, Ishaan and I are together, it is a madhouse because we are all performers. Despite doing so much work myself, I am a loyalist, admirer and fan of my sons. I am happier watching them dance than dancing myself. For one of my own screenings, I just walk in, but when it's one of their films, there is so much enthusiasm, excitement, expectations and euphoria. I revel in their excellence and achievements as only a mother can.

Anil Kapoor landed *Trimurti after Sanjay Dutt landed in trouble with law*

Director Subhash Ghai revealed that Sanjay Dutt was supposed to be a part of his 1995 film, 'Trimurti'. However, he got on the wrong side of the law and had to leave it

Director Subhash Ghai revealed that Sanjay Dutt was supposed to be a part of his 1995 film, "Trimurti". However, later he had to opt out of the drama as he got into trouble with the law.

Dutt's arrest led to Anil Kapoor's gain as he replaced him in the movie. Ghai revealed that they had even shot the first schedule with Dutt before he got arrested. The 'Taal' maker dropped a throwback picture of himself posing with Dutt, Shah Rukh Khan, and Jackie Shroff."HOW FATE TURNS IN THIS SHOWBOZ ...The most expensive film From MUKTA ARTS was TRIMURTI (1993) directed by Mukul Anand started with SANJAY DUTT n shot its first schedule with him but film was ended with ANIL KAPOOR as sanjay dutt got into a worst grip of law immediately after KHALNAYAK release - a craze all over world," Ghai wrote.

He further added "Now sanjoo is back into stardom on big screen unstoppable...Our blessings are always with him with love." For the unversed, Dutt was arrested for illegal possession of arms and ammunition like 9mm pistol and an AK-56 assault rifle used in the 1993 Bombay Terror Attacks. After years of being in and out of the jail, Dutt was finally released from Pune's Yerawada Jail on August 26, 2015 after completing his prison term for his conviction in the 1993 Mumbai serial blasts case.

Helmed by Mukul Anand and written by Karan Razdan, the project saw Jackie Shroff, Anil Kapoor, Shah Rukh Khan, Anjali Jathar, and Priya Tendulkar in pivotal roles.

It was Anand's last completed film as he passed away while shooting "Dus" in 1997. "Trimurti" was released in the cinema halls on 22 December 1995, and took the box office by storm, becoming the first film to record a ₹1 crore opening day."

‘You Can Piss Everyone Off’

‘If you respect people, if you accommodate people, these are good attributes to have.’
‘Like the whole world is a mixed bag of people, our industry is the same.’

Playing besties in the film Pune Highway, their bond between **Jim Sarbh, Amit Sadh** and **Manjari Fadnnis** was visible even offscreen.

But their mood was in complete contrast to the sombre mood of the film’s whodunit, as they cracked jokes, laughed and generally, let their hair down.

“Sometimes, you find some very strong bonds while working. I have been lucky that way because I have found some really nice, close friends,”

How would you describe Pune Highway to anyone who has no idea what this film is about?

Amit: Well, this is from a play called Pune Highway. It’s a story of three friends. They have a very deep friendship and know all the secrets. The way this friendship blossoms is one of the USPs of this film. Somewhere afar, a murder unfolds. The story is about how that murder brings about a lot of ups and downs in their friendship.

I never thought a murder mystery would be so well woven with a coming-of-age or friendship film. It’s like watching two movies at once.

When a movie is released in theatres, it’s not only about your performance or the quality of the content. Many other factors come into the picture like the opening weekend, screen count, box office numbers. Is it unnerving to have a theatrical release in today’s times?

Jim: It is more unnerving for the producers.

It is unnerving for us in the same way that we want something to be successful because we worked

hard on it and hope that people will go and watch it. We want it to resonate with the audience. It is, of course, more concerning for the producer because the money and the commercial aspects enter into it. As far as we are concerned, we just want it to do well.

The poster has three of you in puzzled expressions. Can you recall a moment from your life when you felt as puzzled?

Amit: There are so many times. That's the beauty of life; it just puzzles you every second step. And the moment you think you've cracked it, you're on the downs again.

Jim: Welcome to my podcast (All three laughs together).

(Jim continues.)
I have a very specific story.
One of my best friends from college, we were a group of four very, very, very close friends. Me, Isaac, Nuna and Victoria. For a while, there were two other friends that joined in as well, but this was the like core group. About 12 years ago, I got an email from Nuna saying that Victoria's ex-boyfriend has murdered her.

Manjari: *shocked*
Jim: Yeah, that's when I had this most puzzled expression where you think about how you could never imagine something like this would happen to someone so close to you.

This is something you read about in the newspaper, it doesn't affect your actual life. It made me think about the nature of wanton violence and how anybody that can act with such violence in reaction to a circumstance. It's totally un-understandable by me. Slowly, I came to the opinion that these things, when they happen, are similar to a falling coconut. Falling coconuts also kill people. It's un-understandable. It's a chance.

In an industry which is so make-believe, how difficult is it to cultivate real friends? And how difficult is it to maintain these friendships?

Amit: It depends on you.
You can be an obnoxious person and piss everyone off. But you can be a nice person too. You can be an actor, a banker, you can be anything... it's not necessarily a job, it's your trait as a human being. If you respect people, if you accommodate people, these are good attributes to have.

Like the whole world is a mixed bag of people, our industry is the same. It has great people, not-so-great people at one point, but then maybe a few years ago, they were great. It's just the evolution of life that carries on.

Manjari: Sometimes, you do find strong bonds while working. But not all relationships last. I have been lucky that way because I have really found some really nice, close friends.

Like the chaotic situation in a murder mystery, there is a lot of chaos in an actor's day-to-day life.

How do you make sure you stay focused on what's important?

Jim: Different people handle it in different ways.You should just be open. You should be open to friendships. You should be open to the power of social media.

You should be open to working as hard as you can. You should be open to workshopping. You should be open to receiving the script five days before the shoot! You can't control these things, you can just be open and react to what you get.

Amit: Be adaptable and flexible.

Amit, you have been around for more than 20 years in the industry if one includes your TV days. How would you describe your journey in one word?

Jim: Eventful! (Laughs).
Amit: (Takes a brief pause) I can say I am happy.

Manjiri, I think your Meghna from Jaane Tu... Ya Jaane Na is the most memorable character in your filmography. Do people come to you and say like, hey, I remember you from that movie?

Manjari: All the time!
Amit: I didn't say that to you.
Manjari: Thank you.

It happens all the time but I really would want people to watch more of my films and connect me with the other characters I have also played. I am hungry for people to watch me in different roles.

Amit and Manjari, you two have already worked together in Barot House. When you already know your co-star, does it ease out your process?

Manjari: When you have worked together for so long, there's a natural amount of comfort that we share. I think that makes life really easy. It's so much fun on the set when all of us are working together because we understand each other, our processes, and what we expect out of each other in scenes and roles.

I think we feed off each other's energies, so that works beautifully. You will see that in Pune Highway.

Jim, did it take you some time to warm up to their partnership?

Amit: Jim was already warmed up when he came (Laughs).
Jim: It was very easy.

I think they are so relaxed, they rip each other, they joke with each other.

They already had this brother-sister vibe going on when we met. It was easy, I just fit right in.

Amit: This film is about exes and siblings. They are ex-partners and I am her brother.

Jim, you're not an actor who would like to talk about his process.

But is there any technique or trick that's constant?

Jim: There's no technique or trick for all characters.

What a person can do is to spend time with their lines. I love getting it, putting it on its feet, trying to block it, trying to think about the movements.

I like inhabiting it in my body as soon as I can because it has answers that you can't find intellectually.

Your work as a producer is also getting a lot of recognition, which is for Baksho Bondi and Sabar Bonda.

Do you see any shift in your acting process after turning producer?

Jim: So far no, because it's all been new for me.

I wouldn't say there's a direct effect on my acting process. If anything, you understand the complicated factors that go behind making a production.

You're a little bit more forgiving about a lot of stuff because you've seen the other side and you understand that it is a lot more complicated than you're seeing at the moment.

It's easy to get upset about certain things as an actor.

When you've been on the other side, you're like, oh, there must have been a reason and it's worth thinking about what the reason is instead of being unnecessarily emotionally upset.

Lastly, in tune with the title of this movie, what's the playlist for road trips for each one of you?

Jim: It will be mood-based.

There is this one song that I like to listen to on my scooter in Goa particularly.

It's funny because when I went to watch All We Imagine Is Light, she (Director Payal Kapadia) had chosen a similar song by the same artist.

The one I like is called Homesickness Part 2. Give it a listen. It's gorgeous.

Amit: Mine is Ben Palmer.
Great artist. There are several tracks but there's this track called Father Ocean.

It's beautiful.

Manjari: My playlist changes.
When I'm travelling to different cities, I try to find the playlist of their local language and like to listen to that. It gives me the vibe of the city.

Jim: Oh, that makes sense.

Did you know? Raveena Tandon never wanted to be a heroine

Raveena Tandon, during a candid chat with Farah Khan, revealed she initially wanted to be a director like her father Ravi Tandon, and not an actress Bollywood star Raveena Tandon revealed that she didn't want to be an actress and instead wanted to be a director like her father Ravi Tandon.

Raveena was in conversation with Farah Khan on the latter's Youtube channel. Farah introduced the actress as the "most beautiful heroine." Farah said: "I met Raveena when she was 16 years old. I have known her since then. She was very beautiful. I told her You will be a heroine. She said 'I will sweep in the studio'... But I want to be in films." To which, Raveena added: "But this story is a bit wrong. I didn't want to be a heroine. I wanted to be a director like my father. I wanted to make ads. I never thought of being a heroine."

Farah then went on to speak about Raveena's father and said: "I want to tell you His father was my favourite director In Khel Khel Mein, Majboor, Jhuta Kahin Ka… So many classes." Raveena chimed in: "Baghban was a remake of his film Baghban was also a remake of Zindagi Ki." Raveena made her acting debut in the 1991 action film Patthar Ke Phool. She established herself with films such as Dilwale, Mohra, Khiladiyon Ka Khiladi, Ziddi, and Laadla.

In the late 1990s, she collaborated with Govinda in several successful comedies, including Bade Miyan Chote Miyan, Dulhe Raja and Anari No.1. She also played against type in the crime dramas Ghulam-E-Mustafa and School. In the 2000s, she ventured into arthouse cinema with roles in the films Daman and Aks, After several years of hiatus, Raveena starred in the thriller Maatr. After which, she was seen in the thriller series Aranyak, and K.G.F: Chapter 2.

She will next be seen in "Housefull 5" directed by Tarun Mansukhani. The film features an ensemble cast including Akshay Kumar, Riteish Deshmukh, Abhishek Bachchan, Sanjay Dutt, Fardeen Khan, Shreyas Talpade, Nana Patekar, Jackie Shroff, Dino Morea, Jacqueline Fernandez, Nargis Fakhri, Chitrangada Singh, Sonam Bajwa, Soundarya Sharma, Chunky Pandey and Johnny Lever.

Why South Cinema Scores Big Over Bollywood

South Indian filmmakers have kept their focus on the single-screen cinemagoer. They have kept their finger on the pulse of the single-screen cinema fan, who goes to movies once a month or more, to forget his weekly chores, explains Ambi Parameswaran.

'South emerges the new hero in India's cinema landscape' read the headline of an article that traced the box office collection trends of movies post-Covid]. The article also presented some interesting figures about the number of movie screens (cinemas) in India.

A question arises: How important is moviegoing in the life of an average Indian? When I started my life in advertising in 1979, I was a client servicing executive who was also tasked with the job of media planning. Those were the days of calculators and the large bound editions of the National Readership Surveys.

What fascinated me was the stark difference between moviegoing habits of South Indian and North Indian consumers. Almost 50 per cent of urban adults in South India visit cinema halls every month. The number for North India was less than 15 per cent. Those were the days of single-screen cinemas, and cinema advertising was a monopoly of a company called Blaze Advertising.

Again, going over the list of movie halls provided by Blaze, one could see that South India had a lot more and better quality cinemas than North India.
A trivia: Probably the first multi-screen cinema complex was in what was then called Mount Road in Madras (now Chennai). Called the Safire complex, it had four screens; now, no more.

Coming to the disparity in viewing habits, was it just supply creating its own demand? More cinema halls, so more people visiting cinemas? Or was something more at work? The question of disparity in the number of cinema halls between North and South India was brought out by the abovementioned article, too.

For instance, Uttar Pradesh has only 601 cinema screens (EY-Ficci Report, 2025), while Tamil Nadu has 1,158 and Andhra Pradesh plus Telangana have 1,771 screens.

The multiplex revolution has had no impact on the difference between South and North Indian screen population. Of the total screens in India (9,927), multiplexes account for only 40 per cent, though their share of collection is higher.

Single screens still command a significant presence in South India, and that may be a reason for the resilience of the southern cinema business. When Covid hit, there was widespread gloom in the cinema industry.

OTTs were having a merry time. Why will a consumer go to a cinema and watch a movie when he can see it all, without any trouble at home? The recovery of the medium was expected to take a long time. Incidentally, the global movie industry is yet to hit the pre-Covid collection numbers.

But cinemas in South India bounced back rather quickly, even delivering national hits one after the other. Hindi movies, which accounted for 45 per cent of national box office in 2018, have dropped to 40 per cent in 2024; even Malayalam movies have moved from 5 per cent to 10 per cent in the same period.

