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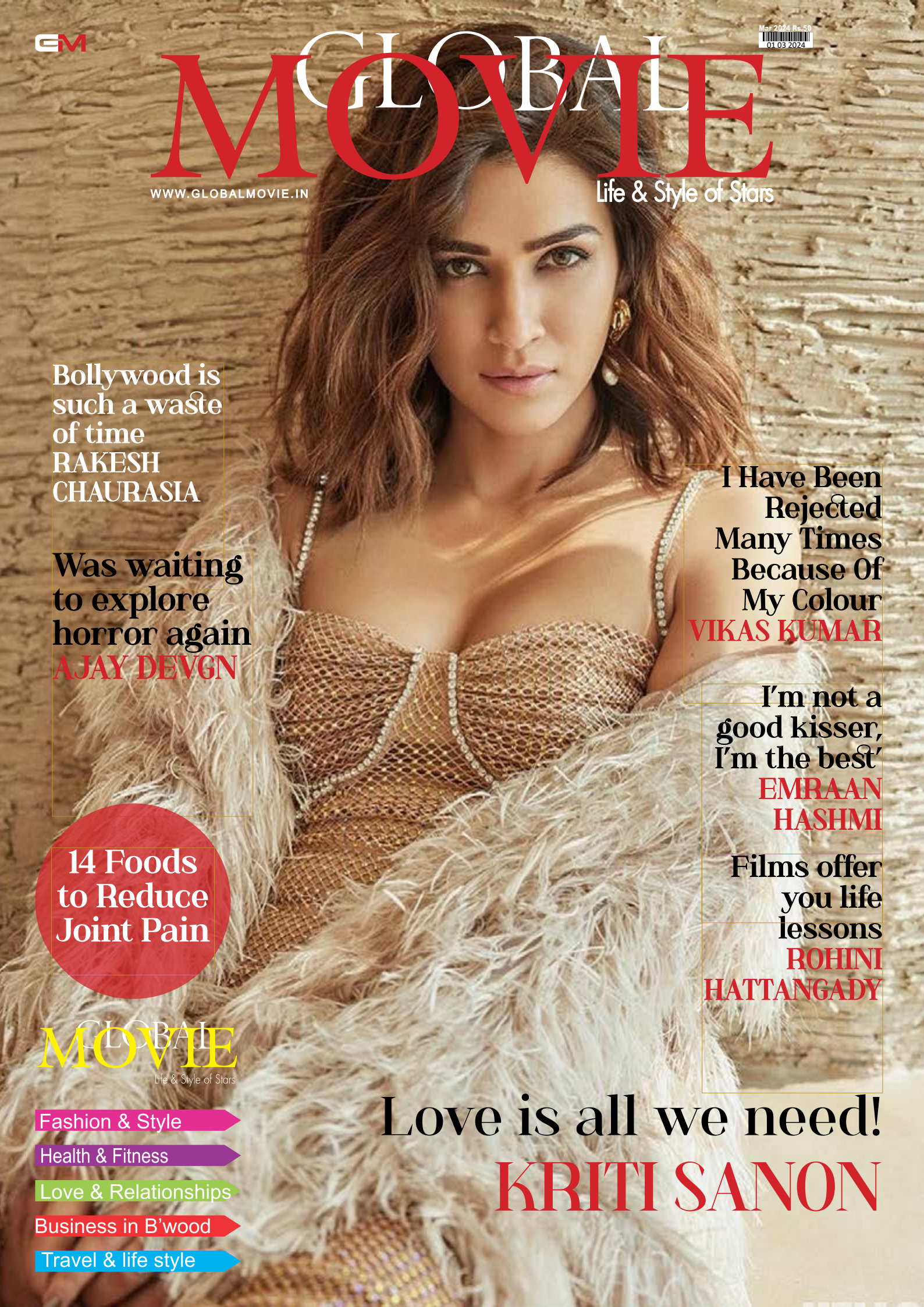

Bollywood is such a waste of time
RAKESH CHAURASIA

Was waiting to explore horror again
AJAY DEVGN

14 Foods to Reduce Joint Pain

I Have Been Rejected Many Times Because Of My Colour
VIKAS KUMAR

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Love is all we need!
KRITI SANON

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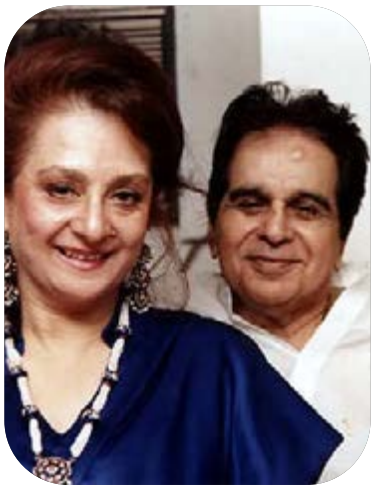

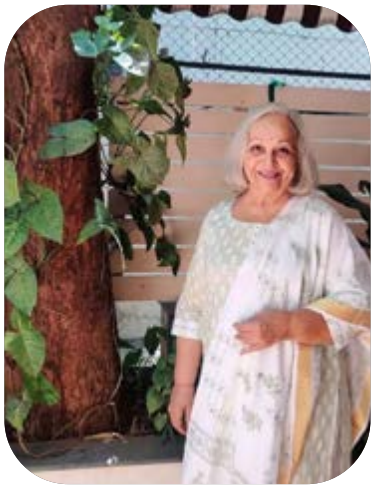

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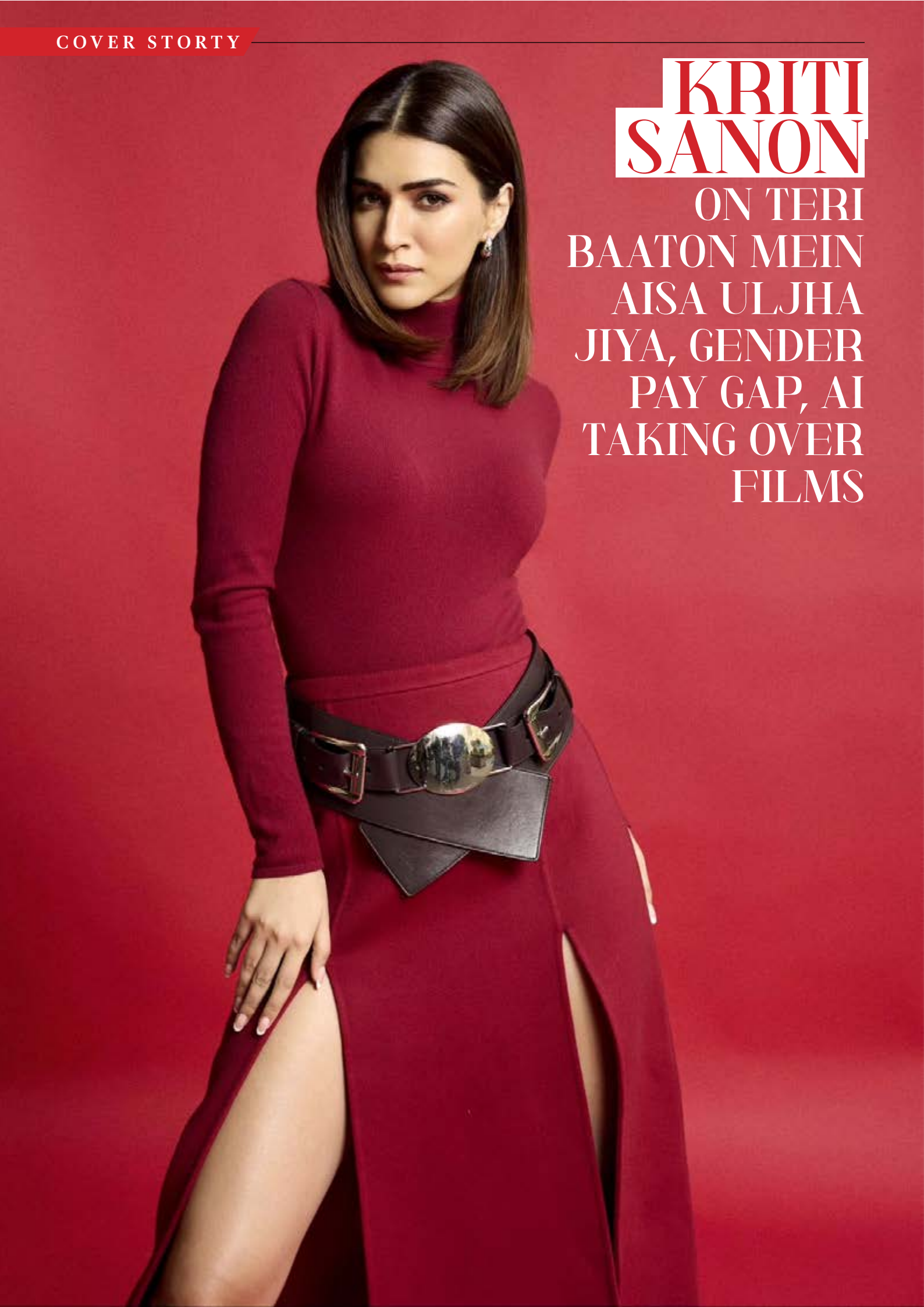


KRITI SANON

ON TERI BAATON MEIN AISA ULJHA JIYA, GENDER PAY GAP, AI TAKING OVER FILMS

‘ Not Just Bollywood ’, Kriti Sanon talks about her film which releases today, Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya, how AI can be a threat to the film industry and how mounting of a hero is like larger than life whether it is a Sooryavanshi or Animal.

How did you prepare for your role in Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya ?

Actually this role was really unique for a robot who is so close to being a human being that a robotic engineer doesn’t get to know that she is a robot. Again since a guy falls in love with her, she had to feel the connection. I had to feel the organic chemistry between a robot and a human being. There is something amiss about her, some sort of a mystery and something is off about her. While shooting, I was always checking whether it is getting too robotic or whether my acting is getting too human. So, it was a constant challenge.

“Love is all we need!” she wrote while sharing a clip of her with her two dogs

Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya actor Kriti Sanon, in a recent interview, said that she has, “fallen in love with acting over time”. Sanon, who started her career with Heropanti in 2014, alongside Tiger Shroff, went on to do movies like Mimi, Bareilly Ki Barþ and Luka Chuppi. Born in Delhi, the actor credits her engineering background for staying curious.

The actor, in a recent post, shared she was spending Valentine’s Day basking in the sun with her furry friends. “Basking in the Sun and in all the love pouring in! My babies next to me... close to my heart!Happy Valentine’s Day! Thank you for all the love you’ve given to #TBMAUJ and to SIFRA!! Love is all we need!” she wrote while sharing a clip of her with her two dogs.

As of Monday, Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya grossed Rs 55.10 crore at the global box ofþce. The movie stars features Shahid Kapoor, who plays an engineer, who decides to marry a robot.

Sanon received a National Award for her portrayal of a surrogate mother in Mimi. The actor was also featured in the 2019 Forbes India’s Celebrity 100 list. The actor was last seen in Ganpath and Adpurush. She will be next seen in Housefull 5 alongside Akshay Kumar and Bhediya 2.

Before acting in þlms, Kriti appeared in ads for brands like Closeup, Vivel, Samsung, Bata and Amul. “I don’t know what my process is because I don’t want to limit myself. Sometimes, I do ‘hit and trial’ of þnding new ways of doing something. Sometimes, it works. Sometimes, it doesn’t,”

“ want to leave a mark and be inspirational to many people who probably are dreaming of coming here and doing what they love. It just feels amazing. (I want to) keep þnding new layers to me and my potential as an actor. Keep doing different work that excites me. I want to work till I physically cannot work,” Sanon added.

After turning producer with Do Patti, Kriti Sanon reveals if she plans to don the director's hat

Kriti Sanon, who launched her production house 'Blue Butterfly Films' last year, has revealed if she is set to don the director's hat.

Last year, Kriti Sanon announced the launch of her production house, Blue Butterßy Films. The actress' upcoming Þlm Do Patti will mark her debut as a producer. In a recent interview, Kriti was asked if she plans to don the director's hat soon. The actress was at her candid best as she revealed that she has no plans to direct Þlms.Kriti talks about directing movies

Speaking with News18, Kriti said, "I love being in front of the camera a lot. A director's job is far more difÞcult and you have to stay with that one project for a very long time. I don't think I can do that. Laxman (Utekar) sir would tell me that I would direct someday but I used to keep telling him that I'm happy just being an actor. As of now, I'm tapping into the creative side of me as a producer." In the same interview, Kriti revealed that she launched her production house because she felt that after nine years in the industry, it was 'time to shift the gear'. The actress shared, "I always had a creative side to me that I wanted to explore not just through acting but also through every aspect of Þlmmaking. I've always been very curious about every department. Whatever I've learned is on the job. I constantly keep thinking about scenes and what new can be done to elevate them and the Þlm in its entirety."

In Do Patti, Kriti will be seen sharing screen space with Kajol. The Þlm will mark their onscreen reunion after Dilwale, which also starred Shah Rukh Khan and Varun Dhawan. For the uninitiated, Do Patti will be released on Netßix in 2024.

‘I’m not a good kisser, I’m the best’

“Some producers are purely driven by the commerce in films and that’s a bit of a deterrent. It doesn’t align with my thinking.”

“I’m not a good kisser, I’m the best.”

Yes, some pretty candid confessions from Emraan Hashmi at the trailer launch of his new Web series, Showtime.

Produced by Karan Johar, who was also hosting the event, the show takes us into the world of Bollywood, giving us a preview of the nepotism and power struggles that exist.