Two questions remain. What did southern filmmakers do that Hindi filmmakers missed out on? And what is the reason behind this huge difference in the South versus North per capita screen availability?

Experts have said that South Indian filmmakers have kept their focus on the single-screen cinemagoer. They have kept their finger on the pulse of the single-screen cinema fan, who goes to movies once a month or more, to forget his weekly chores.

And cinema fans have repaid them with their wallets. Northern moviemakers have got carried away with the multiplex glamour and did not tailor their fare. The multiplex audience was now juggling between the sea of choices on OTT channels versus the cinema screen.

It should, however, be admitted that Hindi did have a revival moment in 2023 with some mega hits like Jawan and Pathan. Will Hindi movie makers find their magic touch again in 2025? They had not found their rhythm at least till April 2025.

Coming to the second question:
Why is there this huge difference in the per capita availability of screens?

Legend has it that the Madras Presidency had a governor who encouraged the building of cinema halls as a way of improving government propaganda. This led to a spurt in the number of cinema halls in the old Madras Presidency.

One thing led to another. More cinemas led to increased cinema going. This probably led to more cinema halls being built. A positive cycle started spinning -- and has continued to spin. I suppose the growth of cinema halls in the Madras Presidency had its own ripple effect in the neighbouring regions of Malabar and Mysore.

Post-Independence, both in Tamil Nadu and the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh, the political parties were cinema friendly, and that helped. The North did not have such a positive cycle. And even with the advent of multiplexes, the gap between South and North has not diminished.

All is not lost. China had fewer cinema screens than India till 20 years ago. In a shocking burst of scale, China moved from just 4,400 screens in 2005 to 90,000-plus by 2024. Will we see this happen in India? Is there a need to create more economical multiplex experiences? Is there a need to create innovative ticketing options? Many questions remain.

Till those are answered, let us enjoy the movies, masti, magic of south Indian cinema.

Zeenat Aman's Son Zahaan Reveals..

what it was like to grow up with fame: 'Still learning what to share with the world'

For many millennials, social media is second nature. But for Zahaan Khan, the son of Bollywood legend Zeenat Aman, it's a space he approaches with caution.

In a recent Vogue interview, Zahaan Khan, the younger son of iconic Bollywood star Zeenat Aman, opens up about the complex experience of growing up in the shadow of a legend.

Now 35, Zahaan is a culinary arts graduate and a freelance music composer who has slowly carved out his own creative identity while navigating the long shadow of his mother's fame and the nuanced role of social media in his life.

"I taught myself how to play the guitar when I was sixteen because I wanted to be friends with all the cool guys who had girlfriends," he chuckles. "But something lit up in me. I became interested in making original tunes as opposed to covering songs." That spark eventually led him into music professionally.

Since 2019, Zahaan has released work under the pseudonym Zanuski, composing original scores for independent films and documentaries. His music career, though under the radar, has been steadily building, shaped more by quiet introspection than public exposure.

Growing up with a mother whose name once dominated magazine covers and silver screens wasn't always easy to comprehend as a child. It was only later that Zahaan began to truly grasp the magnitude of his mother's fame. "When I was a child, I was so used to her getting attention everywhere we went that I didn't realise it wasn't normal," he notes.

"It was only in my twenties, when I started travelling with her and saw people from different parts of the world just throwing themselves at her in adulation, that it struck me how much her body of work has truly affected people. My mother always brings up this one Russian fan-an old lady in her 60s or 70s – who would fly down from Russia every year on her birthday, ring the doorbell and bring her a popular type of Russian bread and a greeting card.

Something like that really puts things into perspective."

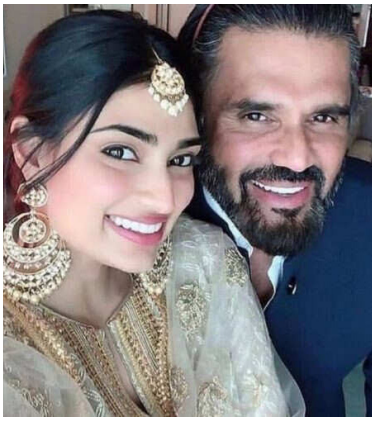
Suniel Shetty Reveals Real Reason Why Athiya Shetty Quit Bollywood

Suniel Shetty's daughter Athiya Shetty made her acting debut in 2015 with the film Hero. She was then seen in Mubarakan and Motichoor Chaknachoor and did a special appearance in the song Tere Naal Nachna from the film Nawabzaade. However, she stopped taking up any projects after that.

Now, in a recent interview, Shetty revealed that her daughter has quit Bollywood and acting. Revealing the reason behind Athiya not continuing her career as an actress, Suniel told Pinkvilla, "She said, 'Baba, I don't want to,' and she just left. And that's what I salute her for saying, 'I'm not interested. I don't want to do films.' After Motichoor Chaknachoor, a lot came her way. 'But I don't want to. I'm comfortable, you know?'

Athiya Shetty and KL Rahul welcomed their daughter Evaarah this year, and the two are busy with parental duties. Talking about this, the veteran actor continued, "She's got the best role of her life. You know, she's working in the best film, and that is her life, the role of her mother, and she's loving it."

Meanwhile, in an exclusive conversation with Filmfare, Suniel Shetty spoke about being a grandfather and the kind of lessons he wants to teach his granddaughter.



The actor said, "First of all, it has everything to do with the culture. I would rather send her to a Gurukul than a school. That's what Tia (Athiya Shetty) and I are constantly discussing. Let her be a part of nature. Let her appreciate the little things. And then automatically, she'll learn to appreciate the whole thing," he said. Opening up about being spiritual and culturally inclined, Shetty also noted, "I'm still connected to my roots. Every year, I go to my Kuldevi and pray. I pray to my Kuldevtas. I do my Naga Pooja. I do my pooja of the spirits and our ancestors. So, I stay connected."

Actor Suniel Shetty opened up about his daughter Athiya Shetty quitting Bollywood. Read the details here.

Neelu Taneja with Hiten Tejwani

Healing Starts With Understanding, Not Judgement'

Neelu Taneja – The Woman Behind Thousands of Transformed Relationships

Neelu Taneja is not just a coach – she is a silent revolution in the world of modern relationships. As a certified Relationship, Life, and NLP Coach, Neelu has worked with thousands of individuals and couples, helping them overcome confusion, heartbreak, and emotional struggles that often remain unspoken.

What makes Neelu stand out is her deep empathy and sharp understanding of human emotions. She doesn't give textbook advice – she connects, listens, and guides each person like a trusted friend. Over the years, she has successfully helped over 1000 people reconnect with themselves and rebuild their emotional lives with clarity and confidence. Her passion for healing led her to launch an app called 'Relationship Revive' – a digital space where anyone dealing with relationship issues can open up, seek help, and begin their journey towards peace and emotional balance. The app is helping break the silence around emotional pain and making guidance more accessible than ever.

In 2023, her dedication was honoured with a prestigious award recognizing her impactful work in the field of emotional and relationship healing.

Neelu is also the author of 'The Feelings Book', a gentle but powerful reminder of how our emotions shape our lives – and how ignoring them only leads to deeper pain. Her writing reflects the same care and warmth she brings to her sessions – making readers feel seen, heard, and understood.

Recently, she featured in a podcast with actors Rushad Rana and Hiten Tejwani, where she explored a powerful idea – if busy public figures can maintain healthy relationships despite packed schedules, why can't regular people? This conversation sparked an important thought: it's not time, but effort and emotional awareness that make relationships last. Whether it's through one-on-one coaching, her app, her book, or her conversations, Neelu's message is simple – "Love is not just a feeling, it's a daily effort. And healing is always possible." In a fast-paced world where people forget to pause and understand each other, Neelu Taneja brings calm, clarity, and a much-needed human touch.

Neelu Taneja with Sana Sultan

Neelu Taneja with Delnaaz Irani

Ibrahim Ali Khan

'Wish I Had Been There'

He had just come out of the ICU after surgery.
He opened his eyes, spoke to Sara for a bit, and asked for me. I said, I'm right here, dad. And then he said, If you were there, you would've beaten that guy up.

If someone in your immediate family has a near-death experience, you don't take them for granted. You become more present in the relationship,' Ibrahim Ali Khan tells GQ India magazine. He was addressing the January 16, 2025 attack on his father Saif Ali Khan at his home in Bandra, northwest Mumbai.

I was shooting a night shift at that point of time. He was stabbed around 2:30 am and I was informed at 5:30 am. I hadn't slept that night and I rushed to see him. He had just come out of the ICU after surgery. He opened his eyes, spoke to Sara (Ali Khan) for a bit, and asked for me. I was so happy; I said, „I'm right here, dad." And then he said, „If you were there, you would've beaten that guy up". To this, Ibrahim started crying.
I wish I had been there. At one point, when I heard he got stabbed, I started to think of the worst-case scenario. That's a very scary feeling.'

Ibrahim clarified that he did not accompany his father to the hospital; his younger brother Taimur Ali Khan did. To everyone saying I drove him to the hospital with my baby brother, I would like to clarify that my dad walked into the hospital himself. He walked in with a knife stuck in him and said, „I need help",' Ibrahim said. Ibrahim revealed that he had a speech problem. Soon after I was born, I had very bad jaundice and that went straight to my brainstem. I went on to lose quite a bit of my hearing and that impacted my speech. My speech is something that I've had to work hard on since I was a child, with coaches and therapists. It's not perfect; I'm still working really hard on it,' he said.

So who gave him the best advice?
It was from two people. My dad said this is not the year 2000 when a star can just walk around in a movie and it can be a blockbuster. Today you must be very prepared, and be a quick learner. Most importantly, he said the script and the filmmaker are two things you cannot compromise on.' The second person he revealed was Priyanka Chopra. She sent me a very sweet message, saying she watched the film and thinks I have a bright future. She said I have to hold my head high and keep grinding; and that I must grow a thick skin. Coming from someone as accomplished as she is, I felt really comforted and motivated.'

'There's A Kind Of Beauty In India'

'In India no matter your lifestyle, you will end up doing the same things as everybody else.'

From Chicago to Mumbai, it's been a journey full of 'adventures' for **Lisa Mishra.**

She started out as a singer in Bollywood, seven years ago.
She found fame for the reprised version of Tareefan from Veere Di Wedding, which led to her singing more Hindi songs.

Lisa then branched out into acting, which she says was "always on the cards" given her background in musical theatre. After Call Me Bae and now, The Royals, she is making her presence felt in the Indian streaming space. "I know a billion other people who work just as hard or harder than me and deserve to be in this place. But I had a little more luck,"

What's your fondest memory from the sets of The Royals?

Just to be able to work with a cast of that calibre, which I think a few people can claim. To be on set with Ishaan Khatter, Bhumi Pednekar, Zeenat Aman, Sakshi Tanwar, people that are so, so respected in their craft.

Your character Nikki felt like she could be very good friends with Harleen from Call Me Bae. How do you compare these two characters?

You're right! I find that similarity as well. Harleen is very similar to Sofia (Bhumi Pednekar's character) and it makes sense that you would feel they could be friends in an alternate universe. The friendship between Harleen and Nikki would be just like Sophia and Nikki.

At the trailer launch of The Royals, you spoke fondly of Bhumi Pednekar. What makes her so special to you?

We are super close on and off screen. We became incredibly close when we were shooting the series. We were on set in Jaipur for 35 days and we had about 15 days in Bombay. So, spending that much time together non-stop really brings you close. Neither of us left the set at any point. We were there all day. The hours were long, and the heat was intense as we were shooting in peak Rajasthan heat. You need somebody you can count on in scenarios like that. Plus, the stress of work. We really showed up for each other as friends and that was effortlessly portrayed on screen as well.

Bhumi is senior to you in this industry. Did she give you any advice?

Bhumi's most enduring advice to me was to have confidence in myself. She constantly reminded me I'm there because I deserve to be there. She always told me that I need to be more sure of myself. I'm doing a great job and I should keep going. She would help me prep my lines. We would prep our scenes together. She didn't want me to feel junior at any point. She's so giving when it comes to co-actors. She really, really, helps people feel confident about themselves and their ability. Very few people have not only the patience but also the grace to share their knowledge and their space like that.

You are juggling between acting and singing careers.

I'm an actor, I'm a musician, I have a podcast about food. I've always been into a lot of different things. But everything I do, I put a lot of work and effort into being excellent in. I don't want to take it for granted that I get to be in sets like this and in spaces like this. I owe it to my audience and to the people who are producing these spaces. It's their money at stake. It's their trust in me. I owe it to them to be responsible about how I give that energy back.

You grew up in Chicago and are a self-taught singer. How did you develop interest for Indian pop music?

That's the kind of music I grew up listing to. There were a lot of Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy, A R Rahman, early Vishal-Shekhar, early Salim-Sulaiman, Shreya Ghoshal. I come from that generation of pop music. I would just mimic what I was listening to because I didn't speak Hindi at the time. I learned Hindi after I moved to India seven years ago. It was just exciting for me to be from a country that made such fun, incredible, layered, complicated music. That's why I just had a love for it since I was very, very young.

How often did you visit India before?

Very little. I think in the span of those 18-20 years, I visited only four times.

What are your earliest memories of Bollywood films and music?