Besides Emraan, the show also stars Mouni Roy, Naseeruddin Shah, Mahima Makwana, Rajeev Khandelwal, Shriya Saran and Vishal Vashishtha.

Here’s another candid confession from Emraan.

“The one thing actors lie about is...”

Karan gives Mouni Roy, Shriya Saran, Mahima Makwana and Rajeev Khandelwal their first taste of his signature Rapid Fire.

So Mouni shares the cheesiest pick-up line she’s received, Shriya reveals a myth about Bollywood, Mahima narrates the worst thing a director has ever said to her, and Rajeev talks about the worst star tantrum he’s encountered.

Just what is Showtime about? Emraan gives us a sneak peek.

“What I love about the show is that it takes you to the world of Bollywood from the perspective of the studio system and the producer’s chair. You have these wonderful, crazy, eccentric characters that are a little delusional, creative geniuses. It’s about star egos, what it is like to be a woman in this industry, how a film is made, the conversations that take place in a producer’s office...”

Just why did Karan cast Emraan Hashmi in the series, where he plays a studio head, much like Karan himself in real life?

“It was my desire to be a dashing, gorgeous, good looking, good kisser. As a producer, I haven’t matched any of those four qualities that Emraan has in abundance. He said he’s not a good kisser, but a great kisser. I’m a terrible kisser!” Karan answers.

'Was waiting to explore horror again'

'When I did Bhoot we got a lot of appreciation. After that I didn't get any script that was good in this genre."

Ajay Devgn says horror and supernatural stories are among his favourite genres and he is thrilled to explore it again in Shaitaan after the success of his 2003 hit Bhoot.

Directed by Vikas Bahl, Shaitaan is described as a gripping tale with elements of black magic.

"It's not that we don't want to do horror films. If we get something interesting, then why not?... I like this genre and I was waiting to explore it again. When I did Bhoot we got a lot of appreciation. After that I didn't get any script that was good in this genre," Devgn said at the trailer launch event of Shaitaan.

The film also features south star Jyotika and R Madhavan. It is a remake of the 2023 Gujarati horror film Vash, which was written and directed by Krishnadev Yagnik. Devgn said he liked the basic story of the original film and decided to make it in Hindi.

"The base of the story was very strong hence we did this film, and we adapted the film in our own way," he said.

Shaitaan features R Madhavan as the antagonist and Jyothika as Devgn's wife. Actor Janki Bodiwala, who starred in Vash also features in the remake.

When asked if Devgn and Madhavan thought about swapping their roles, Devgn said he wasn't keen to play the negative role as he connected the most with the emotions of a helpless father in the movie.

"When we started shooting, the first thing Maddy (Madhavan) told me was: 'Why aren't you doing this role, why have you given it to me?'. I told him, 'I really feel for the character of the father, so I will not be able to do justice to the other character. It's a stronger character though," Devgn said.

Madhavan called Devgn a "sherdil" (braveheart) and Singham of the industry for being kind enough to pass on the meaty role in Shaitaan.

"I can really hope and pray that I could do justice to the kindness that has been shown to me by Ajay sir and his team, I'm very thankful," he said.

Bahl, known for films such as Queen, Super 30 and Goodbye, said he was "nervous" about making a supernatural movie, a first for him.

"The nervousness comes a lot from the fact that I've not done the genre before... Before we started shooting, I told my AD (assistant directors) team that we will learn how to make a film like this, we would watch YouTube videos, read interviews of other directors, and we used to look at camera work. It was almost like tuition classes. One day we were one day watching The Shining (Stanley Kubrick's classic based on Stephen King's novel, starring Jack Nicholson), as an example," Bahl said.

"As a storyteller, it's a great challenge to try new things, stay nervous all the time, hopefully qualify in different genres so that it opens up your world of storytelling," Bahl added.

Jyotika said she is thrilled to have made a comeback to Hindi cinema after over two decades with Shaitaan.

She made her acting debut with the 1998 Hindi film, Doli Saja Ke Rakhna, and went on to become one of the most loved female actors in Tamil cinema.

Some of her notable performances include Chandramukhi, Raatchashi, Kushi, 36 Vayathinile, and Kaathal - The Core among others.

The actor said she was waiting for a "special" opportunity to do a movie in Hindi.

"I am doing this film after 25 years. I got very busy in the South.... (I) was waiting for something very special. I think at this stage of your career, you want to do different work. This was very challenging," she said.

Jyotika praised co-star Devgn as someone who is "very giving".

"The biggest surprise for me was Ajay Devgn and the way he conducted himself all throughout the shoot. I have worked with many actors in my career, almost all the actors down south. My last film was with Mammootty (Kaathal) and now Ajay.

"When I do my film in the South, no one gives space in the poster. It's been a pleasure to watch Mammootty sir and Ajay. These are the real stalwarts of cinema," the actor told reporters here at the trailer launch of Shaitaan.

Jyotika, who worked with Madhavan in Dumm Dumm Dumm, Magalir Mattum and Priyamaana Thozhi, is happy to collaborate with the actor in an unconventional project.

"There was no competition, we were so into the role that it actually felt like a family. We finished the shoot in 25-30 days, we were all just flowing with it. I thank Kumarji (Kumar Mangat Pathak, producer) for casting me and I have already thanked everyone so many times. For me to come back to Bollywood and get this (kind) of a film, it is very special," Jyotika added.

Jyotika said she resonated with her character of a mother.

"I think when it comes to a daughter, there is no bigger warrior than a mother. My kids are the same age... So, I didn't have to put any effort into it. I used to cry after watching her enact a scene. It is really a vision of a mother." Kumar Mangat Pathak revealed that the team already has plans to make the second part of Shaitaan.

Shaitaan will be released in theatres on March 8.

'I fought cancer to make Bhakshak'

Pulkit was fighting for his life when he decided to make Bhakshak.
'I was in a lot of pain in 2019, hooked to IVs in a hospital, fighting a demon called cancer.'

Bhumi Pednekar's latest film Bhakshak hopes to create awareness about the horrors of child abuse in shelters, and Pulkit, the talented director behind it, felt it was a difficult topic that need a voice.

"I believe once we start a conversation around it, we can save many lives from being scared. I feel making a film, inspired by real stories, becomes a huge responsibility,"

From the start, Pulkit was determined not to let the crime of child abuse scare away the audience.

"On the first day, when we started writing, we made up our mind that we don't want people to move away with disgust. We want them to watch and feel for it. We made a point, we want to make a relevant film but without dropping the screenplay. So the balance is quite a conscious effort we took on the writing table itself."

Pulkit was fighting for his life when he decided to make Bhakshak.

"I was in a lot of pain in 2019, hooked to IVs in a hospital, fighting a demon called cancer. My wife Jyotsana, who is also my co-writer, suggested that to come out of the bad times, we need to write.

"We started looking out for stories through which we can reflect on pain and suffering. We came to know about a shelter home mishap in Deoria. We started digging further, (and found that) a lot of shelter home cases, across the country, were having the same story.

"We were curious, so we went deeper. A lot of shelter homes, across the globe, were having the same story!

"We were broke, but suddenly we felt that our pain was nothing. That was the moment when we started writing this film."

Bhakshak, says Pulkit, is not only inspired by the grisly case in Bihar.

"A lot of other shelter home cases across the globe have inspired me to make this," he says.

"Yes, I am from Bihar, and I feel that my socio-cultural background gives me a better perspective to tell this story in a better form. But if it was not set in Bihar and was in some other state, I would have made the film with the same sense of responsibility."

Pulkit's research was deep and disturbing.

"We were clear that to get this story right, we had to go beyond the newspaper articles. Through the help of my lawyer friends in Delhi, we learnt more about the sexual abuse of the children and the Act (POCSO). We read up on real cases and interviewed people, including lawyers, news reporters and police personnel.

"The deeper we went, the more disturbing it became. We were not inspired by a single case, hence we didn't want to put a name to it. For a film like this, it doesn't matter whether you name the city. What matters is, this is inspired from a real story and is still happening in your neighbourhood."

About his cast in Bhakshak, Pulkit says,"I was aware that to tell a story like this, you need actors who can play the outer as well as the inner conflict. Also, to play these characters, an actor needs to feel the pain, as I did. On every character, we made our checklists and then approached the actor.

"Bhumi Pednekar was my first choice. We narrated the film to Bhumi and then she disappeared. There was no response for the next six months. Then one day, she called and said the script was haunting her. She wanted to be Vaishali (her character in the film)."I feel blessed to have an ensemble like this: Bhumi, Sanjay Mishra, Aditya Shrivastava, Surya Sharma, Sai Tamhankar... Thanks to my casting director, Mukesh Chhabra, even actors who have just one scene in the film were brilliant."

What Makes Radhika Madan A Rising Star

Besides Rashmika Mandanna, this year's Forbes 30 Under 30 achievers list also features Radhika Madan from the showbiz world.

The talented actress, who started her acting career from the small screen, has come a long way and successfully carved her niche in the Hindi film industry.

At 19, Radhika made her acting debut in the television show Meri Aashiqui Tum Se Hi.

In 2018, she left television to make her Bollywood debut in Vishal Bhardwaj's quirky Pataakha, opposite Sanya Malhotra.

The film earned her the Screen Award for Best Female Debut.

Her second outing Mard Ko Dard Nahi Hota premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival and won the People's Choice Award.

Radhika looks stunning in a black power-suit as she attends the Emmys 2023.

She is the youngest from India to be on the jury at the International Emmys.

With her ITA Best Actor Award in Original Film for Kacchey Limbu.

In 2020, she played Irrfan Khan's daughter in Angrezi Medium.

Enjoying chai time and some snuggles with her fur buddy.

No European holiday is complete without having some yummy dessert for breakfast.

Radhika with her forever Valentine!

Ms Madan with her Rising Star of India trophy which she won at the GlobalSpa Awards 2023.

Last year, Radhika won three awards, including a style award and the Best Actor award at the UK Asian Film Festival for her movie Sanaa.

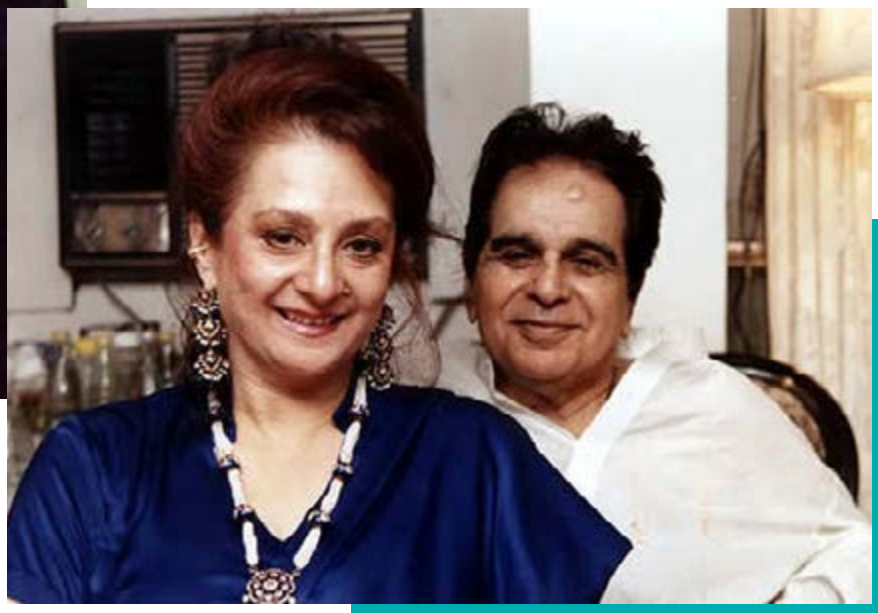
This year, she will be seen opposite Akshay Kumar in Sarfira, a remake of the critically acclaimed Tamil movie, Soorarai Pottru.

Radhika with her forever Valentine!

Ms Madan with her Rising Star of India trophy which she won at the GlobalSpa Awards 2023.

"He Was a Complete Man,"

Exclaims Saira Banu, as Ahe Looks Upon Dilip Kumar



Bollywood romances are one thing but the one Saira Banu had with the late Dilip Kumar was right out of a fairytale. You can just take his name, and she sounds like the 22 year old who had fallen head over heels in love with him and to date, still feels the same. That he's made her a better version of herself is evident, but that love when true can truly conquer all is something she proves with everything she has to say about the 56 years she has spent with him, happily married. On the occasion of Valentine's Day, she bares her heart out as she gives a deeper glimpse into her epic love story. Excerpts...

The most loving thing that Dilip Saab ever did for you?

He was a complete man. I have never seen a man so wonderfully endowed with the most beautiful traits. One small thing that I can generate that accentuates and illustrates what kind of person he was. Once, when I was shooting in Kashmir, I think I was shooting for Shagird. And the weather in Kashmir suddenly changed for the worse. We could not shoot for eight or nine days over there. We just kept sitting, and eventually, Samir Ganguli and Subodh Mukherjee decided suddenly overnight that this wouldn't happen. And they shifted the entire unit from the North to the Jog Falls in the South. We had to imagine a song there. With this sudden turn of events, nothing was organised.

There was nothing to eat for the unit. I usually had my own stuff and everything, but they were, of course, late in coming. They had to come in from Kashmir.

And I did what I never do, which is eat what is being served. And unfortunately, the food that I ate made me sick. I was so sick that night that by morning I had food poisoning.

And they had to cancel the shoot that

day. Somehow I finished the shoot, but when I was back at home in Mumbai, I landed in trouble with a terrible illness.