My earliest memories are singing songs from Ghulam andHum Dil De Chuke Sanam. I was three or four years old at the time.

How did your singing journey begin?

I started singing at four. When I was seven or eight, my teachers at school recognised that I have a talent for this. They kept making me sing on stage. By the time I was 13, I started my YouTube channel and I was posting videos of myself singing and playing guitar. From 13 to 24 -- for 11 years -- nobody was watching those videos. But then I got discovered and was brought to India to make music.

Was acting always the next plan?

It was always on the cards. I've been an entertainer since I was a kid. I grew up doing musical theatre. So when I moved here, I immediately started with auditions. I really love entertaining, being on the stage, being on screen. And since the age of 13, posting all these videos online, I'm very used to people watching me.

How did people around you react when you told them you want to move to India?

I think my parents were confused. They were like, we moved away, why are you moving back? My extended family lives in India. My parents moved 25 years ago because my dad was an employee at State Bank and he got transferred there. When I came back here seven years ago, it felt strange to integrate back into the country I'm originally from. I felt like a foreigner.

How did you navigate the cultural shock in India?

It was a huge cultural shock for me, definitely. There are fewer people in America. There's more space there. There's a kind of beauty in India where it feels like a communal atmosphere. Everybody's together. Everybody's sitting in the same traffic. They're standing in the same lines at Elco (a shopping arcade in Bandra, northwest Mumbai) for paani puri (Laughs). Life is equal here in a lot of ways. In India no matter your lifestyle, you will end up doing the same things as everybody else.

You have an American accent. Is that a problem during your auditions?

Not any more. I think after what I did on Bae, people have seen I can pull off the Indian accent in English because no one dubbed for me. I'm able to do the Indian accent, this (American) accent and the British accent. I've grown up being really excited about voice acting so this comes very naturally to me.

What's next on your wish list?

If I have any shot in hell, I would love to be in a feature film since I've done two series now. I think it will be a great adventure for me.

What Rakhee Is Doing These Days

'I am not playing someone's mother or grandmother just because a big director is offering a role.'
'Believe me, I have many such offers but they don't persuade me.'

Rakhee's latest Bengali film Aamar Boss released to rave reviews earlier this month, and the senior actor seems thrilled about working in the film.

It marks her return to Bengali cinema after six years, "I am not in a hurry to get back to doing a film. It has to be something worth my while."

Your first Bengali film in a long time is a work of joy and beauty.

You know, when the directors (Shiboprosad Mukherjee and Nandita Roy) offered me the film, I wasn't sure. My last Bengali film is yet to be released. I don't know what happened to it. Incl. But then I saw Shiboprosad and Nandita's film.

You mean their blockbuster Raktabeej?

No, not that. Their earlier film Haami is about a child's upbringing. I was immediately excited about working with them.

Their past work apart, they have conceived a role for you in Aamar Boss which not many actresses your age are given?

I agree. It is very difficult to get a central role, and that too one with so many layers. I am glad the film was made smoothly and released. I am even more happy that the film is being appreciated not only in Kolkata but other metropolitan cities as well.

What is the point in doing a film that doesn't get released properly?

We are happy to have you back on screen.

Don't raise your hopes too high. I am not in a hurry to get back to doing a film. It has to be something worth my while. I am not playing someone's mother or grandmother just because a big director is offering a role. Believe me, I have many got such offers but they don't persuade me. I would rather be at home.

Your grandson is the apple of your eye.

Samay is a very important part of my existence. He is only 15 but taller than all of the family, taller even than his father Govind. I have introduced him to books and Nature. He is a very mature boy.

Coming back to your film, what was it like to shoot with Shiboprosad Mukherjee and Nandita Roy?

They made me feel so much at home. They looked after me like their own. Kolkata is always a pleasure to shoot in.

Your video devouring gol gappas on the street of Kolkata have gone viral.

That is part of the film. We were shooting on the street with a gol gappa vendor by a secret camera. Nobody knew it was a film shooting.

Didn't the gol gappa vendor recognise you?

No.

Which part of the galaxy does it belong to?

Oh, stop it! He was a young man. Probably a fan of Alia Bhatt. His gol gappa was good, shooting chalta raha, main khati gayee It had no detrimental affect on my stomach. I enjoyed myself.

Which was more enjoyable, the gol gappa or the shooting?

That is a trick question. But seriously, I was overwhelmed. We visited a movie theatre where Aamar Boss was being screened.

The lights were turned on mid-screening. There were many elderly citizens in the audience. They were very moved.

They must have swooned on seeing their screen queen in person?

I have never thought of myself as someone special. When I started, I just wanted to be a competent actress. I hope I am that.

‘I’m Grateful I’m Indian’

‘Thankfully, as Indians, we have a long history of trans people in our culture, in our religions, in our mythology.’
‘It’s not a fad which has suddenly come into existence, the way that a lot of Americans treat it.’

As a transgender and a doctor-turned-actor, **Trinetra Haldar Gummaraju** says she has experienced transformation "on a very intimate level".

She relishes the idea of becoming a different person with each new character and considers this as the most "interesting part" of the acting process. If Made In Heaven 2 got her through the door, Trinetra is now building on her acting portfolio with Kankhajura, her latest OTT show co-starring Roshan Mathew and Mohit Raina.

"I have seen people being insensitive, ignorant, uneducated and uninterested about the topic. Thankfully, nothing extremely bad has happened, but there is a certain apathy that many people have towards the community. How many people really care about these things?"

What's keeping you busy these days?

The promotions of Kankhajura. Apart from that, many other things. I am trying to focus on my physical fitness. That's something that I've neglected for very long. I finally started going to the gym.

I finally got a nutritionist on board, and we're trying to figure out how to make me healthy. It's funny that we, as MBBS students and doctors, have advice to give everybody but our own personal lives are an absolute mess. Besides this, there's been a lot of reading, traveling and spending time with family.

What are you playing in Kankhajura?

I play Amy, a Goan girl.
She used to be called Amey when she was growing up, but now she is Amy. Ashu (Roshan Mathew's character) and Amey were friends as children, but now when he's come out of prison, Ashu is getting to meet his long lost friend who is now Amy. The show is about Ashu who uses his way of manipulation to get what he wants and gets trapped in that. Their track adds a romantic angle, but it involves using somebody in an emotional way.

How do you look at your transformation from a medical professional to an actor?

When I first started auditioning in 2021, it was very new to me. I remember being on the set of Made in Heaven and feeling lost. After that, I did this beautiful workshop with (acting coach) Atul Mongia.

I did some work with Puja Sarup and Sheena Khalid, amazing theatre actors. I also did this amazing workshop with Helena Walsh. I feel like the process of learning my craft started with that. By the time Kankhajura came my way, I was far more prepared than I was during Made In Heaven.

The most interesting part about acting is that you get to step away from yourself and inhabit somebody else. Being a trans person, I have experienced transformation on a very intimate level. The greatest joy for me is this transformation, both personally and professionally.

Did the praise for your role in Made in Heaven translate into more work opportunities?

I was sceptical. The thing is I have seen how trans representation has played out in different countries because I have trans actor friends in the States and the UK. They're a little ahead of us, in the sense, this wave of representation has already happened there.

But all of them said the same thing, that when we did our one or two shows, we thought the entire industry had changed. But it's not true. I felt the exact same way. Made In Heaven came out and got a lot of praise. A lot of filmmakers and actors said wonderful things. But I'll tell you what happened after that. Bollywood went into a strange period of recession, which is continuing to this day. A lot of filmmakers are suddenly unsure about what is working at the box office.

As a result, a lot of makers are doing formulaic work. Unfortunately, even OTT is becoming a little Bollywood-used in that sense. After Made In Heaven, I didn't expect magic to happen overnight but I do see change happen in small but significant ways. There are certain filmmakers who are really committed to telling stories that are impactful and beyond your basic formula. Kiran Rao has done a Laapataa Ladies without any A-lister actor. Zoya (Akhtar) is doing incredible work.

Superboys of Malegaon is an incredible film that Reema Kagti directed. So while we're creating a film like Animal, we're also making All We Imagine As Light. Interesting work is happening but it's all scattered.

I think everyone is confused because nobody knows what is working anymore. As a trans actor, it's an interesting time to stick around and see who is committed to telling honest stories.

How do you look at the representation of the trans community in the current scenario of Bollywood?

We talk about Bollywood as if it's this singular entity, but it's really not.

It's a collection of multiple groups of people, families and businesses, right? If we look at acceptance and what LGBTQ inclusion looks like, it's going to be very different from one

group of people to another. It's not like I have only seen great experiences just because I started with Made In Heaven.I've had bad experiences also. I have seen people being insensitive, ignorant, uneducated and uninterested about the topic. Thankfully, nothing extremely bad has happened, but there is a certain apathy that many people have towards the community.

How many people really care about these things?

Only when something trends on social media does it become something we want to talk about. The most important thing is not even representation because we have had representation of trans characters for a long time. It's just that we've not had good representation. It's always been a man or even woman playing the character. But that doesn't necessarily make a good movie or show. This is beyond just basic inclusion and representation. There has to be a good story and a good character. That's what I'm interested in.

Who do you consider as your friends in the industry?

One of my closest friends in the industry is **Gazal Dhaliwal.** She's a trans writer, who's been in this industry for a very long time. She's responsible for some incredible projects like Lipstick Under My Burkha and Mismatched. She is my biggest inspiration and my biggest supporter. I first watched her on an episode of Satyamev Jayate many years ago. There was one episode on gender and sexuality and Gazal was part of that.

I was just 12 or 13 years old when I showed that episode to my parents. That was their first exposure to seeing a trans woman, who was actually in the industry. She had hardships but also the support of her parents. She was the first person who inspired me to transition and become myself.

While efforts are being made to integrate trans individuals in all aspects of the society, we also have someone as influential and powerful as Donald Trump running an anti-trans campaign in the US. Do you think it adds to fear-mongering against the trans community?

Yes, absolutely. As a country, we are better off when it comes to trans rights. We've had the NALSA (National Legal Services Authority) judgment. We've got the Transgender Persons Protection of Rights Act, which gives trans people a fair number of rights.

I'm not saying that we are perfect as a legal system and for the rights that we as trans individuals need and the welfare schemes that we need. There's a long way to go on that front. But I'm just glad that we don't have a political lobby against us, trying actively to take away our rights. This is something that's unfortunately happening globally, in the UK and the US.

It's a really bad time for say, abortion rights, which is very concerning for me as a doctor as well because you could get into trouble for normal medical practices. It's terrifying that on a global level, trans people are being targeted so specifically by people who don't have the information or are using disinformation as a way of fear-mongering. That's the easiest thing to do politically to gain votes, right?

Vote banks are built on the unfounded fears of large groups of people. All you have to do is to stoke the embers to get people scared of something. Unfortunately, trans people fall in that category of people where it's very easy to fear-monger around. Thankfully, as Indians, we have a long history of trans people in our culture, in our religions, in our mythology. It's not a fad which has suddenly come into existence, the way that a lot of Americans treat it. Even if we don't have complete integration, acceptance and opportunity, at least there is awareness.

We have a concept of Tritiya Prakriti and Ardhanarishwar. I am grateful that I'm Indian. But I would say that it's also on us as trans people, who have some degree of privilege and education to use our privilege and do as much as we can. As an actor, my responsibility is to increase representation of trans people in popular culture because entertainment is a part of everybody's life. My purpose in life is to normalise conversations around trans people so that it doesn't become such a big deal for trans people to have basic rights.

What makes you feel proudest about your journey so far?

It is to see queer and trans people reaching out to me on social media and saying thank you for putting our journey out there. I think every queer individual needs to see another succeed in some way. That gives you a lot of confidence and motivation to move forward in your life and do your thing.

When parents of queer people or queer children or queer adolescents reach out and express that gratitude, it really makes me feel like I've done something legitimate. I know some of them closely but I will never know the full impact of that. It is something that we will only know in retrospect, maybe 50 years from now.

Why Dilip Kumar Never Sang In Mughal-e-Azam

'K Asifsaab was very definite that 'woh Hindustan ka honewala Badshah hai -- woh gana nahin gayega.' Dinesh Raheja recalls a memorable encounter with Naushad on the legendary composer's 19th death anniversary on May 5.

When I visited Naushad at his green-fringed Bandra bungalow in northwest Mumbai, circa 2000, he was around 80 years old. But the life force coursed strongly through the maestro's veins. The composer of landmark classics like Mughal-e-Azam, Mere Mehboob, Mother India and Baiju Bawra was sitting with his harmonium, trying out tunes and singing to himself.

"I recorded some 15, 20 songs for Mughal-e-Azam and not all of them were used in the film. K Asifsaab said, 'Bhai, jo tumhara dil chahe karo.' Today, there are no such producers. The one who arranges the money feels he knows about music too," Naushad said.

At 80, what drives you to sit in your music room and compose tunes on your harmonium?

A kalakaar lives as long as he is engrossed in creation. That's my message for everybody: Talaash mein raho. The day your search ends, that's the end of your life. If you ask me to name my favourite film scores or my favourite songs, I will say that it has yet to come.

Your body of work is renowned. But why were you so selective?

I have composed music for only 66 films in 60 years. Of these, 26 were silver jubilees, six were golden jubilees and four were diamond jubilees. Today, composers work on 10, 20 films at a time. I used to devote 15, 20 days for each song -- sochna, banana, mitaana, phir banana, phir mitaana. Till I was satisfied. I recorded some 15, 20 songs for Mughal-e-Azam and not all of them were used in the film. K Asifsaab said, 'Bhai, jo tumhara dil chahe karo.' Today, there are no such producers. The one who arranges the money feels he knows about music too.

Were any of the unused Mughal-e-Azam songs to be sung by Dilip Kumar's character?

No. K Asifsaab was very definite that 'woh Hindustan ka honewala Badshah hai -- woh gana nahin gayega.' I remember while creating the song Jab Pyar Kiya Toh Darna Kya, lyricist Shakeelsaab (Shakeel Badayuni) and I were locked in discussion in this very bungalow's terrace from six in the evening till the next morning -- without food. K Asifsaab's challenge was clear: Anarkali has to sing something which will make Badshah Akbar look like the Badshah from a deck of playing cards.

Did you compose additional

songs only for the famously lavish Mughal-e-Azam or for other films too?

Even for Baiju Bawra, I recorded so many songs. When Baijnath (Bharat Bhushan) is leaving Akbar's darbar, the latter offers to make him the court singer but he refuses because Gauri (Meena Kumari) is waiting for him back in the village.

That's when Akbar asks Tansen to stop Baijnath with a song. It was a very difficult piece of music and I had it sung by Amir Khansaab. But the film had to be trimmed and it was deleted.

Have you kept a recording of that song?

No. At that time, it was directly on film. There was no recording, no tape.

That's such a loss. Your association with Prakash Studios goes back from the Station Master (1942) days till Baiju Bawra.

Jee. Vijay Bhattsaab and I sat together for six months discussing the story of Baiju Bawra, the situations for the songs so that they appeared integral to the story. Some characters like the dacoit ladki (played by Kuldeep Kaur) were created. We worked hard not because we wanted to make enormous amounts of money but because of our desire to create something worthwhile.

Let's rewind even further. I believe the 1944 blockbuster Rattan was the first turning point in your career.

Yes, Rattan's music was very popular. But I had already scored for jubilees like Kardar Productions' Sharda and Prakash Studios' Station Master.

Tell us about K L Saigal singing your immortal Shahjehan (1946) composition, Jab Dil Hi Toot Gaya.

I did just one film with Saigalsaab and he died soon thereafter. Aur doosra Saigal paida nahin hua. I had seen his performance in Devdas (1935) when I was growing up in Lucknow. Saigalsaab had an individualistic style of singing. Lage ke hum kahin baithe ga rahe hai, yeh nahin ke cheekh rahe hai. Low octave mein.

At the same time, he had a very extensive range and could go high as well. Woh itne popular huey, ke Saigal amar ho gaye. When Saigal met me, he was very ill and there was a doctor constantly attending to him. One day, at rehearsals, he told me that an industrialist had offered him Rs 25,000 to sing for an hour at a function.

I said, 'Kundanlalji, mubarak ho.' Those days hero-heroines were not paid Rs 25,000 for a whole film. Just then, one lightman came and invited him to his daughter's wedding. That evening, Saigal didn't go and collect Rs 25,000 but went instead to the wedding function of that poor man and sang Babul Mora Nahiyar Chhuto Hi Jaaye. Yeh Saigal ki insaniyat thi.

Another 1940s singer you created memorable songs with was Noor Jehan in Anmol Ghadi (1946).

She had magic in her voice. Whenever she used to do stage shows, she would begin with my Anmol Ghadi composition, Awaaz De Kahan Hai.

Wasn't Anmol Ghadi's other singer-actress, Suraiya, introduced by you?

Suraiya ko hum laaye. She did a small girl's role in Station Master and then lent her voice to a children's song about bootpolishwaale. She was so young, she had to stand on a stool and sing. I also got Latabai's brother Hridayanath Mangeshkar to sing his first songs in Deewana (1952) and for the young Baiju in Baiju Bawra. He too had to stand on a stool and sing.

Mohammed Rafi was a long-time favourite of yours.

Mohammed Rafi sang his first film song with me, in a chorus. He was paid Rs 10 for that. The film was Pehle Aap (1944). Bahut sharmile the. Bahut shareef aadmi the. I said your voice is good but right now, I can offer you only a chorus song. The song Hindustan Ke Hum Hai Hindustan Hamara was a military song and we needed the sound of the marching. Those days, there was no re-recording or mixing. So we bought old shoes from Chor Bazaar and made all the singers, including Rafi, wear them. And then we did the rehearsals, pairon mein chale pad gaye the unke. Later, I gave him a solo song in Anmol Ghadi, Tera Khilona Toota. For that, he got paid Rs 15. Thereafter, we continued. Rafi can never be forgotten.

You made Rafi sing for Raj Kapoor and Mukesh sing for Dilip Kumar in Andaaz (1949).

Yes. But that time, the insistence on a certain playback had not started. It started later; take only Mukesh or Rafi or Lata. When that happened, new singers stopped getting breaks.

Talat Mehmood sang some wonderful songs for you in Babul (1950). Why didn't you utilise his voice subsequently?

That's because stars started insisting on certain singers. I had even recorded Talat's voice in a couple of films in the 1960s but thereafter, the hero and the producer insisted we use Rafi's voice. I was majboor and Talatsaab was a little cross with me. But I explained that I wasn't the producer of the film. I was the producer of Babul, so I could insist on using his voice.

You witnessed Lata Mangeshkar's ascent. Did her creative zeal continue even after she became immensely famous?

You know, during the recording of the Amar (1954) song, Na Milta Gham, Lata couldn't get one antara exactly right and she insisted on trying again and again for 17 takes till she finally fainted in exhaustion. When she regained consciousness, the first thing she wanted was to sing again. And she did, till she got it right.

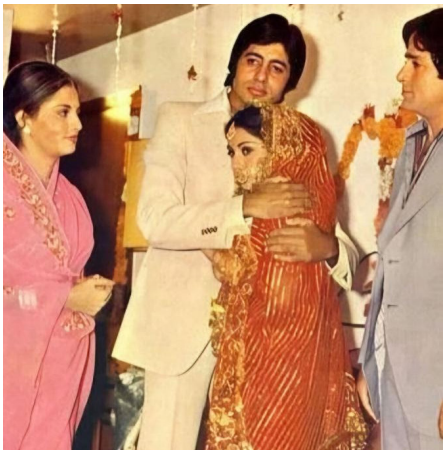
I Had Just Given My 10th Std. Exam

'I was super shy and awkward and had no idea what huge stars I was working with.'

As Yash Chopra's Trishul clocks 47 years on May 5, **Poonam Dhillon** gets nostalgic and remembers her debut film. "Gapoochi Gapoochi was the most difficult song for me as I had to dance. I had never done that before,"

It's been 47 years since your debut film, Trishul.

So many years have passed!
I was 15 and had just given my Standard 10 exams. I knew nothing about acting or stars at that time. I had seen probably four-five films in my life.



Which films had you seen before?

I had seen Dosti many times, at the Children's Day celebrations in school. Also, Guddi, Mera Naam Joker and a few more. I was super shy and awkward and had no idea what huge stars I was working with. Gapoochi Gapoochi was the most difficult song for me as I had to dance.

I had never done that before. That too, in front of huge crowds at the Lodhi garden in Delhi. They had gathered to see the shoot as well as sing in the swimming pool.

You were the baby of the family.

Everyone was very kind to me and treated me like the child I was. My co-star Sachin was very helpful, teaching me how to do the dance steps.

Shashi Kapoorji, Amitji (Amitabh Bachchan) and Sanjeev Kumarji were considerate and patient, as was Gitaji (Siddharth Kak), who played my mother. I didn't have much work with Hemaji (Malini) or Raakheeji.

But these two ladies were stunning and I would go to their shoot and watch them, awestruck.

A debut with Yash Chopra was no small thing.

I am grateful that I got to start my career with this legendary film, with a legendary director like Yash Chopraji, legendary writers (Salim-Javed), legendary co-actors, legendary music director (Khayyam), legendary lyricist (Sahir Ludhianvi) and, of course, legendary playback singer (Lata Mangeshkar).

‘I’m Very Greedy And Hungry’

Rajkummar Rao gives us another comedy with Bhool Chuk Maaf, where he also romances Wamiqa Gabi in a time loop genre film. “As long as I’m getting to play different characters and challenging roles, I don’t mind,”

What was it like returning to comedy?

Bhool Chuk Maaf was a joyful process.
I’ve been a big fan of the time loop genre and this is the first time that it’s coming to Hindi cinema. Writer-Director Karan Sharma had lived with this story for a long time. It’s very detailed and a fulfilling experience for me. It’s a beautiful story with lot of comedy and a beautiful message in the end.

Comedy is not an easy genre. How do you swing it time after time?

Yes, comedy is not an easy genre. It is a tough genre but I love it. I think I exploded somewhere during Bareilly Ki Barfi, where people saw me doing comedy for the first time.

Yes, but it isn’t only about you getting it right.

I think it depends a lot on the writing. The writing has to be there. The situations have to be there. Only then an actor can take it to some other level. Without good writing in comedy, it might look forced.

That way, you have been lucky.

Yes. I have been lucky that I have been a part of some really well-written scripts, which are genuinely funny. But I think, yeah, once you have everything in your favour -- like the writing, the right script, the right co-actors -- it’s very important to enjoy what you are doing, especially in a comedy film, because that translates on screen.

How different was Bhool Chuk Maaf?

As I said, this is a new genre for Hindi cinema and I have been a big fan of the time loop theme. It’s a lot of fun exploring this because you are reliving the same day again and again. But how differently you can react to the same situations was a task.My director Karan was very much in charge. He knew exactly how my character Ranjan would react in different situations, on different days. That really helped because the writing was brilliant. I enjoyed what I read, and that made my life easy

‘I always think I’m going to do maybe two films a year. But then I get these really good scripts and I get greedy.’

You shot for Bhool Chuk Maaf in Varanasi.

Shooting in Varanasi was an amazing experience. I personally love being in Varanasi. Just sitting by the ghats, you know, sitting in front of Ma Ganga, it’s very peaceful. The way (Director Of Photography) Sudeep Chatterjee has shot Banaras! He has made it look so serene, so beautiful, so colourful.

How do you view the past few years of your career?

The past couple of years have been hectic, but no complaints. As long as, you know, I’m getting to play different characters and challenging roles, I don’t mind.

How do you manage to be so prolific and yet so consistently good?

I try. I always think I’m going to do maybe two films a year. But then I get these really good scripts and I get greedy. I’m a very greedy and hungry actor. So whenever I read something nice and a good maker is attached with it, it’s very tough for me to say no. As long as I’m not being repetitive in my films, I’m fine.

Your next?

The next will be Maalik, which is in a way my debut in the raw action genre. I’m looking forward to that. I want to see how people will react to that

‘Devdas Made People Realise I Could Act’

I saw Bimal Roy’s Devdas again a few years ago, almost 50 years after it had been made.’ ‘I found it very intelligently made; the scenes flowed so beautifully.’ ‘There is just one scene with both Suchitra Sen and me in the film, and it’s beautiful.’

Vyjayanthimala is not only an immensely talented danseuse (Hothon Pe Aisi Baat, Main Kya Karoon Ram, Man Dole Mera Tan Dole are emulated till date) but also a hugely popular star-actress in the 1950s and 1960s, thanks to a long string of hits like Nagin, Naya Daur, Madhumati, Ganga Jamuna, Sangam, Sooraj and Jewel Thief

We revisit a 2003 interview of **Vyjayanthimala** with **Rediff** Senior Contributor **Dinesh Raheja** where the movie legend reveals, “I didn’t befriend my contemporaries. What was the point?”

You started your career with South Indian films. Did you shift to Hindi films only after Nagin (1954) became a blockbuster?

S Mukherjee of Mumbai’s Filmistan Studio sent Director Nandlal Jaswantlalji (who had just helmed the hit film Anarkali) to my hometown Madras to sign me for Nagin.

This was after my debut film, AVM’s Bahar (1951), had become successful in Tamil, Telugu and Hindi. Though I was brought up and educated in Madras, I had come to Bombay a few times for my dancing programmes and had found it a pleasant city.

After the shooting of Nagin wrapped, I went back to Madras. But Nagin became a blockbuster, and film offers poured in. My contract with AVM forbade me from doing films with other Madras producers but didn’t restrict me from working in films made in Bombay.

Nagin’s success made you a major star in the Hindi film industry and turned your life around. What do you remember of the shoot?

Nagin’s director Nandlal Jaswantlal had been making films from Bollywood’s silent era and he was fond of close-ups. He would tell me not to open my eyes wide because ‘you already have big eyes.’ In the struggle to keep my eyes half-closed, my eyelashes would begin to flatter. But he was happy as he wanted a dreamy look.

What recollections come to mind when you look back at those early days of your career?

The famous (lawyer) Nana Palkhivala stayed in the same building as us at Commonwealth (Nariman Point). He was fond of playing the piano. I would listen with fascination as I had learned to play the piano at school. My family purchased the Station Wagon because we needed a big car. An entourage of eight people always accompany me to the studios. Since it was a long drive from Nariman Point to the studios which were largely in the suburbs I would do my makeup in the car.