The most loving thing that Dilip Saab ever did for you?

Go on...

And eventually, after getting to the hospital, I did not recover, and they had to shift me to London. The place where we stayed in London was a beautiful home in the suburbs.

And this private hospital was in the heart of town. So when Saab wanted to organise food arrangements for me at the clinic with special permission, It would take hours in the car. So he opted for the London tube and would get a beautiful tiffin packed for me with very light food, which was ordained by the doctor. He would travel personally, deliver the food to me and my mother, and see that we had a good deal.

It was the most touching, loving gesture—one of the most loving gestures that I can remember and recall, which is stuck in my mind.
Every day of my life, I have been grateful to him for so many things that he's done. He's been a perfect gentleman.

And I've seen the world; you know, I have travelled the world as a child. I've travelled the world as a grownup w working woman all over the world. Never have I seen a man so full of kindness as Dilip Saab.

If you had to pick a romantic classic in which you could star with Dilip Saab which one would it be?

The classic that I always wanted to do with Dilip Saab and I wanted it to be my first movie with him. It was an adaptation of Pygmalion written by George Bernard Shaw. Wherein this professor, who was to be played by Dilip Saab, turns the flower girl into a lady. I had studied it at my school and I had studied it so well that I had given an exam on it. So I know it by heart. I would have loved to have played Eliza Doolittle to his professor Professor Henry Higgins. And there's one more.

Please continue...

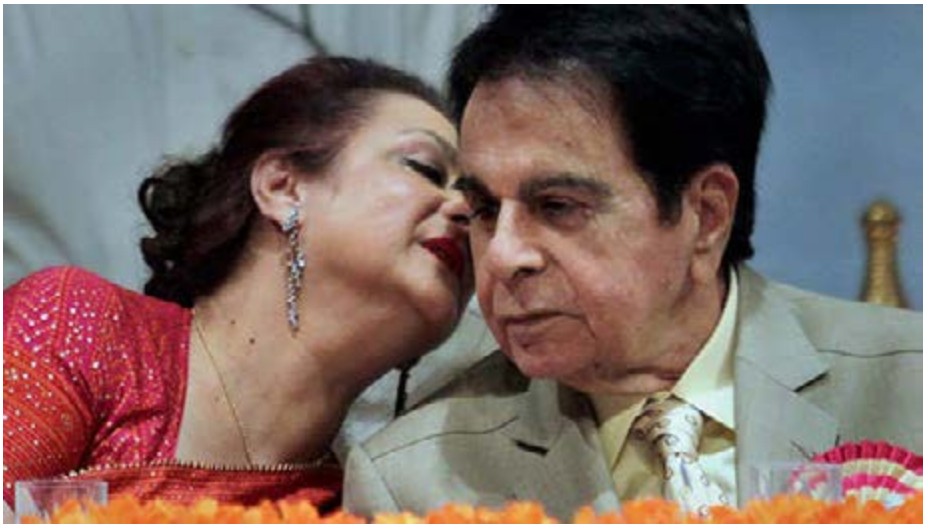
That is the romantic classic I would have wanted to do with him. Another one which I would have loved to have done with him would have been Roman Holiday. The famous Gregory Peck and Audrey Hepburn movie. Wherein a princess, she takes off from her palace. Just to make a few days of an ordinary life for herself, wherein she meets this journalist and falls in love with. That was a beautiful film. I would have loved to have done it as a Hindi version.

One lesson you learnt about love from him.

As for a lesson to learn from him, we started our life together

I would say that we have grown up together. We were married for 56 years. And he was in the bloom of his life in the early 40s. And I was 22. I really feel that I have just grown up with him. But the one best lesson that I have learned from him and that has taken me so long to own is that he never spoke ill of anyone.

That is one thing I have learned from him.



'Bollywood is such a waste of time'

'You make a song, it gets rejected, you have to make 10 more.'

Rakesh Chaurasia made history when he won two Grammys with Ustad Zakir Hussain, Edgar Mayer and Bela Fleck for As We Speak (Best Contemporary Instrumental Album), and Pashto (Best Global Music Performance).

In the second part of a fascinating two-part interview, Rakeshji -- whose uncle and guru Pandit Hari Chaurasia was one half of the memorable composer duo Shiv-Hari -- asked whether he would be interested in composing songs for Hindi films.

"Having played in Bollywood for the last 30 years, I find the process time-consuming. It's such a waste of time," the flautist says.

Three times Grammy winner Ricky Kej called this the 'Year of India at Grammys'. Would you agree?

Believe it or not, that was my first thought when our names were announced: That I had achieved something big for my country through my music.

The reason this award is so valued is because you can't get your society, your city, or XYZ to vote for you.

Only members of the Recording Academy, who are musicians themselves, are allowed to vote, and then, I'm told, there's a third body that decides the winners.

The envelope is only opened only on stage and the winners announced.

That's why the Grammys are always a surprise.

Ricky Kej and you, along with Pankaj Tripathi, performed at the Gateway of India during the Mumbai Festival 2024 to celebrate the city's unsung heroes.

Yes, Pankajji had done a film, Main Atal Hoon, on our late prime minister Atal Bihari Vajyapee and knew his poems.

Ricky and I played and he recited these poems in between.

It was just a 30-minute performance, but we thought, let's do it because the Gateway of India is celebrating its centenary year and is an iconic venue and the ambience was great.

It turned out to be interesting for the audience.

Now that you have won two Grammys, many more opportunities will open up. Is there something you have always desired that you can pursue?

I've never thought about this. All these years, my thoughts were just limited to reaching Zakirbhai (tabla maestro Ustad Zakir Hussain) and a larger audience.

Babuji (his guru and uncle, flautist Hariprasad Chaurasia) has taken this instrument to such heights, and maintained the level that my focus has only been on carrying the Chaurasia legacy forward by becoming a very good performer.

When I used to accompany him, I cherished Babuji's audience whom he left spellbound.

My endeavour too has been to meet the expectations of all those who come to listen to me.

Their appreciation and applause are my biggest rewards.

As far as collaborations go, I'm open to everything.
I want to take the music of the flute further into the world.

Yes, you have been a part of many collaborations, including the Grammy winning album As We Speak.

My guru has done everything possible in the field of music and has never stopped me from experimenting.
There are people who believe that classical musicians should not experiment.

Why not? It's not as if we are standing in a pizza shop and selling something, our experiments are in the field of music.

If you worry about what people will say and set boundaries, your thoughts don't broaden.
Worse comes to worse, you will fall on your face.

Aur agar kuch achcha ho gaya (But if something works), then you win a Grammy!
Had we not experimented with As We Speak, I would have missed this golden opportunity.

Have you ever thought of composing for Hindi films?

Not really because having played in Bollywood for the last 30 years, I find the process time-consuming.

You make a song, it gets rejected, you have to make 10 more.

It's such a waste of time.
I'd rather compose for my own fusion albums.

Even Shiv-Hari (flautist Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia and santoor maestro Pandit Shivkumar Sharma) only composed for Yashji's (producer-director Yash Chopra) films.

Their focus was classical music and performance.
They were not ready to negotiate on that.

Even Yashji made just one film a year and told them they could take all the time they wanted.

But they left after composing for a few films, maybe because it was affecting their performance.
It's far better to just play and return home.

In the West, they are far more professional. Would you be open to a documentary on your life or a series where the camera follows you for a week maybe?

Oh yes, I'd love that.

Apart from music, what are you passionate about?

I'm health conscious, I like going to the gym, swimming and playing sports.

I've run the Half Marathon.
I enjoy watching action movies with my family whenever possible.
James Bond films, with lots of action.
Drama puts me to sleep.

At a time when there is so much debate about religion, your albums, Divine Call, Call of Shiva, Call of Krishna, are steeped in spirituality.

Classical music itself is steeped in spirituality, more so the flute which is the instrument of Krishna.

My goal is to take Indian music to every corner of the world, to show people how rich our music is, culturally and so attached to divinity.

But your fusion albums have been hugely popular like Inner Peace.

The idea for that came from a good friend of mine, Chandu Mittani. He lives in Leicester City and has a music label, Sona Rupa,

He pointed out that there is a huge audience in the UK for such albums.

People who drive to work and want to listen to something peaceful, which will calm their minds, so they won't jump a red light.
To be honest, I wasn't sure if there would be takers for such a different sound, but he was sure it would work and told me to trust him.

He didn't want tabla and tanpura, so I collaborated with pianist Anupam Chatterjee on Inner Peace - Music for Mind, Body and Soul.

The 2013 devotional and spiritual album was a huge success and we then recorded Eternal Music on popular demand.

Do you think there is a bigger audience for classical music in the West as compared to India?

No, we have a very informed and erudite audience in our country who know what they are coming for.

And they come in large numbers.

During the Sawai Gandharva Bhimsen Mahotsav or at the Diwali festival, there is an audience of 15,000 to 20,000 early in the morning, at around 5.30-6.30 am.

The good thing is that India has such a huge population, there is an audience for every genre of music.
In the West too, they enjoy our music.

The difference is that when you understand too much, you become a critic and wait for someone to err and falter.

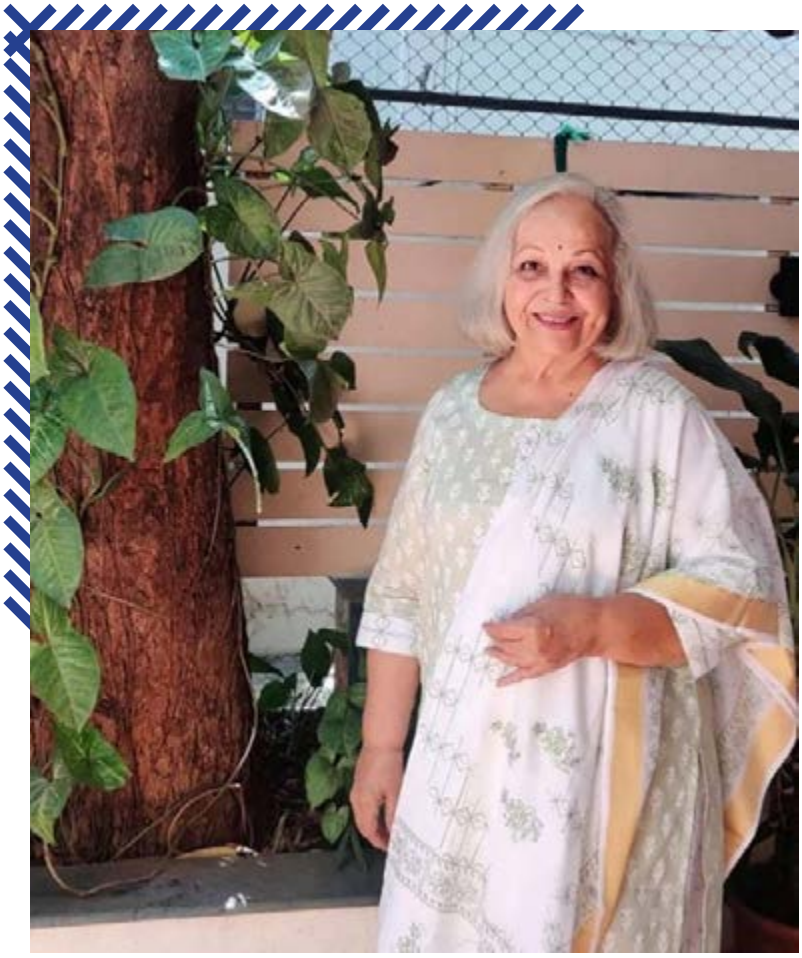
But in Europe, people are not there to judge you, they just listen to you quietly and often you see a tear in their eye because they feel for the music.

Where do you see yourself five years from now?

I've always followed my guru's advice that just keep working, things will happen on their own.
I was only focussed on making myself perfect so I could reach my goal of becoming a full-fledged classical musician and a performer. I never imagined that the destination would bring me two Grammy awards.

In music there are no endings.

I'm young, there's a long way still to go in music



'Films offer you life lessons'

'If someone were to ask you if you want to die tomorrow, no matter what problems you are grappling with, you would be hesitant, right?'

Rohini Hattangady is a National Award winner, winner of two Filmfare Awards. She is the only Indian to have won a BAFTA (Best Actress in a Supporting Role) for her performance as Kasturba Gandhi in Sir Richard Attenborough's Gandhi.

Last year, the actress who has over 160 films to her credit and has done her share of TV, besides winning the prestigious Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for her contributions to theatre, featured in the highest grossing female-centric Marathi film, Baipan Bhari Deva.

On February 23, she has another Marathi film coming up, Aata Vel Zaali (It's Time To Go), with Dilip Prabhavalkar, which revolves around a couple's plea for euthanasia so they can choose to die with dignity.

She says, "It's a difficult decision and requires total conviction. It's easier for those who have no children, family or any other ties... or for those who believe their worth in this world is over, that merely existing and not living is a waste of time, money and a burden on caregivers. But when there's a family involved, it's a dilemma. I believe as long as life has a purpose, you should go on."

In Richard Attenborough's centenary year, what do you remember of Gandhi in which you played Kasturba?

I was just 27 then.

Gandhi was my fourth release, after Arvind Desai Ki Ajeeb Dastaan, Albert Pinto Ko Gussa Kyin Hota Hai and Chakra.

The offer came out of the blue, on July 14, 1980.

Seven days later, I flew to London to audition for the role.

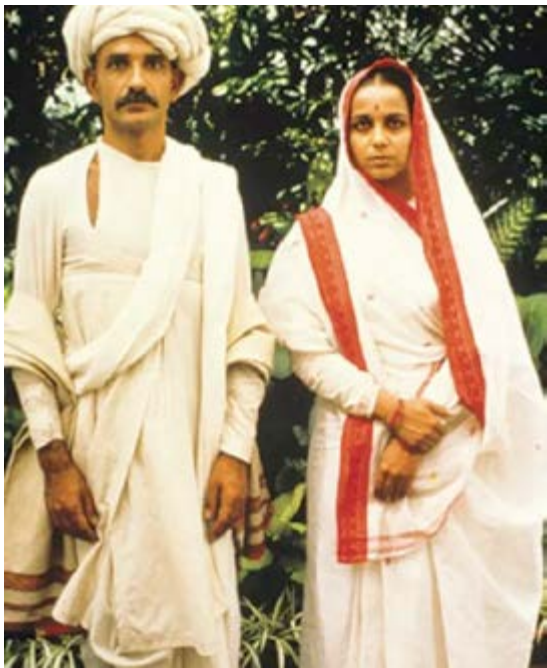
I was selected and we started shooting in 1980.

I had done my schooling in Marathi medium in my hometown, Pune.

In college, being a science student, I was happy if I scored 40-50 marks in English.
I could speak English, but my pronunciation was different.

Gandhi, being an Indo-British co-production, the first thing I had to do was correct my Ts and Ds, my Vs and Ws.

I also learnt the charkha along with Ben (Kingsley who played Gandhi) who had to spend hours in make-up and work on his posture.
(Laughs) While I was in my elocution classes, Ben would be doing yoga.



What was Richard Attenborough like as a director?

Well, he knew everything there was to know about Gandhiji, but at the same time, he was open to suggestions.

I remember there was this one scene in which Gandhiji is sitting on the jhoola (swing) having his meal while is listening to someone talk about Champaran.

Sir Richard wanted me in the frame too, but couldn't figure how I could overhear the conversation without listening at the door.

I suggested I could be rolling out chapatis in the kitchen since in India, we serve hot chapatis during a meal. This way, it would seem natural for me to listen in.

He liked the idea and executed it perfectly.

Gandhi won eight Oscars, including Best Film, Best Director and Best Actor. Why weren't you present at the ceremony?

The film got 11 nominations, but missed out on Best Actor in a Supporting Role and Best Actress in a Supporting Role.

Since I wasn't nominated, they weren't going to pay my travel and hotel expenses, and I couldn't afford to fly out on my own to the US.

I did go to the UK when I was nominated for the BAFTAs and eventually won the award for Best Actress in a Supporting Role, along with Maureen Stapleton for Reds. Before the ceremony, Sir Richard had asked me to prepare a speech, just in case I won.

(Smiles) I can't remember what I said, but I thanked him, Ben, the producer and said I'm proud of my country.

More recently, you featured in the highest grossing Marathi film of 2023, Baipan Bhari Deva. What was the experience like shooting for this film?

Wonderful!

All the actresses (Vandana Gupte, Sukanya Kulkarni, Shilpa Navalkar, Suchitra Bandekar and Deepa Parab) are friends from theatre.

We've seen each other's work, but had never worked together.

(Chuckles) The shoot was great fun, it was a task for the director (Kedar Shinde) to get us out of our vanity vans. But once we were on the set, filming progressed smoothly.

Kedar often left it to us to do the scenes our way, telling us that since we knew our characters, we should react accordingly, without thinking too much.

All the sisters are middle-aged, the youngest being around 40-45 years, and grappling with problems ranging from EMIs to menopause and philandering husbands.

I play Jaya, the eldest, and there's a history of resentment between Shashi and me, and things turn ugly over her daughter, Chinu.

It's a beautiful film which will appeal to women of all ages and can now be watched on OTT.

There's another Marathi film releasing on February 23, Aata Vel Zaali, with Dilip Prabhavalkar, which touches on the subject of euthanasia in a revolutionary way.

Ananth (Ananth Narayan Mahadevan who has written, directed and co-produced the film) and I are both from theatre.

We have done a play together and since then, have wanted to work together.

When he came to me with this idea, I thought it was very interesting, having read of a Pune couple whose story was somewhat similar. I said yes immediately.

It revolves around an elderly couple who are in perfect health, but when they start to feel they are simply existing and not living, that their lives have become unproductive, they take it as a signal to make a dignified exit.

But according to the Supreme Court's March 2018 judgment, active euthanasia (injecting a person with a lethal dose of a drug) is illegal while passive euthanasia (withdrawal of food and treatment which helps a person to live) is permitted only under the supervision of the high court and with the consent of the patient who must be in a vegetative state through any living will.

It's complicated.

Euthanasia is a boon for those with a debilitating disability or whose body is starting to fail them, making them completely dependent on others.

But it can also be misused by others too.

It's easier for those who have no children, family or any other ties, or for those who believe their worth in this world is over and living is a waste of time, money and a burden on caregivers.

It's a difficult decision and requires conviction.

If someone were to ask you if you want to die tomorrow, no matter what problems you are grappling with, you would be hesitant, right?

When there's family involved, it's a dilemma.

You lost your mother-in-law to cancer...

Yes, she lived with us and I would go for shoots peacefully knowing she was there to ensure my young son Aseem had his meals, went to school on time and even kept an eye on him even when he was playing.

When she was diagnosed with cancer, it came as a real shock to (husband) Jayadev and me.

We got her the best possible treatment, but she did not respond to chemotherapy, and succumbed to the disease within a year.

After her demise, life changed for both of us.

My son was just six at the time and we decided that at any given time, one of us would be home with him.

This meant a lot of adjustments.

Sometimes our dates didn't match and I had to let go of offers.

Ditto for him.

My mother-in-law passed away in 1988. Twenty years later, in 2008, Jayadev succumbed to cancer after fighting for a year.

How difficult was that period for you?

Very difficult. I wanted to quit and spend time with him, but we needed the money.

Aseem had just graduated from FTII and offered to stay home and look after his father.

For a year, he did not go for any auditions or accept any offers.

It was a brave decision for an actor who was just starting out, but it's thanks to my son that I could go out and work.

My producers were considerate and agreed to my coming a little late.

I could also leave early, so I could be home and have time to chat with Jayadev.

After his father passed away, Aseem started his career from scratch, with Sanjay Leela Bhansali's My Friend Pinto in 2011.

He's done well. He got rave reviews for his portrayal of Illyas Khan in the Web series The Trial, featuring Kajol.

'I am not very intimidated by stars'

There was a more subdued role in another Web series, Hansal Mehta's Scoop.

I also continued working.

Jayadev was our sounding board, suddenly, there was no one.

But one learns to adjust.
Life goes on.

Like Kasturba, a role that is instantly associated with you even after 40 years, is that of Parvati in Mahesh Bhatt's Saraansh. It must have been a challenge playing another elderly woman when you were in your early 30s.

(Smiles) Having played an 80 year old in a play when in college and mother to Dharmendraji in commercial Hindi cinema, that was not the real challenge.

What intrigued me was the story of an elderly couple struggling to come to terms with the death of their only son in a mugging incident in the US.

Initially, it's her husband (B V Pradhan, played by Anupam Kher) who finds it hard to accept that Ajay is dead and Parvati tries to motivate him.

For him, life is suddenly futile and meaningless.

After a failed suicide attempt, he convinces Parvati that they should end their lives by consuming poison together.

But then a pregnant girl, Sujata, whose boyfriend is afraid to publicly acknowledge her, and whose politician father is determined to abort the baby, enters their home.

Pradhan finds purpose in life again, determined to keep Sujata and the baby safe despite the threats, while Parvati eagerly waits for the child, believing a reincarnated Ajay will return to them.

When her husband sends Sujata and her boyfriend away to another town where they can be happy and safe from his father, Parvati is devastated.

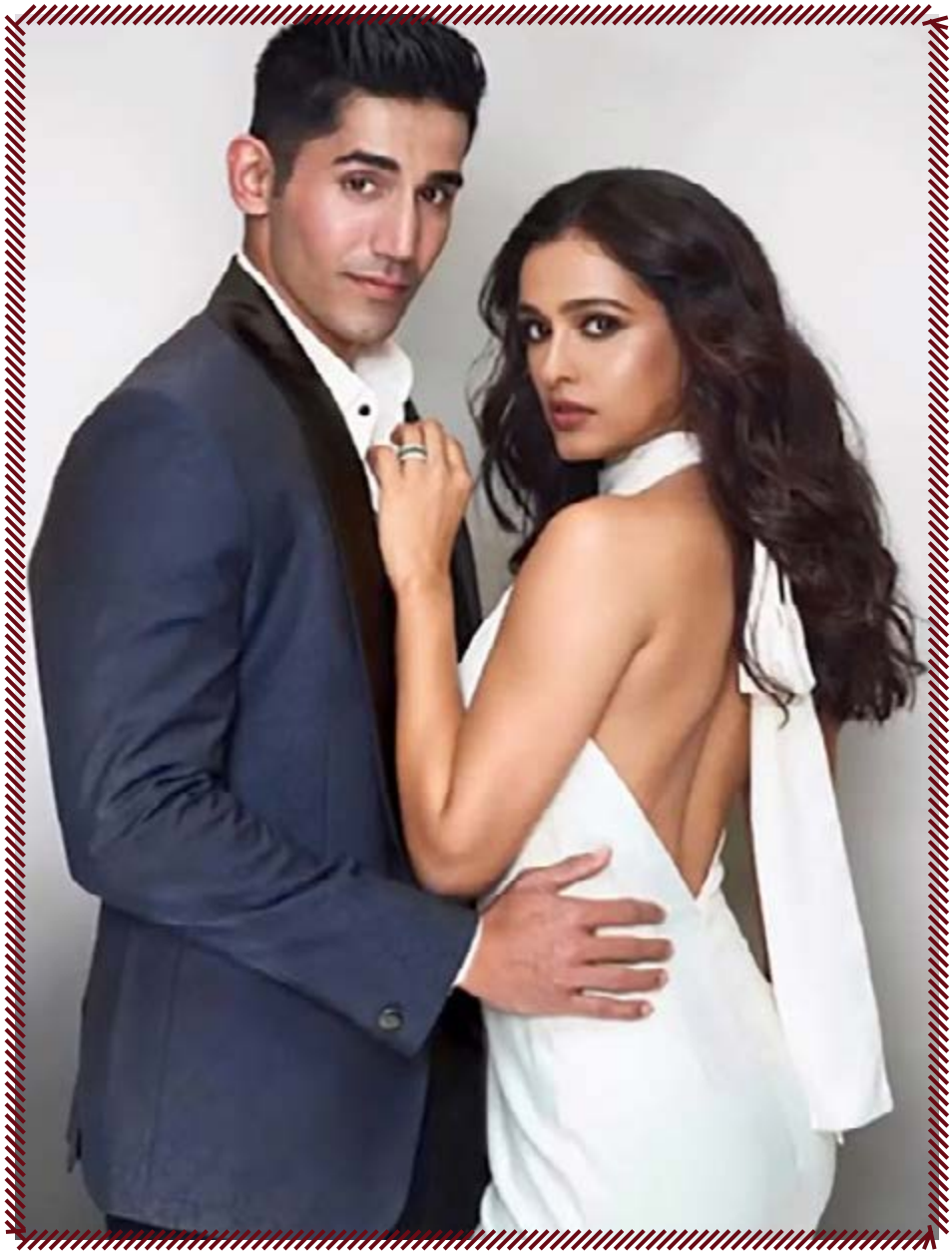
Now, life seems meaningless for her and she attempts suicide.

She is saved and now it is Pradhan who explains to her that life hasn't ended. As long as they live, they have to carry on, give it some purpose.

Films like Saraansh and Aata Vel Zaali offer you life lessons too.

'Men, women, everybody, we want love'

'When something like this happens, it's just like all the weight and all the time that there was no work and the auditions were not cracking, you feel it's just worth it.'



In Karmma Calling, **Namrata Sheth** and **Varun Sood** got to do what every Bollywood newcomer aspires for -- Glitz, glam and drama. Desvcribing it as a 'dream experience', the young actors shared screen space with Raveena Tandon in Director Ruchi Narain's twisted tale of revenge.

What was it like working with Raveena?

"What made me a bigger fan of Raveena ma'am was the fact that she made sure that I wasn't nervous around her at all. She normalised everything. She made sure that every actor was comfortable around her."

What drew you to this project and what was the kick of acting in it?

Namrata: I've been a fan of the original show.

The minute I got to know that they were auditioning for the Indian adaptation, I was instantly excited.

I really wanted the part.

Just knowing that a show that I've loved is being made for Indian audiences was very exciting in itself. Then to get to play a character that is so layered and different from myself and a character that I've grown up watching to be able put my own take on it and do it in my own way, was just a dream experience.

Varun: For me, it was more of an opportunity that I needed. I needed somebody to trust and believe that I can pull off a big show like this.

I think that was my number one driving factor towards the show.

Obviously, the character and the story are fantastic. We have all seen it work in Hollywood. When I got to know there's an Indian adaptation to it, I thought that once we Indianise it, the flavour of our country will make it richer and more entertaining.

I was quite excited to play the Indian version of Daniel Grayson (the character played by Josh Bowman in Revenge).

The biggest draw of the show is Raveena Tandon. As her co-stars, what was the fanboy/fangirl moment for you on the sets?

Varun: I've grown up watching Raveena ma'am. Andaz Apna Apna has to be my favourite film. That's my comfort film.

To share the same screen space with her was unreal.

I was very scared, very nervous. I didn't want to mess up on set.

I didn't want her to question my existence on set.