Did you adjust quickly to working in Hindi films?

Working in Bombay was different from working with AVM in Madras. There, I was treated like a child. I'm affectionately called 'Pappu Kutty' whereas in Bombay nobody knew me by that name.

Devdas (1955) was what got you critical recognition as an actress.

I must credit Bimalda (Roy) with expanding my histrionic image and making people realise my acting potential. Before Devdas, I was called Twinkle Toes as dancing was the most important aspect of my films. In Devdas too, I did do a lot of dancing (in songs like Jise Tu Kabool Kar Le, O Aanewale, Ab Aage Teri Marzi). After all, I was playing the courtesan Chandramukhi. At the same time, there were also a lot of shades to my character.

My dance training helped me tremendously while portraying Chandramukhi's unrequited love for Devdas as well as all those subtle emotions that were Bimalda's forte. As Natyashastra says, 'The tear should be in the eyes of the beholder, not in the eyes of the dancer.' I tried to live up to that.

What was it like to be directed by Bimal Roy in two classics?

Being directed by a creative person like Bimalda was wonderful. He was in tandem with his cameraman Dilip Gupta and people still talk about the wonderful top-angle shot of me swirling whilst dancing to the song O Aanewale.

What an eye Bimalda had for framing shots!
I saw Bimal Roy's Devdas again a few years ago, almost 50 years after it had been made! I found it very intelligently made; the scenes flowed so beautifully. There is just one scene with both Suchitra Sen and me in the film, and it's beautiful.

Bimalda showed me walking down a village road and Paro passed by in a palanquin which he shot separately. Bimalda made us just look at each other in the scene.

He was a gentle person who would answer my queries most softly. With all his greatness, he was simply personified. He explained the Devdas shot, saying that neither woman knew of the other's connection to Devdas, but some unknown, uncanny instinct made them look in the other's direction. This shot has a tremendous impact when seen in the context of the story.

Did you interact with Suchitra Sen?

Since we didn't have a scene together, Suchitra Sen and I didn't meet each other. I would have loved to meet Suchitra Sen as I admired her a lot as an actress.

Immediately after Devdas,

Bimal Roy cast you in the title role in Madhumati (1958). What was your reaction?

I was thrilled. Madhumati's song Aaja Re Pardesi Main Toh Kab Se Khadi Is Paar was hauntingly sung by Lata Mangeshkar and I find it is still popular.

The song was originally shot in Nainital but had to be reshot near Bombay because of some technical glitch. Bimalda was a perfectionist. Bimalda also gave us a lot of creative liberty.

Madhumati had several song-and-dance numbers and for one of them, Ghadi Ghadi Mera Dil Dhadke, instead of employing a choreographer, he just asked me to do the song my way.

I thought long and hard about it and devised some exuberant, running movements. I decided

to run like a deer in a jungle to capture my rustic character's essence. It wasn't a dance in the true sense, yet I thought the end result was very graceful.

In both the Roy films, you starred opposite Dilip Kumar with whom you made one of the golden era's most famous screen pairs.

This was a definite high for me. Dilip Kumar and I eventually starred in as many as seven films together.

Throughout the 1950s and the 1960s, you were one of the most popular heroines on the Hindi screen.

Besides my Bimalda movies, I've done some wonderful films like Ganga Jumna, Sadhana and Sangam.

I worked with directors of the calibre of B R Chopra in Sadhana, Amiya Chakraborty in Kathputli and Raj Kapoor in Sangam.

You were also known for being rather aloof and keeping to yourself.

I didn't socialise at all.

So what would you do when not shooting?

I would practise my dance. My outings were limited to award functions or special occasions.

I remember a benefit cricket match in which Nargis, Raj Kapoor, Suraiya, Nimmi and Pran participated. I didn't befriend my contemporaries.
What was the point?

You chose to draw the curtains on your film career when you are still a successful star. In fact, your last film Ganwar (1970) was a box office success. Was it difficult for you to make this decision?

I said goodbye to films in 1968 after I got married to Dr Bali. In 1974, after my son Suchhindra was born, I moved to Madras. When I shifted, I had to close down my dancing academy in the Bombay locations of Matunga and Peddar Road even though they were flourishing. arting from my dance students was the most painful aspect of leaving Bombay.

You remained devoted to dance.

Just as my film Madhumati was a reincarnation subject, I too believe in reincarnation. Of course, we take new births till we attain moksha.
In fact, my dancing is a way of attaining moksha, by surrendering completely to the Lord.

‘Alaya Wants None Of The Nepotism’

‘Alaya has kept her career disconnected from me in every way.’ ‘She wanted to achieve success by herself without any help or interference.’

Pooja Bedi is a starkly different mother to her actress-influencer daughter Alaya F.

Unlike other star mothers in filmdom, she neither demands mosambi juice on the sets nor is she ruthlessly ambitious for her daughter. Pooja's life is not an extension of her daughter's. Pooja talks about finding the sweet spot: The balance where she can be a loving mom and let her daughter develop wings and fly.

"Parenting isn't about control. It's about empowering your child to live their fullest life, and if staying separately is what she seeks for personal growth, I fully support it."

From being a star to a star mother, what is your take on this shifting dynamic?

I've played all three roles: Star kid, star and now star mom. I remember my mom (danseuse Protima Bedi) telling me how people would whisper 'Pooja Bedi's mom' as she walked by, and how proud it made her feel. I know now what she meant as the same happens to me.

It's so utterly exciting that my child has made a wonderful and positive mark on people. They come up to me in droves excitedly talking about her talent, her grounded nature and her incredible fitness videos on Instagram.

Who attracts more attention when you two go out together today?

We get recognised equally but I only get paparazzied when I'm with her at restaurants or the airport. It's obviously the younger generation that attracts more media eyeballs.

You give your star daughter a high degree of independence. Since when did Alaya live separately?

Alaya is an ultra loving, caring and family oriented girl, but she loves her space and independence. She moved out three years ago at the age of 24.

Parenting isn't about control, it's about empowering your child to live their fullest life. If staying separately is what she seeks for personal growth, I support it.

My doors are always open, and so are hers. Home is where the heart is.

You pointedly distance yourself from Alaya's career. Does it come easily or do you have to force yourself not to butt into Alaya's professional life?

It's not me, Alaya has kept her career disconnected from me in every way. She wanted to achieve success by herself without any help or interference.

I have never been invited to her sets, or advertising shoots or professional events. I only see her full movie at premiere time. She's highly focussed, uber disciplined, obsessive about her routines and wants none of the nepotism angle. She's a self-made girl.

Did you ever bring Alaya to work?

I have always involved my kids in my career. I used to bring them to the sets of my talk show, my dance show, Bigg Boss, and even flew them to South Africa for the finale of Fear Factor.

Are you mirroring how your mother Protima Bedi related to your life and career?

Yes, in a sense, my mom and I had a similar relationship to what I share with Alaya -- very loving, very supportive, very close, yet our professional journeys were our own.

My mom immersed herself in creating her dream Nrityagram and I am doing the same with my dream, Happy Soul, my holistic health and wellness venture.

How would you describe your relationship with Alaya today?

I love being a mom. We go for workouts together, dinner dates, and we spoil each other. I will literally fly with her for one day to Goa to go kayaking and stand-up paddle boarding. There are nights when we just chill and chat and chat some more.

She calls me 'Yapper Mom'. And she's a very generous, highly

protective and loving sister to Omar. Just last week, she hugged me and said I was so much fun to be with ... little moments like that make my heart sing.

I think every generation from my mom to me to Alaya has got many degrees calmer, that journey is apparent.

Do her father Farhan and you interact regularly about the children after the divorce or is it awkward?

I share a wonderful rapport with Farhan, his wife Laila and their son Zaan. We are family.

We meet, dine together, party together and share immense goodwill for each other. The interest of our kids is top of the charts for us. It's the best outcome of a divorce as kids don't get scarred or feel incomplete.

How does Alaya relate to your fiancé Maneck Contractor?

My kids adore Maneck. They were thrilled that we got engaged but feel terrible for him as they think I'm more than just a handful to deal with.

I'm super-high energy, have a million dreams and am strong and no-nonsense but funny and goofy too. I admit I can be overwhelming.

You were an unabashed rebel. Alaya's much more strait-laced. How did that happen?

Will there ever be a collaboration between the two of you?

Recently, Alaya and I did an episode on Farah Khan's cookery show, and it was so fun. Last year, on Mother's Day, she did a take on Pehla Nasha (Pooja's song from Jo Jeeta Wohi Sikandar) for her social media reels and made me feature in it too. Every such moment creates unimaginably happy earthquakes in my heart chambers.

What is your advice to her on her love life?

My kids have learnt by watching me navigate my relationships that it's the journey that's important, not goal posts. It's important to let go gracefully if things aren't working out; gratitude and respect are key elements in a break-up.

They've seen me stay good friends with all my exes. Actions speak louder than words. I think it's important for a parent to lead by example and not just be a gyaan giver.

Do you ever find yourself pestering her to find the right guy?

I can't wait to meet the lucky man who will one day enter her life and sweep her off her grounded feet. I still can't believe she is now as old as I was when I gave birth to her.

'The Rejections Used To Shatter Me'

As you gain experience, you realise that none of this is personal. The failures actually teach you bigger and better lessons.

Like thousands of aspirants in Mumbai, **Palak Jaiswal** had to wait for years before she got her first acting break since she moved from her hometown Bhopal. She kept herself busy in theatre and commercials before landing her first major role in SonyLIV's well-received show **Black, White & Gray - Love Kills,** in which she plays a girl whose disappearance unearths a shocking murder mystery. "Social media is your digital portfolio now. It is easier for the people to find out about you and connect. But ultimately, it's your talent that counts,"

Your character in Black, White And Gray is so twisted. What was your experience in playing such a role?

Since I have been in theatre, I can separate myself from the character I am playing. Usually, the motive is to bridge the gap between the two. That's where you find your character. For this particular character, I have to find out why she is making these choices. I had to find out the problems she is dealing with.

Were you comfortable with the bold scenes in this show?

There are not many bold scenes. And these scenes are not vulgar.

The scenes are justified.
To prepare for bold scenes, we had intimacy workshops so that both actors feel comfortable with what they are doing. It should not feel like you are doing something you don't want to do.

And, of course, we were told about these scenes beforehand.The director and creative team had explained how they were going to shoot it. During the shoot, we had an intimacy coordinator. She guided us; she gave us a safe word in case we didn't want to do anything. Overall, it was a very comfortable process both for me and my co-star Mayur (More).

What are your favourite crime thrillers?

I am a big fan of David Fincher movies. I love Gone Girl. I love Amazing Amy as a character.

Somewhere, I was hoping to play a character like that. A character that's not your usual girl, who is slightly insane. Thankfully, my wish was fulfilled with Black, White And Gray. In Hindi, I loved watching Gupt. It had a great blend of crime, suspense and thrill.

Where do you feel most fulfilled as an actor, in front of a camera or live audience?

These are just mediums. For me, acting in itself is a very fulfilling job. What's more fulfilling is to find a character that challenges you. To find different aspects of your character is a very interesting process.

Camera is a very break and stop process. But in theatre, once you start there's no stop. It keeps on going. Both are different mediums and very enjoyable.

Do you enjoy the process of auditioning?

It's daunting.
There's always some nervousness in you. You don't get a complete script, so you enact on the basis of a little information about that particular character. Sometimes, the brief that the casting agents give is different from the director's. Many times you lose out on a role because of that. Auditions are very luck-based.

How important is social media in a budding actor's journey?

Social media plays a very big part in terms of marketing yourself. Actors don't go to production and cast people with portfolios in their hands anymore. Social media is your digital portfolio now. It is easier for the people to find out about you and connect. But yes, ultimately it's your talent that counts. Social media only helps you in creating your existence.

Tell us about yourself.

I come from Bhopal.
My parents are extremely supportive, and have given me freedom of what I want to do. My father brought me into theatre when I told him about my acting aspirations. He said if you want to learn acting, you should start with theatre. I moved to Mumbai in 2008 and did my schooling here. I was really good at dancing but didn't want to get into dancing professionally. I shifted my focus to acting, then started giving auditions. My professional acting began in 2019 when I started doing commercials.

Was it difficult to wait out your first break?

I always believed that patience and hard work will get me where I want to be. The most important thing in this profession is perseverance and believing in yourself. The bigger the dream the better it is because then you will work towards it. The rest you have to leave up to the universe. Everything has its own timing.

How do you deal with rejections?

At first, I would be heartbroken.
The rejections used to shatter me. You take them personally. But as you gain experience, you realise that none of this is personal. The failures actually teach you bigger and better lessons. Now I only focus on the positive part of things.

'WHEN I GO TO A HOTEL, I CHECK UNDER THE BED'

'A Lufthansa crew member reached a hotel in the middle of night and slept.' 'The next morning, something fell and she bent to pick it up.' 'She saw a dead body under the bed!'

After working as a flight attendant, **Priyanka Setia** moved to modelling, theatre, and finally, OTT series. In the last 10 years, she has done films and shows like Hawaizaada, Begum Jaan, Sacred Games, Aranyak, Rudra: The Edge of Darkness, Sirf Ek Bandaa Kaafi Hai and Khauf, the horror series, "There was a lot of emotional turmoil, fear, guilt and unpredictability," Priyanka says about her Khauf role.