So I was very well prepared.

What made me a bigger fan of Raveena ma'am was the fact that she made sure that I wasn't nervous around her at all.

She normalised everything.

She made sure that every actor was comfortable around her.

And she built on every actor.

She made sure that every artist in a scene performed to their optimum so that the scene turns out great.

Namrata: We've all grown up watching her. She's an icon.

To know that we were going to be performing in front of her, we all really wanted to make sure that we were well prepared.

We knew what we were doing by the time we got on the set because you don't want to mess up in front of somebody like that. But she never lets you feel intimidated.

She knows that we're new.

She knows that we're just figuring things out.

She'll be giving us tips on how we can make things better.

She's just a sheer professional.

All the characters in this show are so layered and complex. What was your brief from Director Ruchi Narain and how did that help you to play your characters?

Namrata: It is difficult because it takes a lot of understanding of the emotional state of that character.

My character Karma is going through a lotm but she doesn't let any of it show on her face. So there was that fear of it looking flat, or she's just being one dimensional.

I had to do a lot of workshops to understand where her sadness was coming from.

It took a lot of conversations with Ruchi. Her brief was not to be myself because I'm nothing like the character. But the minute she felt that I was in a place where I could execute the character, she trusted me. She kept telling me that now you know Karma better than me.

But she guided me up to that point where I could feel like I was the character.

Varun: My character Ahan is very relatable.

The fact that he comes from such a rich family; he is like the Prince of Alibaug and still so humble, so innocent, and still in touch with his emotional side.

I love the fact that I could relate to a lot of traits of Ahan overall.

Do you believe in the concept of karma? Can you recall a moment from your life where you felt like it is a real thing?

Varun: I'm experiencing right now how karma has really worked for me.

I've tried to be a good person to everybody in my life, and I've treated them the way I would have liked them to treat me.

As a result, I have bagged such a big show.

That's how karma plays out.

If you do good, good things will happen to you.

Namrata: I agree. You have to just carry out your life in the best way that you can.

That's not to say that mistakes won't be made and people won't be hurt in the process sometimes. But as long as you're aware of your actions and how they're affecting people, I don't think you have to really be fearful of anything.

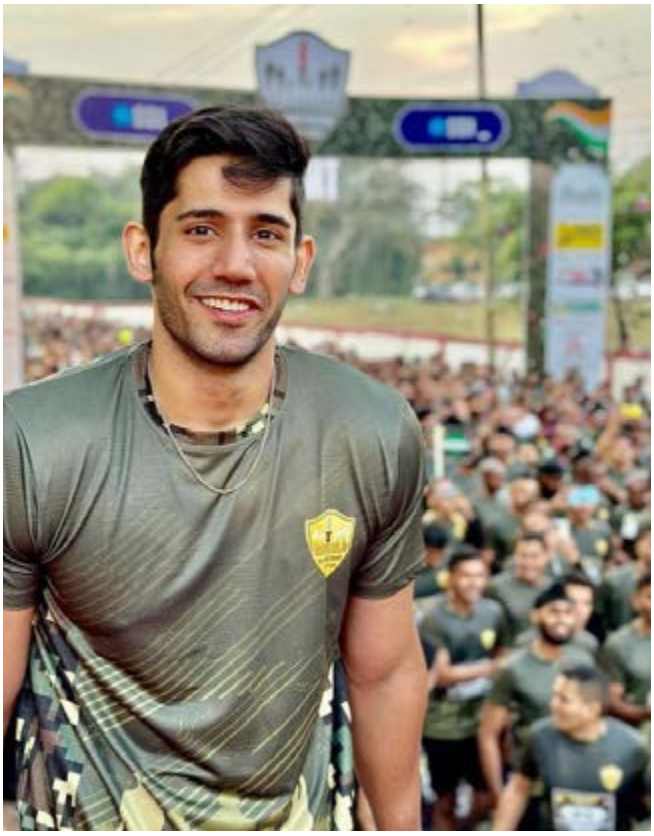
Having a strong moral compass is most important.

From being the outsiders making a mark in this industry to headlining a big scale show. How do you sum up your journey?

Varun: It's a great feeling that somebody trusted you with their creation. To be part of such a big show is surreal, overwhelming.

Every day I wake up, I'm thanking God and all my loved ones that they stuck by me in this process. Because it's not easy, right?

Once you've decided to be an actor, and have no connections in the industry, you don't really know which path to walk on.



And when something like this happens, it's just like all the weight and all the time that there was no work and the auditions were not cracking, you feel it's just worth it.

You just hope that the audience also likes you, so that more people out there can believe in you. And then you become a bankable actor.

Namrata: It is really fulfilling and gratifying because it's been a journey to get here. It takes a lot of resilience and perseverance and reminding yourself that the right opportunity will come your way when you're ready for it.

Looking back now, I think everything makes so much sense, the things that didn't work out, and that I was upset about at that moment.

In hindsight, you see that there is such a thing as destiny.

Since this is the age of social media, does it get challenging for young actors to maintain the balance between their work and social media personality?

Namrata: It's very stressful. It doesn't come naturally to me.

It takes a lot of effort to make sure that I'm being active on social media. It takes a lot of forcing from my team.

But I am learning to enjoy it.

It's part and parcel of the job.

We have to adapt to changing times.

So you know, you try to keep a balance, keep certain things private and use social media as a platform to showcase work.

Varun: Social media is very difficult to maintain: To post the right thing and to keep it engaging.

But my idea of social media has been just be yourself.

If you don't post that much, you don't post that much. And that's your reality.

The more authentic you are, the more relatable you are to the people who are visiting your profile.

How do you react to all the attention you receive from the opposite sex?

Varun: It's flattering. Validation as human beings is something that we all need. And it's very sweet.

A few of the messages that we get on a regular basis, it's like a complimentary thing. Every time you work, people like you and they become your fans, and you get compliments from both the same sex and the opposite sex.

I would like to have it a lot more. I like the feeling, for sure.

Namrata: Yeah. It's not as much the opposite sex as just audiences in general. You want everybody to look at you and like what you're doing. If a performance of yours made them feel something, that's the biggest compliment you can get.

At the end of the day, as actors, we do seek that validation from the audiences. Men, women, everybody, we want love from wherever we can get it

‘There will be fireworks between Sushmita and me’

‘In the olden days, unless you are the heroine, actors would have screen deaths. But now, there are so many good roles for women.’

Ila Arun plays the perfect villain to Sushmita Sen's Aarya in the Web series, now in its third season, Aarya Antim Vaar.

Her Nalini Sa is a heroin supplier, and as the season's last four episodes get ready to stream from February 9, she promises that it's only going to get better.

"This is the Antim Vaar, the last attack. Who will attack whom? Who will win? Who will be defeated? I don't know how the audience will react, but if they like my entry so much, the scenes are going to get better,"

Before the role was offered to you, did you watch Aarya? Were you aware of how popular the show was?

It's a popular and celebrated show, and I knew about it.

I thought it was an action-oriented show, but it has a lot of human angles.

Aarya has faced a lot of things and you can relate with her.

I got hooked.

When I was offered this role, I thought it would be a great turning point in my life.

What attracted you to it?

It's the first time I get to play a don. I had played a firm woman Maham Anga in Jodha Akbar, but people called it a vamp's role. It was not a vamp's role, she was a strong person.

Secondly, I liked Director Ram Madhvani.
Thirdly, it is based in Rajasthan royalty. I am not from a royal family, but have seen royalty closely since I am born in Jodhpur and brought up in Jaipur.

I have heard a lot of raja-rani stories.

I have never got a chance to do those kinds of roles, so when I did get the chance, it was a good opportunity to use my observations.

What was the shoot in Rajasthan like?

It's my hometown. If you ask a cricketer how it was playing on a home pitch, they would say it was fun.

The local people know me well because of my music. It felt nice to be among them.

I know how to carry those costumes, how to add something local in the dialect, the way of sitting, standing, talking, how to bend and say 'khamma ghani' (namaskar).

We were shooting in an army area, where I have been going for Durga puja since childhood. There is a beautiful Sheetala Devi temple.

Those are the places and monuments I would visit as a child and today, I own that (in the series)! It was hilarious!

I was the owner of so many forts and havelis!

I got a kick.

We didn't see you that much in the first four episodes of the season. What kind of fireworks can we expect to see between Aarya and you in the rest of the season?

The first four episodes were my introduction. You will see a lot of fireworks in the forthcoming episodes.

This is the Antim Vaar, the last attack. Who will attack whom?

Who will win?

Who will be defeated?

All these things will create a lot of excitement.

I don't know how the audience will react, but if they like my entry so much, the scenes are going to get better.
There will be a lot of friction and fireworks between Nalini Sa and Aarya.

You have done six films for OTT, but this is your first Web series. What attracts you to this medium?

I think this is the best medium.

I debuted on OTT during COVID.

All my films that were stuck were released on OTT, like Raat Akeli Hai, Sherni, Aafat-E-Ishq, Ghoomketu...

People started noticing me again.

It's a powerful medium with large audiences.

It's a good platform for serious actors.

Better roles are written for veteran actors.

There is good content because there is no pressure.

In the olden days, unless you are the heroine, actors would have screen deaths. But now, there are so many good roles for women.

'I have been rejected many times because of my colour'

'I have trained Ravish Kumar, Virender Sehwag, Harbhajan Singh, Irfan Pathan...'
'But if I approach somebody for work, I never get it.

Vikas Kumar's unique face-off with Sushmita Sen in the Web series **Aarya** is among its highlights.

While the actor considers this among his best cop roles, he also enjoyed **dancing with the former Miss Universe** on their time off!

Tell us about yourself.

I am from Bihar. I realised that one should finnish education so that one has something to fall back on if things didn't work out in Mumbai, so I did my MBA.

Acting happened because I got bored of my studies.

When I told my father, he was shocked because I was a topper in class. Everyone felt I would follow my father's footsteps and become a doctor.

My father saw acting as a huge risk because it was luck dependent and we had no contacts.

What made you think of acting?

I loved Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge so much that I saw it nine times in a theatre.

One month before that, I had been impressed with Rangeela.

When I was a child, my friends would tell me that I behaved like Aamir's Rangeela character and Shah Rukh's DDLJ character.

I thought this is fun, I would like to do this, not realising the hard work and luck that goes into it.

I was also a Manoj Bajpayee fan after watching Tamanna and Satya.

I came to know that both Shah Rukh and Manoj Bajpayee have been trained with Barry John.

I was in Delhi preparing for my medical entrance when I found out that Barry was still doing theatre there.

He asked me to join a three month acting course with him, as his theatre group was not functioning at that time.

After the course, the feedback from Barry John was very encouraging, so I started doing plays.

When did you decide to come to Mumbai?

My first trip to Mumbai was with a play called The Fifty Day War based on the Kargil War. It was directed by Aamir Raza Husain. We did 75 shows of that in Mumbai.

Later, I shifted to Mumbai when I was 25 years old in 2005.

I knew someone from the Barry John workshop, and stayed with him for a week.

Fortunately, I found a place right next to his flat, and four of us would share the BHK (bedroom-hall-kitchen) flat.

I was doing plays so I had saved some money; my father also gave me some.

I was a very responsible person. I did not take the auto, did not have cold drinks, always cooked food at home, there was no extra expense.

We used to sleep on the floor on a mat. Later, we got a mattress.

How did you land your first job?

Before getting an acting assignment, I got the job of dialogue coaching.

Director Aamir Raza Husain was directing The Legend of Ram: Prince of India in Delhi. I was in Mumbai with no job, so he asked me to join his play.

I went to Delhi as my girlfriend and now my wife (Raavi Sehgal) stayed there. I came back to Mumbai after 40 shows.
This time, when I came back, I told my father not to send me money.

Two of my roommates joined a call centre and Director Honey Trehan, who was also my roomie, started working as an assistant to Vishal Bhardwaj.

I joined a call centre too, and underwent the mandatory three-week voice and accent training. I got a certificate for best performer.

As soon as I finished my training, I got a call from a Hollywood production house to be a dialogue coach in the film One Night With The King (2006), which would be shot in Jodhpur.

Honey had recommended my name.

Then, I started getting voice coaching jobs for Gulaal, Ishqiya, Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara, 7 Khoon Maaf...

What happened to acting?

I did a short film called Shanu Taxi.

I was to play a lead in a show in Delhi, produced by NDTV, but it got shelved.

I was to do a film called Hero Heroine, produced by Anurag Kashyap and directed by Atul Sabharwal.

I prepared for it for a week by going to work at an Irani cafe, and serving, washing dishes, mopping, making Irani chai and Anda Salli. But the movie got shelved.

Atul knew what I was capable of so he called me when I was working on the sets of Ishqiya as a dialogue coach and asked me to audition for Powder.

Powder was my first big break on television. It was a proper role that I got paid for. It was followed by Khotey Sikkey,

After the first season, we got 10 days to prepare for season 2 of Khotey Sikkey, but YRF Television, which produced it, shut down.

I kept getting cop roles but since I had done it in Powder and Khotey Sikkey, I would refuse them.

But then I was offered CID and my family wanted me to do it. So I took that job.

In 2021, I produced a short film, Sonsi, with my childhood friend Sharib Khan.

I am also planning to start an audio-based show.

When things were not working out, how did you deal with it?

I did not have a phase when I was depressed because of missed opportunities. I just went with the flow.

When I was doing The Legend of Ram in Delhi, a big Hindi news channel's founding member saw the play and liked my voice. I was offered a job as a news broadcaster, and I auditioned for them. They selected me and they said I would be the next news anchor.

But abruptly, three days before the launch, I was dropped.

I have reason to believe it was because of my complexion because they said my look did not go with the look of the channel.

When I asked the lady, who told me, if it was because of my complexion, she said, 'Sir, you know better.'
But even that did not affect me.

You were rejected because of your colour?

Yes. I have been rejected many times because of my colour.

My auditions were good but they never gave me lead parts.

It used to affect me in school.

Any regrets?

It's not a regret, but maybe I should have used time better, maybe I should have been more proactive about looking for work. I have trained news reporters like Ravish Kumar, commentators like Virender Sehwag, Harbhajan Singh, Irfan Pathan... I have even trained beauty pageant winners.

But if I approach somebody for work, I never get it. I have got work through word-of-mouth only.

'I don't like people messing with me'

'Television actors are people who play with fire.'

Television actor Smriti Kalra, known for playing the female lead in the Star Plus show 12/24 Karol Bagh, will be seen in the coming Hindi film, Kaagaz 2.

Set to release in theatres on March 1, the film, co-starring Anupam Kher and Neena Gupta, is the late Satish Kaushik's last directorial venture.

Remembering him, "When we were shooting for the film, he used to say, 'Tum mujhe Sridevi ki yaad dilati ho'."

What could you tell us about Kaagaz 2?

The film talks about the right to freedom, the right to life, and the right to personal liberty.

We have all been stuck due to some rally or procession, but we are so used to it that we say, 'Let's wait for a while'.

But for some people, it can be life threatening.

This film is based on true incidents, but the best part is that it talks about the problem and comes up with a solution.

When did you become a part of the film?

I was actually the last member to be cast.

I was unaware of it but later, I learnt that the casting for the female lead took a year-and-a-half.

After I gave the audition, I got a call back saying someone else had been finalised.

Weeks later, I got a call saying that Mr Kaushik would like to meet me.

Whenever I post a picture of mine on Instagram, I always write notes along with it. They are poems, sometimes thoughts.

So when I met Mr Kaushik, he asked me to read out whatever I had written.

I remember sitting in his office and opening my Instagram handle.

There was this post of mine which had the caption: 'Aaj phir unse mulaqat hui aur hum dono ki na baat hui.'

It was kind of a series that I had made.

It's about two people who meet each other but don't get the opportunity to speak to each other and what happens during that encounter.

I read out aloud and he liked it. He was like, 'She is the one. She is our Tanisha.'

Satish Kaushik passed away in the middle of the shoot. How did that affect you?

I was shell shocked.

I had just messaged him the day before. I had shown him an ad and he had really liked it.

I replied to him, saying, 'Sir, I will

always make you proud.'

He was very fond of me.

So yeah, it was shocking. When the news flashed online, for a moment, I thought the name must have got misprinted.

I saw the news but did not register it.

But when I got the message and when it sunk in, it was very shocking.

I had just known him for a few months but there is a great deal of pain when you get to know about a colleague going like this.

I realised that I was close to him when I went for his last rites because suddenly, I was crying so badly.

I had developed a close bond with him without even realising it.

When we went for the promo launch on February 9, I felt really bad and cried as soon as I reached home.

Did he give you any tips or advice during the filming?

When we were shooting for the film, he used to say, 'Tum mujhe Sridevi ki yaad dilati ho.'

You know, Sridevi ma'am was my favourite actress, and when he said that to me, I remember how happy I was.

My role was not prominent in the original draft, so he rewrote it.

My opening in the film has been shot by him.

He was like, 'Give me a smile; your smile is really beautiful.'

He used to say, 'Everyone gives in their 100 percent. Someone who gives more than that is what takes them ahead.'

How did you become an actor?

I was a science student but I knew I wanted to get into the media. Not acting, but journalism.

I have done my Honours (degree) in Journalism.

Months into my college, I understood that I will not understand a thing if I only attend class.

I wanted practical knowledge, so I started interning.

I did editing and PR (Public Relations) for pocket money.

I became an RJ on Red FM and was earning good money, but got bored.

So what did you do next?

One of my friends was in a play and she asked me to tag along.

I just went with her and landed my first play in Delhi.

Then, someone told me that casting for a show (12/24 Karol Bagh) was going on.

I was a bit sceptical about going for an audition but one of my work mates said he would drop me there.

I remember being dropped at Lodhi Garden and meeting Producer Sudhir Sharma.

I probably looked a bit shabby because he asked me to comb my hair.

But after giving the audition, I did not want to play that role because the character was crying a lot.

I said that I want to play the second girl, the happy one. I wanted to play the character that eventually Sargun Mehta played.

But the producer told me to play the role I had auditioned for.

I was not mentally prepared for it but I wanted to do something new and the shoot was in Delhi. So I was like, okay, let's do it.

That's how my acting stint started.

I did not expect it to be so difficult and tiring.

Television actors are people who play with fire. When you shoot for a film, you feel it's a do-able job, but TV is very tedious.

Did you earn well those days?

Initially, I was offered Rs 2,000 per day and I said, 'I don't work for peanuts.'

Then the producer raised it to Rs 5,000 per day.

That's what I started with.

You have worked for one-and-a-half-decades now. Did you have any bad experiences?

When I look back, maybe people were trying to say something that I did not understand.

My ignorance and sheltered life helped me sail through.

Very recently, someone was trying to say something. I didn't understand at first, but when I did, I gave a befitting reply. It depends on how you carry yourself.

I don't like people messing with me.

But having said so, it is not easy, as there are all sorts of people.

The Girl Who Caught Bollywood's Eye

'The fact that I got noticed in a film that stars Hrithik Roshan and Deepika Padukone is a big high for me.'

Her first film saw her in just a just blink-and-miss appearance but she got to share the frame with Amitabh Bachchan!

"I just could not say no because it was a scene with THE Amitabh Bachchan," recalls Sanjeeda Shaikh, whose journey from Ahmedabad to Bollywood began in 2003.
"I was a dance instructor to (Baghban Director) Ravi Chopraji's wife, Renu aunty," Sanjeeda remembers.

"One day, he saw me dancing and told me that I need to report to shoot a song of Baghban. Without realising, I became a part of the film world."

Sanjeeda, however, does not feature in the film.

"My scene got edited," she sighs.
"I was one of the background dancers in the song, Chali Chali Ishq Ki Hawa Chali song in Baghban. My career started from there, but very few people know this," she says.

"Yes. I was not a trained actress. But now, I have learnt the skills and can emote well," she says.

In fact, her co-star in Fighter, Hrithik Roshan, endorsed her acting skills on X.
In Fighter, Sanjeeda plays Saanchi Gill, whose armyman husband (played by Karan Singh Grover) gets captured by the Pakistan army.

"The fact that I got noticed in a film that stars Hrithik Roshan and Deepika Padukone is a big high for me," Sanjeeda says.

Her emotional performance in one of the pivotal scenes had the incomparable Shabana Azmi raving about her!

Sanjeeda can cry at will, and she shows us how in this video.

But it was not films but television that gave Sanjeeda a break.

After Baghban, she bagged roles in popular serials like Kayamath, Nach Baliye 3, Nach Baliye 4, Ek Hasina Thi, Nagin 3 and Kumkum Bhagya.

"My television journey was great. It was not that I was away from films but the film world was away from me," she says.

"I feel everything has a right time and as an actress, this is my right time. After Fighter, I am doing Heera Mandi with Sanjay Leela Bhansali."

The period Web series also stars Manisha Koirala, Sonakshi Sinha, Aditi Rao Hydari and Richa Chadha, and will stream on Netflix.

"I was to work with Sanjay sir in SaraswatiChandra, but it did not work out. I am lucky to be one of his leading ladies in Heera Mandi. After working with him, I proudly say I am 'Bhansalified'," says Sanjeeda.

Bhansali is known for being a hard task-master and Sanjeeda says, "Sanjay sir gives respect to everyone on the sets, be it the art director, the actors or even the junior artists. Everyone is respected if you are good at your job. Sanjay sir is a magician, a perfectionist. He makes things that no one else does."

Why hasn't she starred in Gujarati films, since she hails from Ahmedabad and has tried her hand at other regional cinema?

"No good Gujarati film was offered to me," Sanjeeda says, after some thought.

Just what does Sanjeeda love about Ahmedabad? She tells us here.

Has Sanjeeda ever encountered the bad side of Bollywood?

"No," she says emphatically. "Everyone in this industry has been very good to me. I can never say that mere saath yeh hua tha ya vo hua tha. Nothing of the sort happened. On television too, I worked hard and people appreciated it."

What does she expect from life?

"If life gives you everything, you will always feel that you have not got something. But I am very content with what I have. I am not a planner. I take things as it comes, be it success or failure," she says.

"Failure is the most natural process of life. To come out of failure and become the person you are is the biggest achievement of your life."

Has she ever faced a sense of depression that follows with failure?
"No, not at all," Sanjeeda answers. "It is because I am surrounded by great people, great energy. They are the people who empower me and support me in whatever I do. I am in a very happy and beautiful space in my life."

'If you are brave, you become unstoppable'

'I remember that when I was about seven years old, a doctor saw me and told my family that I would only survive for six months and that the disease had no cure.'

'But my mother never gave up.'

'She would always say, "My son is born to become a renowned wrestler".'

Multiple award-winning wrestler Sangram Singh is all set to star in the film, Udaan Zindagi Ki.

The wrestler says that he enjoys his work in show business now, but there was a time when people in the industry would make fun of him.
"Whatever I am today is because of the hurdles that I faced. The only thing that matters is that how big are your dreams. If people are not laughing at your dreams, it means that your dreams are small,"

What is Udaan Zindagi Ki about?

It tells the story of a 22-year-old boy who wants to become a rapper.
He convinces his father to help him, but his father expires.
I felt I should do such a film. Whether it is successful or not is not in my hands.
I felt right about it, and shot it in my hometown.
This film is for all types of audiences and I feel that whoever watches it may get inspired.
That's why I took up this film.
I feel that when you do a film, it should have a message.
I am the brand ambassador for a sports institute and also the Swachh Bharat Mission. It brings me happiness.
There was a time when I was offered less work, so I starting taking lectures at IIT and IIM.

Why did you choose to back this project?

Haryana's Chief Minister (Manohar Lal) Khattarsaab is my friend and mentor.
One day I met him and he said, 'Sangram, you should do something for our state's youth.'
Months later, I came across the script

of Udaan Zindagi Ki.
The film has the feel of Dangal and Sultan and surprisingly, the character of my father in the film is played by the same actor (Naveen), who played Salman's father in Sultan.

You are a sportsperson. How difficult was it for you to get acquainted with show business?

When I came to Mumbai, I was completely unaware of what was right and wrong.
I was receiving a lot of love from the entertainment industry and the media.
For a period of time, I did not even know what my work was.
I had a couple of shows and films. I would do what the makers wanted me to do on a set, like close-up shots, wide shots, etc.

What happened next?

It was during the preparation for a film based on Khashaba Dadasaheb Jadhav that I learnt what quality work actually means.
Shyam Benegal was set to direct that film.
I invested almost three years of my life for that project.
I was set to play the lead role of Khashaba Dadasaheb Jadhav, who won the first (individual) medal for India at the 1952 Summer Olympics.

But the film did not see light of the day.
I was also supposed to do a film with Mahesh Bhatt. Unfortunately, the project was shelved because of some issues among producers.

Later, many superstars offered me work; I used to end up at their locations.
There were a few films, which I felt that may be if I had said yes to them, I would have ended up getting more work in the industry.I also refrained from doing ads for tobacco companies and things that are harmful to health.

At what point in your career did you feel that you have to try your hand at acting?

To be honest, the real motivation in my life has always been tons of rejections I have faced.
I was the kid who could not stand properly nor even speak properly.
I come from a humble background. I could not buy myself a pair of shoes or pay my bus fare.
My stars finally aligned, and I got the opportunity to become a wrestler.
I started wrestling from a small level. When I got the opportunity to play for my country, I was thrilled.
There was a time when everyone would tease me, taunt me for who I was and where I came from. But I went on to become the best wrestler in the world.

Your participation in Bigg Boss 7 grabbed a lot of eyeballs. What made you say yes to it?

One day, some people from Endemol visited me.

They told me about a show they wanted to make. It was about wrestling and they wanted me to host it.
I thought they must be lying to me.
When they convinced me, I thought why not give it a try.
I used to earn Rs 8,000 at that time and had taken a loan from a bank. I thought if I agreed to do the show, it would help me financially.
I took permission from the sports team, and went on to do a lot of shows, including Bigg Boss. I have even hosted several shows.

Did anyone make fun of your accent?

Whenever I used to go to such places, people used to say that he is a Haryanvi and has a peculiar voice.
Some people would make fun of me.
Whatever I am today is because of the hurdles I have faced.
The only thing that matters is how big your dreams are. If people are not laughing at your dreams, it means your dreams are small.
No matter how successful you are, or how intelligent you are, if you are ready to learn new things, nothing will stop you.
So steadily, I got the chance to learn.
I was the kind of student who would feel that getting 33 percent was a big deal. Now, I am travelling worldwide, giving speeches.
I meet IPS and IAS officers.So if you think positively and if you are brave, you become unstoppable.

You were confined to a wheelchair for the first eight years of your life, battling rheumatoid arthritis. What were those years like? How did you develop the will to come out of that dark phase?

I come from Madina in Rohtak. We did not have games like tennis and badminton there.
Once I saw people wrestling in our village.
My elder brother also used to wrestle. That's when I thought I wanted to be a wrestler.
But the disease, rheumatoid arthritis, that I was suffering from, was deadly because you are not in a position to do anything.
It started from the legs, and is extremely painful.
Doctors used to say this disease was incurable.
I remember that when I was about seven years old, a doctor saw me and told my family that I would only survive for six months and that the disease had no cure.