What made you say yes to a horror series like Khauf?

The script.
It was offered to me, and I auditioned for the part. When I read the script, it was so beautiful that I instantly thought what amazing writing it was.

Do you like watching horror?

Love it! I am a horror buff.

Did you have any eerie experiences on set while shooting for Khauf?

No. But I had anxiety.
I am usually an anxious person but during this shoot, it was more. I thought it could be because of the heat or the nonstop shoot or that I wasn't resting or eating enough. But later, when I reflected on it, I realised the show was tough.

In it, a crime happens, and four girls are a part of it. These girls are not allowed to leave the haunted hostel. They can't tell the warden that something is wrong because nobody else can see or feel it, so they don't believe it. My character Reema is not allowed to see her daughter; my husband has stopped talking to me. So there was a lot of emotional turmoil, fear, guilt and unpredictability. I am pregnant in the series, so I am also scared about that. What will happen to the baby I'm carrying? Thinking about these things affected my mind.

Have you experienced any eerie moments in your life?

No, but some instances have stayed with me. I used to be a flight attendant for Lufthansa. Once, I was staying at a hotel in Kolkata, and was on the phone, talking to my boyfriend. It was night, and I was in a corridor.

At the end of the corridor, there was this one room, whose doors were barricaded with wooden planks. I found that very strange because usually hotel properties in India are gorgeous. Later, I got to know that the room was haunted, that's why it was barricaded. Then, there was a story from a Lufthansa crew member, where that person reached a hotel in the middle of night and slept. The next morning, something fell and she bent to pick it up. She saw a dead body under the bed! After that, whenever I go to a hotel, I check under the bed.

You work alongside brilliant actors like Rajat Kapoor and Geeta Kulkarni in Khauf.

I decided to up my game to match them. I saw them working and realised they are such nice, humble people. No tantrums. I know Geetudidi from my theatre days. I have seen how meticulous and hardworking she is. I had a scene with her where she's drunk. Before the scene started, in the evening, she started talking to everybody on set like she was drunk. Everybody was wondering if she was really drunk or just preparing for the role. Rajat sir is so humble. He always knew his lines. Shilpa Shukla was also very controlled on set. Even if there was too much heat or pareshani on set, she had no nakras.

Tell us your experience on the sets.

It was beautiful. In the series, Chum's (Darang) character and my character don't get along and we keep fighting. But Chum and I were like best friends on set. We used to come together, live together, and eat together. Even if my scene was getting late, she would wait for me. Our vanity vans were together.

Tell us about yourself.

I am from Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh. I pursued my BSc in agriculture in Nainital. Then I came to Delhi and flew for Lufthansa for six years. I was modeling simultaneously. Someone in my modeling agency asked me to shift to Bombay. I met Anurag Kashyap on a flight; he was coming back from the screening of That Girl In Yellow Boots in Venice.

He suggested that I try theatre and gave me Makarand (Deshpande) sir's number. I shifted to Bombay, lied to my family that Lufthansa had sent me there. Otherwise, my family of doctors would never have allowed me. Makarand sir was generous enough to let me continue to fly and rehearse on holidays. In Lufthansa, you can plan your roster, so I started taking short flights. When I started getting more roles in theatre, I decided to quit my job and continue acting.

How did your parents react when you finally told them?

They were very, very, angry.
Bhai, ek toh they were angry that I wanted to be a flight attendant. My father is a doctor. My brother is a neurosurgeon. My dadu was a doctor in Punjab. My chachu was also a doctor. I was a rebel kid. They were actually very scared and rightly so, because it is a struggle. I realised it afterwards.

Since you were working, there must have been no financial struggle.

I knew I couldn't ask for money from my family. So from renting an apartment for Rs 35,000, I moved into Rs 10,000 per month PG (paying guest) accommodation. I stayed with five other girls. There is no certainty in this profession.

You joined Pankaj Kapur's theatre group.

My first acting workshop was with Pankaj Kapur. He is wonderful, and I learnt a lot from him. He taught me how to use my body while acting.

How did you get into films?

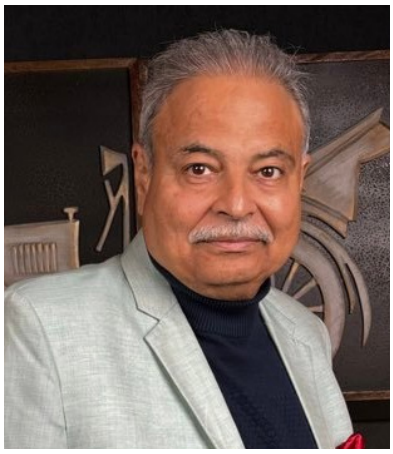
I auditioned for Hawaizaada and got it. I gave a lot of auditions but there were a lot of rejections. It's still a struggle; it's not that I am getting many opportunities. But I am doing well. I started directing ads and even a short film. Then COVID happened. There was no work for two-and-a-half years. Then, I got a chance to write the Khalbali Records series.

Are your parents happy now?

I don't think so. My mother has always been happy but my father has been very ambitious. Maybe he is happy but I've never had that one-to-one chat with him.

OTT Has Become 'Desi Porn'

'This kind of content will destroy our culture.'



The Supreme Court of India on April 28 raised serious concerns over obscene content on Over the Top (OTT) platforms and on social media, and stated some regulation is needed. The apex court also sought a response from the Union government, Amazon Prime, Netflix, ALTT, Ullu, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and X seeking their detailed perspective and replies.

The court action came on a public interest litigation filed by former Central Information Commissioner **Uday Mahurkar** urging the apex court to ban such OTT platforms which were promoting obscene and vulgar content in India. "Husband and wife having sex is a private matter, why do you want to showcase it in public? This is not good,"

Why did you go to court over vulgarity shown on OTT channels, what prompted it?

Let me take you back to 2003. There was a movie called Jism starring Bipasha Basu. The subject of the movie was the infidelity of a married woman. At that point I had raised objections over this movie's subject at a seminar that was held for a nationalist cause.

I had pointed out way back then that if we as a society continue to go like the movie Jism portrays, we will be over as a society.

Unfortunately, people who were closely associated with promoting Indian cultural values could not do much against it. Post Jism, the trend of making movies on such subjects started growing.

I took every community together, be it Muslims, Parsis, Sikhs, Christians and Hindus to save family values from movies like Jism. Unfortunately, I met with little success then.

But what was your objection to Jism?

It was perverted content. In 2018, OTT content came. Today, OTT has become desi porn. In 2020, we faced the Covid pandemic and the OTT condition worsened with more and more obscene movies being showcased. Right now there are 909 OTT platforms in India. Out of these 909 OTT platforms, 700 to 800 of them showcase either vulgar or obscene content. These OTT channels have stooped so low that they are showing father-in-law having an affair with daughter-in-law or teacher having an affair with student or brother-in-law having affair with his brother's wife. This kind of content will destroy our culture in future.

But wasn't pornography available before OTT too?

It was, but now OTT has worsened the situation by making pornography easily accessible. By showcasing perverted content on OTT, one can influence and damage the minds of our teenage children. In 2022, when I was Right to Information commissioner, I met a friend who told me that our culture is in danger if we keep on going like this with OTT content.

He also told me that the influence of Bollywood on society was so strong that no one would listen to our pleas on OTT content. We also came to the conclusion that pornography is a cause of rape. And if we wanted to, we had to prove it. Once proved, there will be awareness in the society.

Do you seriously believe what is shown on some OTT channels leads to rapes?

Yes, 100 percent. I have proof.

Did you give any examples in your PIL?

Yes, we submitted all the proof in court. You must have read about kids raping other kids. Recently there was a case where a 55-year-old man raped his brother's young daughter. There is a famous case in Florida, US, where the accused admitted that he got addicted to watching pornography from childhood. And when he raped a girl for the first time he killed the girl to hide evidence of his crime. This became a habit for him. And when he met other rape accused in Florida jail, he said all accused stated that pornography was the reason they started raping women. We have done research on this subject and therefore want action against OTT channels showcasing porn content.

Which OTT channels in particular?

There are many like Alt Balaji, Ullu, Netflix, Amazon Prime Video. We have taken examples of films and taken details of every film that has been showcased on these OTT channels which are obscene. Netflix had 125 films that showcased obscene content. Another one from Ekta Kapoor is XXX Uncensored. The less I say about it the better it is because it crosses all the limits of decency.

You also wanted Ekta Kapoor to be arrested under the POCSO (Protection of Child from Sexual Offences) Act. Is this not going too far?

No, not at all. When you are showcasing a girl in school uniform involved in intimate scenes, then you gotta be arrested under POCSO.

How do you control these OTT platforms?

Ban them. Muslim countries do not allow such content to be telecast. Singapore and South Korea are the other two countries where such content is strictly monitored.

Why don't we regulate OTT platforms?

It is because Ekta Kapoor and other Bollywood biggies have a tremendous influence on our society.

Why has the government failed to take action against OTT channels?

We appealed to them but they have not done anything on this issue yet. Only once were 18 OTT channels and 57 social media handles banned by the Government of India. Once the Ullu app was bringing in its IPO but then I approached SEBI (the Securities of Exchange Board of India) against them through my NGO, Save Culture Save Bharat Foundation. I told SEBI that Ullu claimed they are an entertainment company but I registered a protest at SEBI stating they are a porn-based company. After which their IPO did not come out.

It is said that movies depict what happens in society. Do you feel so?

No, this is wrong analysis. Freedom comes with responsibility. This is also written in the Indian Constitution. You cannot misuse your creative freedom. We want a complete ban on porn in India. Fifty years ago there was no porn and people in India were living, isn't it?

Are you saying 50 years ago rapes were not happening in India?

This is a matter of research. I am talking about right now, rapes are happening because of the porn industry. Husband and wife having sex is a private matter, why do you want to showcase it in public? This is not good.

A film director once told me titillation is very natural for a human being and when you showcase it on the big screen it sells.

This is wrong. This particular director wants to sell his dirty thoughts to the public so he made this statement to you. Moreover, we believe in Viksit Bharat and if you showcase such content on OTT, will we ever be able to achieve our goal by 2047?

Today, the whole world is looking at us and we need to save our culture.

Top 10 Indian Fashion Trends 2025

The fashion world in India during 2025 will unite the Indian traditional heritage with modern fashion trends through a unified combination of ethnic styles with contemporary styles. Additionally, Bollywood fashion exhibits a compelling fusion of India's traditional formal elements and present-day popularity which simultaneously influences national tastes as well as worldwide fashion trends. As of January 2025, Indian fashion is embracing a dynamic blend of traditional aesthetics and contemporary innovations. Here are the top 10 Indian fashion trends shaping the fashion landscape of 2025.

1. Sustainable and Handmade Fashion

Natural sustainable production has become a serious design priority as makers focus on developing materials from renewable sources while creating handcrafted products. The ongoing movement supports both environmentalism and traditional Indian art forms. Onscreen actors from Bollywood now prefer clothes that are sustainable along with handcrafted items. Activating environmental consciousness and showcasing India's traditional artisanal culture defines this emerging trend.

2. Revival of Traditional Motifs

Classic Indian motifs such as paisleys, birds, peacocks, and lotus flowers receive contemporary adaptations which present themselves as appealing to contemporary youth while remaining faithful to cultural heritage. Art-Deco inspired designs revival in the Bollywood world brings back elaborate geometrical patterns alongside prominent motifs in their enchants. Contemporary fashion receives its vintage elegance through this design revival.

3. Fusion of Western Silhouettes with Indian Craftsmanship

Through expert blending techniques designers combine Western line structures with indigenous Indian handicraft techniques to produce innovative fusion fashion that suits the global market. The new collections display this crossover by featuring combinations of bead-drop tassel hems alongside sequin embellishments. Festive charm and captivating visual appeal are added to clothing through these design elements.

4. Emphasis on Embroidery and Sequins

Designers maintain intricate embroidery share equal prominence with sequins to add refined elegance to both traditional lehengas and sarees. The additions of embellishments serve to increase both visual attractiveness together with showcasing design complexity.

5. Adoption of Co-ord Sets and Pre-stitched Sarees

Many fashion-conscious women favour pre-stitched Sarees together with the co-ord Sets trend. The market shows growing interest in co-ord sets combined with pre-stitched sarees because they combine practicality with modern style. Because of their modern twist on classic attire these clothing styles become suitable for multiple events.

6. Maximalist Fashion

Through maximalistic strategies, Bollywood fashion displays abundant bright tonalities together with intricate decorations and multi-layered accessories to create bold extravagant attire.

7. Long-Sleeved Blouses

Long-sleeved blouses start to pop in fashion trends. Bollywood designer Manish Malhotra pairs sarees and lehengas with his exclusive versions of wide-sleeved blouses to produce sophisticated silhouettes.

8. Aquatic Hues and Animal Prints

Brooklyn Bridge store manager Amna Khanähmed shows trends by embracing aquatic colour combinations crafted using shiny metallic effects. The fashion world sees a return of timeless animal prints which include leopard, tiger and snake patterns to offer fashion fans dynamic and bold options. Animal prints serve to produce bold adventurous accents for various clothing combinations.

9. Mocha Mousse as the Colour of the Year

For 2025, the Pantone Color Institute selected Mocha Mousse, a warming, chocolatey brown hue imbued with richness. The delectable qualities of chocolate and coffee aims to evoke a global mood of connection, comfort and harmony. So, One can choose to create a silhouette in solid chocolate brown colour or mix and match brown with golden or beige.

10. Expansion of Indian Designers into Global Markets

The world now recognises how renowned Indian designers capitalise on international markets by proving the adaptable nature and worldwide attractiveness of Indian fashion design. Sabyaschi Mukherjee marked his 25-year career in the fashion industry by staging a grand exhibition in Mumbai that exhibited how he seamlessly matches global clothing styles with artisanal Indian techniques. The fashion industry in India evolves daily through cultural conventions blending with creative advancements to serve international markets with their broad customer base.

"08 Simple Ways"

To Stay Healthy During Summer

As the mercury rises and the days stretch longer welcoming the summer season, the pursuit of health and wellness takes on new dimensions. Heat-related illnesses, including heat exhaustion and heatstroke, become more prevalent during the hotter months, particularly among vulnerable populations such as the elderly and children. Furthermore, dietary habits tend to fluctuate during the summer, with an increase in the consumption of cold sugary beverages, high-calorie snacks, and fast food. Keep hunger pangs at bay this summer with Threptin High-Calorie Protein Supplement infused with B-vitamins—an essential addition to your summer survival kit! Despite these challenges, the summer season also presents ample opportunities for individuals to adopt healthier lifestyles. Farmers' markets flourish during this time, offering a bounty of fresh fruits and vegetables that can form the foundation of a nutritious diet. In this article, we'll explore essential tips for staying healthy and nourished throughout the summer season, empowering you to embrace good health and make the most of these sun-soaked days.

1. Hydrate, Hydrate, Hydrate

One of the most critical aspects of staying healthy during the summer season is staying adequately hydrated. The heat and humidity can lead to increased sweating, which can quickly deplete your body of essential fluids. Make it a habit to drink plenty of water throughout the day, aiming for at least eight glasses daily. Carry a reusable water bottle with you wherever you go, and replenish fluids lost through sweating during outdoor activities. Add more coconut water, flavored water, fresh juices, and buttermilk to your diet to up your hydration levels.

2. Embrace Seasonal Produce

Summer brings an abundance of fresh, seasonal fruits and vegetables bursting with flavor and nutrients. Incorporate a variety of colorful produce into your meals, such as berries, watermelon, tomatoes, cucumbers, and leafy greens. Not only are these foods hydrating, but they're also rich in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that support overall health and immunity. Along with eating healthy fruits and vegetables, you can also add nutritional drinks to your diet so that you dont miss out on any essential nutrients. Grab your pack of Ensure Powder Complete Balanced Nutrition Drink for Adults for complete and balanced nutrition—stay nourished, stay healthy!

3. Opt for Lighter, Refreshing Meals

With the heat of summer, heavy, rich meals can leave you feeling sluggish and bloated. Instead, focus on lighter, refreshing foods that won't weigh you down. Experiment with salads loaded with fresh vegetables, grilled chicken, fruit-based desserts, and healthy shakes. These dishes are not only delicious but also provide essential nutrients to keep you energized and satisfied.

4. Limit Sugary & Alcoholic Beverages

While it's tempting to reach for sugary sodas and alcoholic beverages during summer festivities, moderation is key. These drinks can be high in empty calories and contribute to dehydration. Opt for healthier alternatives like sparkling water with a splash of fruit juice or herbal iced tea sweetened with honey.

5. Carry Healthy Snacks

Stay fueled and energized under the scorching sun by packing protein bars for instant energy during summer outings. These convenient snacks provide a quick boost of nutrition to keep you going throughout the day. Make sure to stash them in your bag or car to stay prepared for any adventure during the hot summer months. Keep your energy levels up during the summer heat with Rite Bite Choco Classic Max Protein Daily Bar whenever you're on the go for a convenient and instant energy boost!

6. Stay Cool & Beat the Heat

When temperatures soar, staying cool and hydrated is essential to prevent heat-related illnesses such as heat exhaustion and heatstroke. Seek out air-conditioned spaces like shopping malls, libraries, or community centers to escape the heat during the hottest parts of the day. If you must be outdoors, take frequent breaks in the shade, use fans or misting devices to cool off and wear lightweight, breathable clothing to allow for air circulation. Prolonged exposure to high temperatures can result in dehydration, heat exhaustion, or potentially life-threatening heatstroke. Familiarize yourself with the symptoms of these conditions to ensure prompt medical attention if needed: Signs of heat exhaustion include heavy sweating, dizziness, and lightheadedness. If untreated, heat exhaustion can lead to heatstroke, a medical emergency.- Signs of heat stroke include a high body temperature, confusion, and unconsciousness. Immediate medical intervention is crucial when these symptoms arise. Stay hydrated and energized this summer with Glucon-D Instant Energy, your go-to health drink to prevent dehydration and beat heat exhaustion!

7. Practice Proper Food Safety

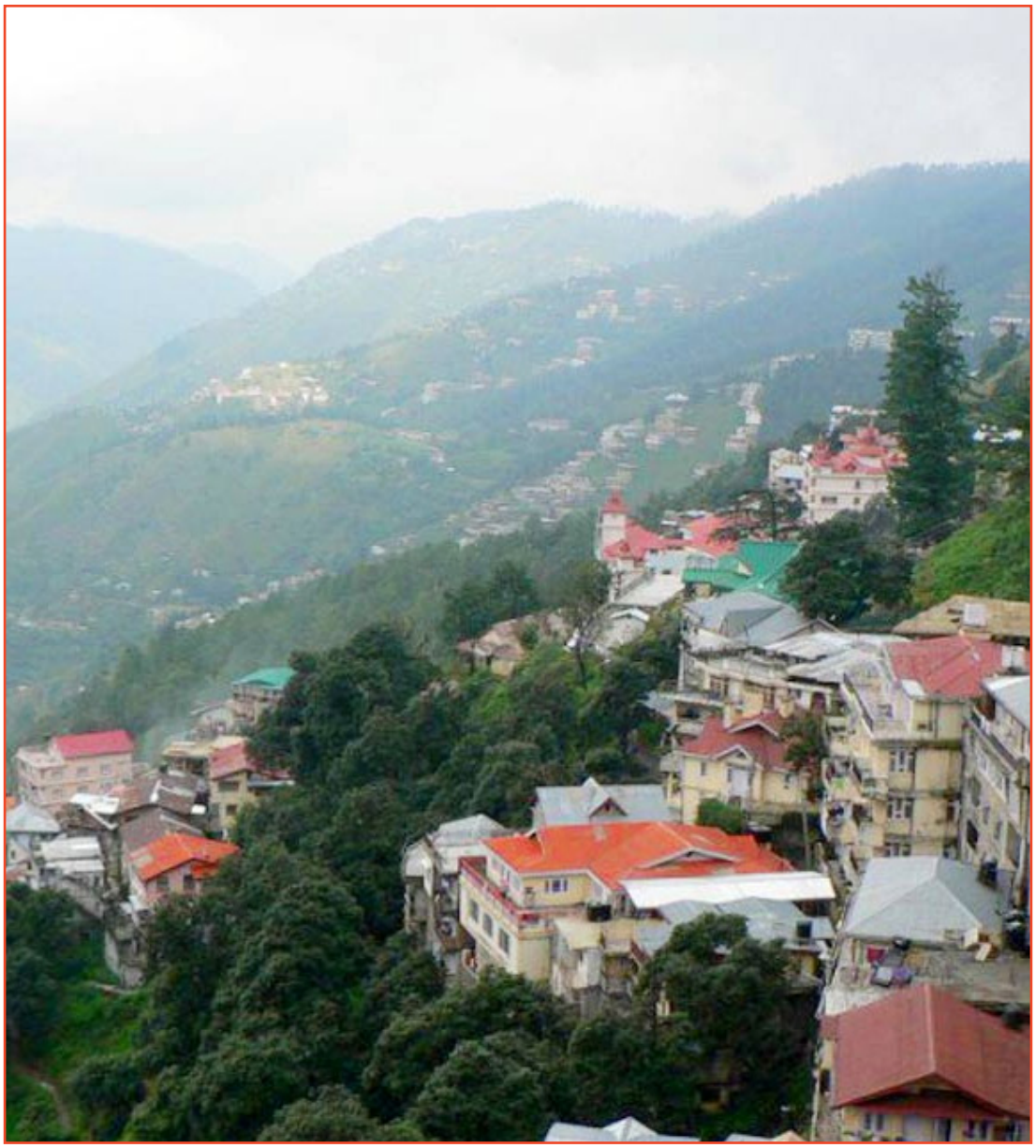
With warmer temperatures comes an increased risk of foodborne illnesses, so it's crucial to practice proper food safety when preparing and storing food. Keep perishable items refrigerated or chilled with ice packs when outdoors, and avoid leaving food out in the sun for extended periods. Wash your hands frequently when handling food, use separate cutting boards for raw and cooked items, and cook meats to the appropriate internal temperature to kill harmful bacteria.

8. Get Adequate Rest & Sleep

While summer days may be filled with excitement and adventure, it's essential to prioritize rest and sleep for your overall health and well-being. Aim for seven to nine hours of quality sleep each night to allow your body to rest and recharge. Create a comfortable sleep environment by keeping your bedroom cool, dark, and quiet, and establish a relaxing bedtime routine to signal your body that it's time to wind down.

By following these eight essential tips for staying healthy during the summer season, you can enjoy all that this vibrant time of year has to offer while safeguarding your well-being.
So go ahead, embrace the warmth and sunshine, and make the most of your summer while taking care of yourself along the way.

Best Places To Visit In May In India

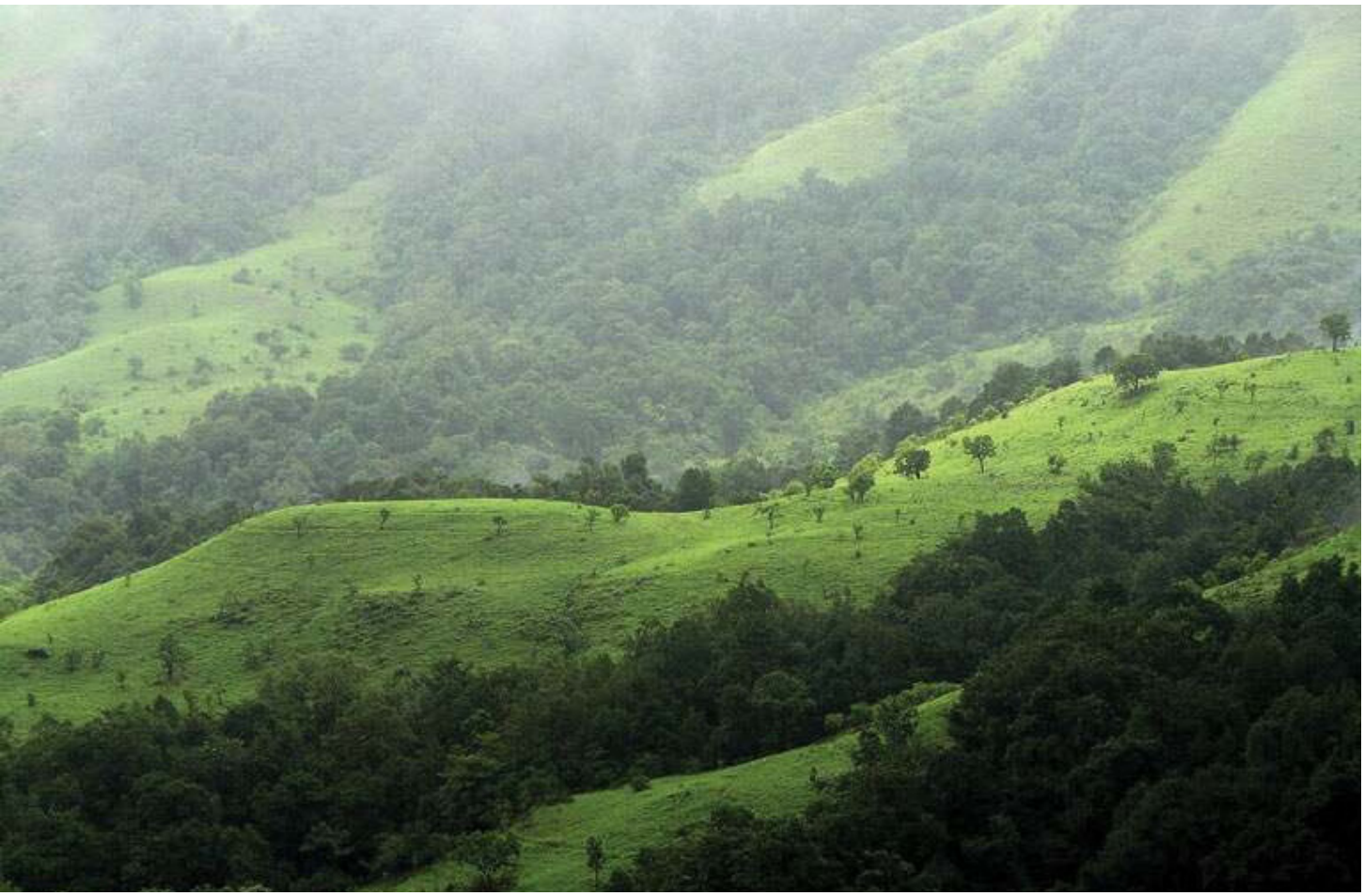


01 Munnar, Kerala

Munnar is a popular hill station in the state of Kerala, located approximately 1,600 m above sea level. The place is renowned for its vast tea plantations, breathtaking natural beauty, gorgeous green hills and abundant flora and fauna. You are free to explore the places since the summer months are relatively mild around here. Eravikulam National Park is a famous tourist attraction known for Neelakurinji flowers. This flower blooms once every twelve years, making it a fascinating scene to witness. Mattupetty, Anamudi Peak, Chinnakanal and Anayirangal, Pallivasal, and Tea Museum are some of the best tourist places in Munnar. The place also offers adventurous activities such as trekking, and rock climbing. Trek to Meesapulimala, the second-highest peak in the western ghats, is something you must take.