But my mother never gave up.
She would always say, 'My son is born to become a renowned wrestler.'
I reached the wrestling ground and that was an achievement in itself.
I told the wrestlers that I wanted to become a wrestler. They taunted me, saying, I needed to stand properly first.
Hurt, I asked them, 'Who is a wrestler?'
They said, 'A wrestler is someone who represents his country.'
That sentence never left my mind.
Some relatives, friends, and my mother never left my side.
My mother would massage my body 12-13 times a day. She used to massage me using different kinds of oils and desi ghee. Her will power brought me strength.
She was not trying to help a physically disabled person; she was preparing her son to become stronger and face the world.
When I was on my way to recovery, I used to sit and observe the game of wrestling closely.The biggest tragedy is not that the world doesn't recognise who we are, but that we don't know our own potential.

I understand myself now, and feel that everyone and every player is different.

Everybody's journey is different.

The Actress Who Caught Mrinal Sen's Eye

'She didn't tell us she had been diagnosed with cancer.'

Sreela Majumdar caught the discerning eye of Mrinal Sen and he cast her as Alhadi in his 1979 Bengali film, Parashuram. It bagged three National Awards as well as the Silver Prize at the 11th Moscow International Film Festival.

The same year, Sreela Majumdar had another release, Mrinal Sen's Ek Din Pratidin.

Over the next four decades, she acted in over 40 films, including Sen's Akaler Sandhane, Kharij and Khandhar, Shaym Benegal's Mandi and Arohan, Prakash Jha's Damul, Utpalendu Chakraborty's Chokh and last year, in Kaushik Ganguly's Palan.

After battling cancer for three years, Sreela passed away on January 27 at the age of 65.

Her co-star Mamata Shankar from Ek Din Pratidin, Kharij and Palan, remembers her as a brilliant actress and a lovely person, who had grown very protective of her.

She was a brilliant actress who got better with every film, more mature and accomplished,

'I was to play Minu in Ek Din Pratidin'

She played my younger sister, Minu, in this 1979 Bengali film directed by Mrinal Sen.

Interestingly, I was to play the role initially, but my elder son, Ratul, was just 17 days old when the shooting started.

It was difficult for me to leave him at home and go to work, so I asked Mrinalda if there was any other role that I could do instead.

He told me that I could play the elder sister, Chinu.

She's the only one in their impoverished, middle-class family who has a job, so when Chinu doesn't return home from work one night and cannot be traced, everyone is understandably upset.

The film questions whether her family's reactions stem from love and concern or fear of losing their only breadwinner.

Mrinalda pointed out to me that though the story revolves around Chinu, on screen she is there only for a few minutes.

I immediately accepted this role and that's how Sreela got to play Minu.

In retrospect, I think that whatever happens, happens for the best.

Sreela was marvelous, and I know for sure that I could have never played Minu as well as her.

She was a brilliant actress who got better with every film, more mature and accomplished.

'Sreela, you have no idea how beautiful you look!'

We also didn't have too many scenes together either.

But over the years, we became very friendly.

Our sons went to the same school, St Xavier's Convent in Kolkata, and we would bump into each other there when we went to pick up the boys.

We went on to do other films together, like Mrinalda's Kharij and more recently, Kaushik Ganguly's Palan.

Mrinalda was very fond of Sreela.

She had a complex about her complexion, but he preferred her over other actresses for that reason.

I thought she was stunning too and would often tell her, 'Sreela, you have no idea how beautiful you look!'

'Over the years she had grown very protective of me'

Over the years, I had become like an elder sister to her and she was very protective of me.

Once there was a slight misunderstanding on the set over a vanity van.

Sreela was really annoyed when she learnt that it had been allocated to someone else instead of me.

She insisted that I should be given the van.

I tried telling her it was okay, that I would be happier sharing a makeup room with her, but she was not appeased.

'Ki kore hoi (How can this happen)? Momodi, you are much senior, you should be given the vanity van. This is not done!' she complained.

'She didn't tell us she had cancer'.

Palan released last year but we shot for it the year before.

It was evident then that Sreela was unwell.

We were concerned because she didn't look too good.

She didn't tell us she had been diagnosed with cancer, just that she was recuperating from a surgery.

But I'm glad she did the film because we got to spend time together.

I didn't know then that this would be my last chance to work with her.

Some time ago, I got the news that Sreela wasn't well. I kept meaning to call her many times, but something or the other kept cropping up.

Then one day, she was gone.

I still feel guilty for not making that call and speaking to her.

'I wanted to write about a young woman's sexual awakening'

'I went to a school in Baroda, where if the boys harassed us, the teachers pulled the girls aside and said, "Oh, your skirts are too short".'

'They made us feel ashamed of having any sexual feelings or having bodies that were growing up to be young women.'

Debut film-maker **Shuchi Talati's** feature Girls Will Be Girls won two awards at the Sundance Film Festival, including the World Cinema Dramatic Special Jury Award in Acting for the lead performer Preeti Panigrahi and the Audience Award in the same section.

These awards were not unexpected as many critics observed that Girls Will Be Girls was a revelation.

A graduate of the American Film Institute in Los Angeles, Talati, 39 was fortunate to get support for her first project from two close friends, actors Richa Chadha and Ali Fazal, who have recently stepped into producing films with their company Pushing Buttons Studios.

Chadha and Talati have been friends since they attended the Social Communications Media programme at Mumbai's Sophia College.

Shot in boarding schools in Mussoorie and Dehradun, Girls Will Be Girls is the story of teenager Mira (Panigrahi), a studious, head prefect, whose sexual awakening and attraction to a classmate Sri (Kesav Binoy Kiron) is challenged by her mother, Anila, a single mother for all practical purposes, played by **Kani Kusruti.**

Talati, who now lives in New York, has done a wonderful job of creating believable characters, spirited, focused and at times, flawed. It is rare to find such characters in Hindi cinema. We care for them, even as we watch them go down the wrong paths.

Talati was enroute to Sweden to attend her film's European premiere at the Göteborg Film Festival when she discussed the film with Aseem Chhabra.

Shuchi, congratulations on the awards your film won at Sundance. What has this last week been like, especially after the awards were announced?

You know, it's changed a lot and not so much.

The awards were great but what felt more life-changing was to actually share the film with an audience.

You work on it for so long but to sit in a theatre with an audience and feel people so deeply invested, laughing with embarrassment, gasping.

That felt transformative.

The film had met its audience.

I was so happy Preeti's work was acknowledged. She's so special, such a revelation and so brave.

The Audience Award was a confirmation of what we felt in all the screenings.

How did these characters come to you?

The first character that came to me was Mira.

I was writing Mira's story from a place of rebellion.

I went to a school in Baroda that was much like this one, not a boarding school, but extremely strict, where if the boys harassed us, the teachers pulled the girls aside and said, 'Oh, your skirts are too short.'

They made us feel ashamed of having any sexual feelings or having bodies that were growing up to be a young women.

I wanted to write about a young woman's sexual awakening against this backdrop where she did not feel shame.

She's a person, a young woman with agency, who is enjoying this blossoming into her womanhood.
At first, there was a triangle between Mira, her boyfriend and a teacher, who was a little flirtatious because we all knew teachers like that.

You give a hint to that in the film.

Yes, there's a little remnant of that story.

I was writing a separate script, which was a mother-daughter story.

Neither of them were coming together until the two scripts collapsed into one.

I think the second part of the story comes from my perspective, now as a woman in my 30s, trying to imagine it from the mother's point of view.

She is also in her 30s.

She's a young woman who should have desires.

Why should she be relegated to a supporting position in her daughter's and husband's lives?

It doesn't seem like her marriage is that great, so if she's flirting with this young boy, what's wrong?

I think that's when the story became complete.

What I like is the three main characters you created: Mira, Sri and Anila. They are beautiful, but all have flaws. They are like us. We all make mistakes in life.

The issue about the characters being well rounded was really important to me.

Yes, all the characters are flawed.

Mira, who is sort of a 'Miss Goody Two-Shoes,' throws her friend under the bus to save her own skin.

She is kind of complicit with Sri in using her mother to get what she wants.

Sri is a young boy, extremely charming and you could write him off as a cad. But actually, he's also a vulnerable young boy, whose parents are not around.

He's moved around a lot, developed this charm, giving people what they want as a defence mechanism. So I care for him.

The mom sometimes prioritises her own thrills and her needs over her daughter, but when push comes to shove, also shows up like a fierce protector mama bear.

It was equally important that all characters were written with compassion.

Nobody is perfect, but nobody is a villain either.

I needed to feel that each character was acting from a place that made sense.

I liked that the script doesn't reveal a lot. When the film gets over, you leave much to our imagination. Did some things happen or not? Or maybe we were just shocked that we thought things happened. There is a mystery quality to the film.

For me, what actually happened, the conversations the characters are having when we walk into a mid-scene... these things are not so important.

I feel like the film is very clear emotionally.

There's a clarity in Mira coming to understand her mother a certain way.

She doesn't like her in the beginning. But she comes to a different understanding of her mother by the end. And that should be clear to the audience.

The film is told through Mira's point of view and the audience does not know anything that she doesn't know.

Hopefully, the audience is never ahead of her.

As her point of views of different people change, we are on this journey with her.

There are things that she will not be able to ask or articulate.

How can you ask certain things of your mother, in the context of our culture? And I don't think it's important.

But as a writer, you must have had fun with the way you constructed the situations. By leaving things unsaid to yourself, you also don't know what actually happened. I found the film disturbing at times. I was on the edge of the seat. Yet, it was so sweet, romantic and tender. It's very rare that you get these ideas blended together.

I had fun writing it. But I also had a lot of fun in the edit.

As you are saying, there is tenderness and this feeling of being on the edge of your seat.

They are both separate but in a way, so close.

The tenderness you feel for Mira is a huge credit to Preeti. Even though she's an internal character in her performance, you always know how she's feeling.

When she is afraid or concerned, you really feel it. We tried to shoot it that way in the visual language.

When I worked with actors on set, I loved exploring.

I would tell them to play more or less flirtatiously. Because I knew in a film like this, there's a fine line we are going to walk in the edit.

We had to test to see how Mira or her mother were perceived.

It was great to have the room to calibrate this in the edit.
You can write it a certain way but there will always be surprises when the actors play it and you never really know how an audience is going to respond.

The fun part during the edit was to test the film with a small audience, then come back and fine tune it if Mira was too likable or if Sri was not scary or likable enough. The same for the mother.

You worked with Dilip Shankar to cast the film. To get Preeti and Kesav was amazing. What were you looking for in these actors?

For Sri, I was looking for an actor who would have the right quality of being a boy and a man, where he would be interesting both to the daughter and the mother.

He had to have the right combination of charm, but also sincerity and a vulnerability, so he can charm both the women, but you are not wary of it right away.

You don't feel he's a bad boy because he's not.

It was a hard combination because we saw many actors who felt like charming, bad boys. But you would immediately say, 'Oh, no, stay away from that one.'

Kesav was not that.

I feel he really nailed this tightrope he had to walk on.

Preeti is extremely special to me because she is kind of unselfconscious and has this amazing way of being in the moment.

She does not feel studied.

Young actors, especially now in the times of Instagram and TikTok, know what their good angles are.

There is a self-consciousness in front of the camera, which even very good actors have.

But Preeti does not have that. She is so natural and she always did unexpected things, the way her mouth moved or something else. It felt very true to life.
Also, Preeti instinctively understood this character.

She is not unlike Mira. She would come to rehearsals with a little notebook, prepared with questions. She's very studious, smart but also a rebel.

I have seen Kani in a number of films, including Biryani, which is a difficult film to watch. What was the quality that you found in her?

Kani has a livewire quality that is unusual.

You never know what she's going to do next.

She's an actor who doesn't over rehearse.

On the set, you feel she sometimes doesn't know what she's going to do next.

She has kind of nailed this technique where she knows enough, the lines, she will get the marks.

Technically, she's very sound.

She always knows where to catch the light.

But emotionally, she leaves some space for her to discover what's going to happen. This quality where you watch with a little bit of being on the edge of your seat, is so essential for the mother.

A good friend of mine said that Kani has this underlying effortlessly tragic quality. You feel like there is some sadness underneath.

Somehow, she brought this sense of history, sadness where you feel she's mourning her youth.

How was it like working with your friends Richa Chadha and Ali Fazal as producers?

Richa is an old friend. We made our first student film together. And then she acted in a short film that I made to apply to film school.

Over the years, Richa became an actor and I became a director.

But every time I would come to Bombay, her home was my home.

During the pre-production of this film, I stayed with Richa and Ali for four months.

We couldn't really hang out as friends because as soon as we saw each other, Richa would pull out the to-do-list that we needed to tackle. Even though they are first-time producers, they understand the film business. And Richa especially has always had a producer sort of brain.

They were immediately good at things like fundraising.

They had all these relationships with the cast and crew.

Richa was the one who introduced me to Dilip Shankar.

But they also protected the film. They understood what it would have meant if we had a Bollywood star in our film.There were financiers who wanted us to go that route, but Richa's and Ali's words had a lot of weight, where they said no we are not going to do this.