Kudremukh, Karnataka 02

Located in the district of Chikmagalur in the state of Karnataka, Kudremukh is a famous tourist destination in South India. Breathtaking landscapes, lush forests, and trekking trails — Kudremukh is such a destination that includes all. In May, the weather remains hot during the day, while the nights are pleasant enough. Explore the destinations this time around before the monsoon starts. In May, the landscape in Kudremukh is green and vibrant, offering a picturesque background for outdoor activities. Explore the various treks in Kudremukh including the Kudremukh Peak Trek which takes you to the highest point in the region. Don't miss the Unesco World Heritage Site Varaha Parvatha, a 1458 m tall mountain range. You can also visit the Hanuman Gundi Falls and Kadambi Falls which are famous waterfalls around here.



03 Horsley Hills, Andhra Pradesh

Known as the 'Ooty of Andhra', Horsley Hills is a scenic hill station between Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Legend says that the hill station is named after a British General named W. D. Horsley. The region is covered with dense forests, rolling hills and gorgeous meadows, making it a paradise for nature lovers and adventure seekers. One of the main attractions of Horsley Hills is the Horsley Hill Zoo, home to various species of animals and birds. In case you're visiting with your family, it's an opportunity for the kids to learn more about the local wildlife.Apart from that, you can explore the Gali Bandalu, where the wind blows through the entire day, making it a perfect spot to take a walk. The place is also known for adventure where you can opt for trekking, rope sliding, zorbing, and plenty more.

Kotagiri, Tamil Nadu 04

Kotagiri is a small town located in the Nilgiri district of Tamil Nadu, at an elevation of 5,882 above sea level. It is known for its scenic beauty, tea plantations and pleasant climate. The town is a surreal and picturesque destination that provides you with a tranquil retreat from the hustle and bustle of city life. You will get several opportunities for hiking and trekking including the popular trek to the Kodanad viewpoint. The town of Kotagiri is surrounded by gorgeous tea plantations, which contribute to its beauty. Located near Kotagiri, Catherine Falls is an outstanding waterfall that you should definitely visit. Another notable waterfall is Elk Falls which you need to reach by hiking. A prominent landmark of the town is Rangaswamy Pillar which is a sacred rock formation.

05 Mount Abu, Rajasthan

Mount Abu, located in the Aravalli Range in the Sirohi district of Rajasthan, is the only hill station in the state. This place is regarded for its scenic beauty, cool weather and important historical and religious sites, especially for the Jains. Since summers are mild in this part of Rajasthan, it acts like a much-needed escape from the heat of the sands. Just in case the state of Rajasthan is calling you, check out Mount Abu tour this May. Mount Abu is known for its green landscapes, serene lakes and luxurious green meadows. Guru Shikhar, the highest peak of the Aravalli Range is located here. Another famous tourist attraction is the Dilwara temples, a group of five Jain temples, an outstanding example of Nagara architecture. You should also check out Nakki Lake, Gaumukh Temple, Achalgarh Fort, Toad Rock and Raghunath Temple. Also, make sure to do some shopping and taste the local cuisine of Rajasthan.

Tirthan Valley, Himachal Pradesh 06

Tirthan Valley is a picturesque location situated in the Kullu district of Himachal Pradesh, 1,600 m from the sea level. It is named after the Tirthan River that flows through the valley, surrounded by the great Himalayan National Park. The park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site as well, known for its diverse flora and fauna. In case you are desperately searching for an escape from city life, then it's just the perfect location for you. You will enjoy the natural beauty, surreal atmosphere and a variety of outdoor activities. It is also a perfect spot for bird watching, trekking, hiking, camping, river crossing and rappelling. The Tirthan River is famous for its clear water which makes it just the right spot for trout fishing. The entire area also includes beautiful Waterfalls, such as Tirthan Valley waterfall, and Serolsar Lake waterfall. Additionally, you can also opt for the Jalori Pass trek to enjoy the beauty of the Dhauladhar Mountain Range.

07 Pachmarhi, Madhya Pradesh

Known as the 'Queen of the Satpura Range', Pachmarhi is a lone hill station in the state of Madhya Pradesh. Located at an elevation of around 1,067 m above sea level, this place is regarded for its outstanding natural scenery and pleasant climate. The entire town is surrounded by forests, Waterfalls and serene landscapes. You will feel a peaceful atmosphere with a touch of ancient mythology and history, including colonial-era architecture. Pachmarhi is home to several ancient caves including Pandava Caves which date back to the time of Mahabharata. Other popular tourist attractions include the Bee Fall, Apsara Vihar, Jata Shankar Caves, Handi Khoh, Mahadeo Hill and Dhoopgarh, the highest point in central India.

Kausani, Uttarakhand 08

Kausani is a charming hill town in the state of Uttarakhand known for its stunning views of the Himalayas. You don't need to make an itinerary well to explore this place as it is best enjoyed by taking a walk here and there. You might also remember the place from the famous Bollywood movie 'Koi Mil Gaya' which was partially filmed here. Fascinated by its resemblance to the scenic beauty of Switzerland, Mahatma Gandhi himself called Kausani the 'Switzerland of India'. If you are the one who seeks serenity and peace more than anything, then don't miss visiting. The cool climate, and the majestic views of Trishul, Nanda Devi and Pancholi make this town a paradise for nature-loving travelers. Trekking, stargazing, and bird watching are quite popular activities around here. Additionally, make sure to explore Kausani Tea Estate as well.

09 Lonavala, Maharashtra

Known as the 'City of Caves', Lonavala is a famous hill town situated in Maharashtra. The town is located in the Sahyadri Range of the Western Ghats, at an elevation of 624 m from sea level. This place is also known for Chikki, a sweet snack made of jaggery and nuts. Just in case you hail from Pune or Mumbai, it could be a perfect weekend getaway for you. In Lonavala, you get to experience gorgeous landscapes, serene lakes, luxurious waterfalls and green forests. For sightseeing, you need to choose from Karla Caves, Bhushi Dam, Rajmachi Fort, Tiger's Leap, Lonavala Lake, Aamby Valley, and Imagicaa, an excellent amusement park. Also, don't forget to visit Sunil's Celebrity Wax Museum, home to hundreds of celebrity statues! In case you always look forward to getting some thrill wherever you go, then don't worry. Lonavala does offer some interesting outdoor activities like trekking and camping. You should definitely take the Andharban trek from Pimpri to Bhira.

Gangtok, Sikkim 10

Gangtok, the capital city of Sikkim, attracts lots of visitors because of its outstanding view of gorgeous Mount Kanchenjunga. Kanchenjunga is the highest peak in India and the highest in the world. The entire place feels like it has been taken out from the canvas of an artist who knew his art quite well. Apart from the stunning natural beauty, Gangtok is also regarded for its diverse culture, local markets and mouth-watering cuisine. The city includes plenty of Buddhist monasteries including Rumtek Monastery and Enchey Monastery. Other popular attractions are Nathula Pass, Tsomgo Lake, Hanuman Tok, Ganesh Tok, Tashi Viewpoint, and Jhakri Falls. Last but not least, don't return from Gangtok without taking part in some of the outdoor activities. You should try the white water rafting on River Teesta which is a great spot to do this!

11 Shillong, Meghalaya

Known as the 'Scotland of the East', the capital city of the state of Meghalaya offers scenic beauty and uncountable waterfalls. It is also home to a variety of cultures and tribes. The city includes rolling hills, lakes, cafes, golf courses, and museums. It is also regarded as the 'music capital of India', producing many prominent bands. When in Shillong, you must visit destinations like Shillong Peak, Umiam Lake, Elephant Falls, Don Bosco Museum, and Laitlum Canyons. However, you have to be prepared to battle with heavy rainfall. But rainfall just enhances the beauty of those Waterfalls cascading with full force. Shillong is someplace where the clouds are always nesting above the pine trees, making it a mystical place. Additionally, before you return, don't forget to check out the Double Decker Bridge which is a testimonial to the tribes. If you are in good health, then don't hesitate to walk through the bridge to witness an unforgettable journey.

Sandakphu, West Bengal 12

Sandakphu is a famous tourist destination, situated in the district of Darjeeling in West Bengal. Lying at an altitude of 3,636 m, Sandakphu can provide you with the greatest view of Kanchenjunga, the highest peak in India. And that's not all, you can actually witness Mount Everest, Lhotse and Makalu from here as well. This place is well regarded for its trekking trails, including the one that starts from Manebhanjan. The main attraction of Sandakphu is definitely the outstanding view of the Himalayan Range. In case you get lucky, you can witness the mountains on a clear day. It is indeed a dream destination for those who want to visit nature in its purest form. May is a considerably good time to visit Sandakphu since the weather is moderate. If you're interested in visiting a hill station this May, then look no further than here. You won't find another place like this where the world's tallest mountains are before you! These top places to visit in May in India are full of nature, culture and adventure. Lucky for you, the month of May is a wonderful time to check out various parts of India. You should definitely consider planning a vacation just before the rain comes to spoil the fun. To enjoy a hassle-free travel experience in India, you need to rely on a trusted tour company. Just in case you are unable to find a suitable tour package for your vacation, check out SOTC's official website. They have plenty of convenient and affordable tour packages to offer you. Go through the packages once before you make any decision, and get ready to explore!

June 2025

TAROT

Loveena Crystal Gaze
(Tea and Coffee Cup Reader, Tarot card reader)

ARIES
(March 21- April 19)

Perfect timing for you to move forward, keep charging ahead, All your hard work will bring fruit. Heaven is sending you good news regarding your Career. Give your cares and worries to Angels.

Angel msg- Angels are guiding you to new horizons in your life.

TAURUS
(April 20- May 21)

You are on right path, prayers have been answered. Spread your wings, your dreams will be fulfilled. Happiness awaits you. Financially a good period begins for you.

Angel msg- Travel abroad for job will be beneficial.

GEMINI
(May 22- June 20)

Take advantage of divine timing, your time has come to collect your rewards from heaven. Travel abroad for business deals will yield positive gains. Growth in your Career.

Angel msg- Abundance coming your way.

CANCER
(June 21-July 22)

Welcome the new dawn in your life, All blocks are over. Let Universe bring Changes in your Career. Divine timing is at work in your love life. Sunshine days ahead for you.

Angel msg- Open your arms to receive gifts from your creator. Magical energy is Surrounding you.

LEO
(July 23- Aug 22)

Finances are highlighted, Rejoice, celebrate..Magical energy is Surrounding you. Whats meant for you is on its way to you. Angels are blessing you and sending divine love in your life.

Angel msg- Angel of wishes are with you and helping you make a wish come true.

VIRGO
(Aug 23- Sept 22)

Stop worrying and Visualise a favorable outcome, something wonderful is going to happen. Bonds of love will be strengthed. Aim high, your Aura is energized for financial gains. A contract will be Signed.

Angel msg- Stay Optimistic, Angels are showering you with love and blessing.

LIBRA
(Sept 23- Oct 22)

A happy flow of Abundance is coming your way. Career blocks are over. A trip out of town, for work will prove beneficial. Love life blossoms. Rainbow of happiness is coming your way.

Angel msg- Embrace your hearts desire, a new home is in the works for you.

SCORPIO
(Oct 23- Nov 22)

Blessings from Universe are coming your way. Lucrative deals will be Signed. Your dreams will be manifested. Have patience and faith. Parents need your care and attention.

Angel msg- Reach for the stars, you will succeed.

SAGITTARIUS
(Nov 23- Dec 21)

Angels will manifest miracles in your life. A new job, venture will turn profitable, Universe is blessing you to achieve your goals, and blessing you with more comforts and luxury.

Angel msg- Loved ones in heaven are blessing you.

CAPRICON
(Dec 22- Jan 20)

Welcome the new dawn in your life, Revive your relationship with your loved one. Let Universe bring Changes in your Career. Divine timing is at at work in your love life.

Angel msg- Time for changes and new beginnings.

AQUARIUS
(Jan 21- Feb 18)

Financial stability is assured. Visualise your dreams and smooth road ahead. Money inflow is encouraging. Reach for your goals, fly high, don't descend.

Angel msg- News you have been waiting for anxiously comes through and this is a relief.

PISCES
(Feb 19- March 20)

Investment in property is highlighted, Soar with happiness, vibrant Career Opportunities in your Career will bring financial gains. Let heaven help you. Health needs care.

Angel msg- Dreams and desires will be rewarded and realized.

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- Project Work

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