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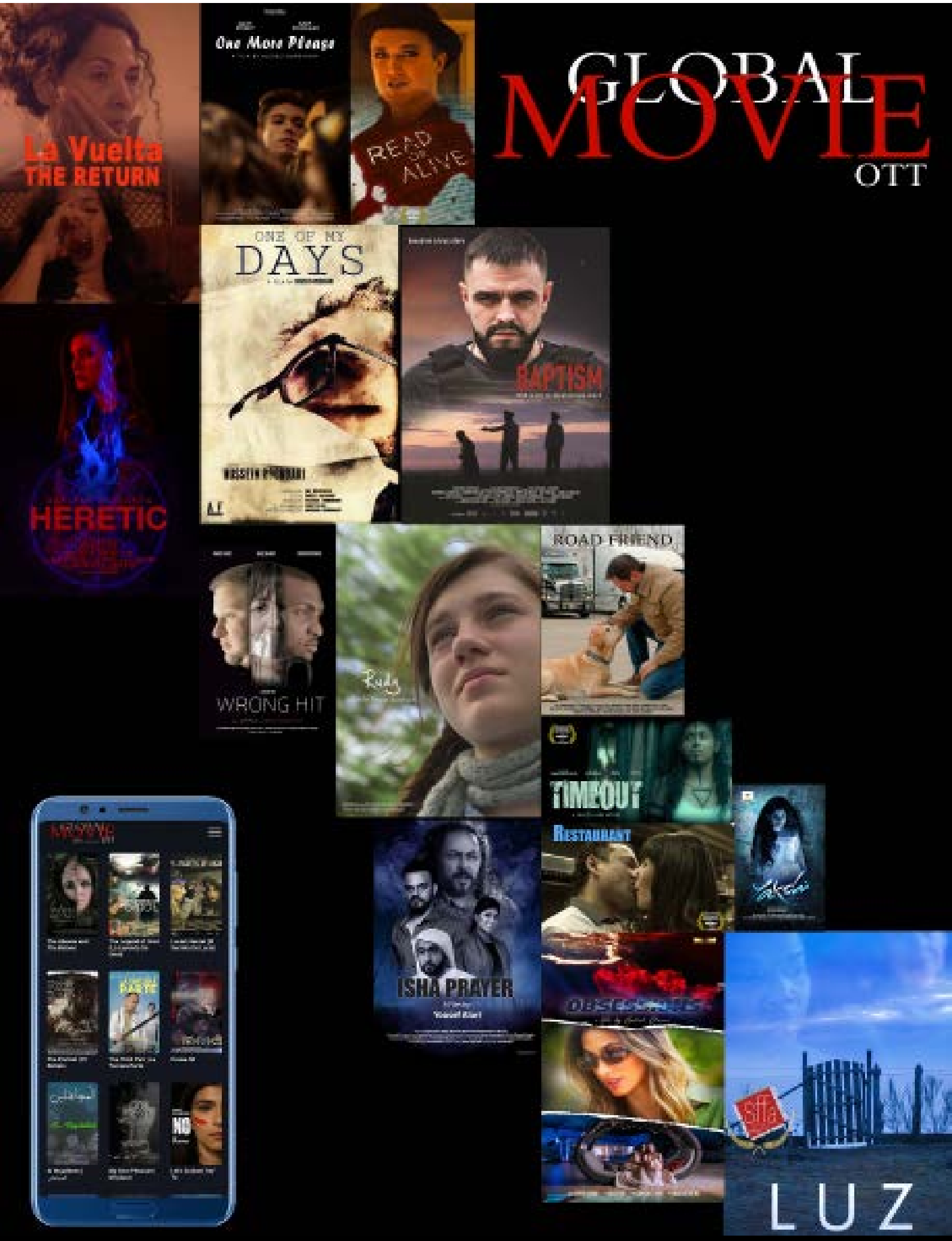


The People Mumbai Forgot

'When the mill strike started, there was a crisis in every mill worker household.'
'One entire generation went without education.'
'Hunger forced them to commit a crime.'

Mumbai was once the hub of textile mills. Then came the great mill strike of 1982 which sounded the death knell of the mills who went out of business.

Over the years the mills were converted into malls; skyscrapers replaced chawls, the city forgot the mill workers who lost their jobs and were forcibly displaced.
Many authors have written heart-breaking stories of these mill workers. Among them, the late Jayant Pawar wrote Adhantar, a Marathi play that was adapted by Mahesh Manjrekar into a film, Lalbaug Parel.

A generation once worked in those mills; two generations later, their progeny work as the house-keeping staff in the malls and skyscrapers that have been built on mill land.
That is the theme of the musical Todi Mill Fantasy, the critically acclaimed and popular play which will be staged during this month's National School of Drama festival.

Todi Mill Fantasy looks at the lives of the mill worker community and the million possibilities they have 'to rise from the ashes of Phoenix (the erstwhile mill which is a sprawling mall today) and fly like a peacock'.
Most of the cast has been drawn from Girangaon, as the mill areas were popularly known, in Mumbai.

Director **Vinayak Kolwankar** grew up in Girangaon too and had not observed life so closely until he realised how the world outside perceives his neighbourhood.

"The housekeeping staffer is educated but he cleans toilets. He is unable to break out of it as he isn't of that coterie that gives him leverage in society. Due to that, he is unable to value himself adequately. This is the biggest frustration we face in our city,"

Vinayak, what prompted you to choose this particular theme which has been handled by many before?

I began understanding their fascination and craze for Mumbai.
When you see Mumbai through their eyes, you realise it is a completely different city. Mumbai was a city where the textile mills closed down and that led to unemployment and poverty.
All this contributed to the rise in criminal activities and how the area has changed today.

They believed that most of the mill workers joined Mumbai's underworld, but we know this is not true.
As part of his studies, this young man, who once disliked reading, began to study about textile mill workers. He says he then understood the 'Butterfly Effect' which motivated him to bring stage this play.

What do you mean by the 'Butterfly Effect'?

When a butterfly moves its wings, its ripple effect is felt in another corner.
When the mill strike started, there was A crisis in every mill worker household. That had spiralling effects.

One entire generation went without education.

Hunger forced them to take to crime.
This impacted the next generation who were denied education.

The spiralling effect is still visible, as the next generation is educated, but still stuck there. The mills have turned into malls and they continue to work there.

This is the Butterfly Effect.

Had there been no strike, the third generation of mill workers, which is my generation, would have done something completely different.

Maybe there would be more Marathi people living in these skyscrapers, doing businesses or becoming entrepreneurs.

Our class system is a reality.

The housekeeping staffer is educated, but he continues to clean toilets.

He is unable to break out of it as he isn't of that coterie that gives him leverage in society. Due to that, he is unable to value himself adequately.

This is the biggest frustration we face in our city.

I want to start a vada-pav business and if I want to get a licence for a cart to sell this, I will face innumerable hardships.

This is the specific conflict of our region that we have tried to portray through this play.

How did you start this journey from a student of theatre to directing this musical?

After reading writers like the late Jayant Pawar who wrote Adhantar/em> to whom we have dedicated our play.

Once I returned to Mumbai after completing my studies, I began shortlisting stories which I thought were pertinent.

I met Sujay Jadhav, who eventually wrote this play. He was staying in Pune, so I moved my bag and baggage to his house.

I stayed there for nearly two years, and re-read all the works of these authors who have impacted me.

We came to Mumbai and did some recce.

Vinayak is inspired by Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theatre concept and Todi Mill Fantasy is produced as a dark comedy in a musical form.

It begins with three friends who live in Girangaon. One is a toilet cleaner and is about to close the café for the night, when a rich, young, tipsy lady comes running into the toilet.

She is running away from the police after her car crashes due to her being intoxicated.

As the scene unfolds, two of his friends are seen on the terrace of a public toilet. Behind them is the skyscraper where their homes used to be once upon a time.

Thus begins the journey of these three friends against the background of prevailing political, social and financial conditions.

The play ends on an unpredictable note.
If I had created a play on mill workers and mill land, who would I have wanted to see it?

This same story I have told, keeping in mind today's times as well as the fact that we are competing with OTT platforms today.

I followed the plays of my teacher, Pravin Muley, where I would see laughter in an emotional scene.

I realised that I don't want to make plays to make audiences burst into tears.
I want them to laugh.

But it has to be self-reflective and thought-provoking.

For example, instead of pitying Shirish Kochrekar and calling him bechara, the audience needs to find out the root cause of the situation he has been forced into.

The play has a lot of takeaway points, but the one that stands out is the music. Marathi theatre has a tradition of live music.

The fusion indie band Desiriff will make your adrenalin flow and the lyrics will sting you.

Those born after 1993 will come to see this play because they will connect with its pace.

We have woven in it the concept of a concert. You connect with rhythm and speed as if you are watching a live band or a rap battle or a rock show.

We kept the opening line that Mumbai has the curse of mill workers. This has to be the anthem. In the line -- 'Phoenixchya rakhet tun uthla mor (a peacock rises from the ashes of a phoenix)' -- the peacock is symbolic of a mall.

In Brecht's Epic Theatre, the goal is to create political and social change. One wonders whether this play can achieve it.

Firstly, it needs to reach the masses, which is tough because every performance of Todi Mill Fantasy costs Rs 150,000.Vinayak has definitely connected with Girgangaon residents and there are changes on other levels that he has initiated.

We are a group showing life in the mill areas. Not poverty, but genuine stories in current times.

We have been able to create new possibilities, apart from this play.

We have been identified as a group that can create good quality fiction and received accolades for it. This is liquid profit that you can't measure.

Through this play, we have been able to start a public relations agency. In this very Girangaon neighbourhood, there are four leading advertising and PR agencies.

Now four Marathi youth have started an agency. Through this play, we have become entrepreneurs.

Today we can sit in this office at Naigaon and speak, but a year ago, we would meet on a garden wall, constructed by a builder after a tower came up in the neighbourhood.

Today we have equipment, books, wifi and all the things that youngsters in Girangaon didn't haveThey don't have that space to just go and sit somewhere, access the Net and discuss issues. We have created this space for them.Even to get confidence to break out of a job culture and venture out on one's own is important. This play has given us scope to form an ideology.

14 Foods to Reduce Joint Pain

Cary Orthopaedics originally wrote and published this article in 2017 and has updated it with the latest research and information.
Ben Franklin was right when he said: "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." We agree! Our orthopaedic specialists encourage patients to adopt dietary and exercise habits that reduce joint pain and support strong, stable joints.

Importance of bone health

Strong and healthy bones are important to your overall well-being and quality of life. Bones provide the framework for our bodies, support movement, protect vital organs and anchor our muscles.

Childhood and adolescence are critical periods for bone development. Bones accumulate most of their density during these stages. In adulthood, maintaining this density through balanced nutrition and weight-bearing exercises is essential.

For older people, the importance of bone health becomes even more pronounced. Osteoporosis can be a major concern because it makes bones susceptible to fractures even after a minor fall.

Building solid bones starts with making the right dietary choices. Choose foods that build bone density, strengthen connective tissue and reduce inflammation. This will help prevent injuries and preserve your joints for a long, active life.

Here are some foods to include in your diet to promote strong bones and prevent orthopaedic conditions like osteoporosis.

1. Calcium-rich dairy

Calcium is a fundamental mineral for boosting bone health because it provides the foundation of bones and teeth. Dairy products like milk, yogurt and cheese are classic sources of calcium. They also contain vitamin B12, which is key in building bone mass.

If you are lactose intolerant or vegan, try fortified plant-based milk alternatives like almond, soy or oat. You will still get your nutrients without compromising your needs.

Calcium-rich foods such as tofu, almonds, and leafy vegetables are good sources of this essential nutrient. Adding these foods into your diet ensures you get the calcium your bones need without regular dairy.

2. Green and leafy vegetables

Eat dark leafy greens like kale, spinach, collard greens and turnip greens. They are excellent sources of calcium, vitamin K and magnesium, all of which increase bone mineral density. Several other popular (and tasty!) vegetables make the list, including broccoli, cauliflower and Brussels sprouts.

Green and leafy vegetables can block an enzyme that causes joint swelling. Plus, they're chocked full of fiber, vitamins and nutrients for overall health and well-being

3. Fatty fish and fish oils

Fatty fishes like salmon, mackerel and sardines are foods rich in vitamin D and omega-3 fatty acids. Vitamin D is crucial for calcium absorption in the intestines and is vital in maintaining bone density. Omega-3 fatty acids found in fish oils have anti-inflammatory properties. This benefits bone health by reducing the risk of bone loss and fractures

4. Nuts and seeds

Almonds, chia seeds and flaxseeds are excellent sources of calcium, magnesium and phosphorus – all essential for bone health.

They also provide healthy fats that support overall health and help in nutrient absorption. A good alternative to nuts or seeds is a spoonful of almond butter.

5. Lean protein

Protein is a building block for bones, muscles and other tissues, and it aids in calcium absorption. Include lean protein sources in your diet. Lean red meats, poultry, beans, lentils and tofu can contribute to bone health

6. Fruits and berries

Vitamin C boosts your immune system and plays a role in collagen production, which is an important factor in bone tissue. Research has shown that vitamin C can help prevent osteoporosis. Many fruits are packed with vitamins and minerals, including citrus, melons, kiwis, pineapples and berries.

We're particularly partial to blueberries, which are high in anthocyanins – one of the most powerful flavonoids. These help "turn off" inflammatory responses in the body. Apples are another fiber-rich, anti-inflammatory fruit that delivers added benefits for gut health

7. Eggs

Eggs are a great source of protein and vitamin D. We need vitamin D to help with calcium absorption.

8. Whole grains

Proteins found in refined grains – such as white bread, white rice and regular pasta – may trigger an inflammatory response in the body. However, high-fiber whole grains help produce fatty acids that help fight inflammation. Therefore, stick with whole grains.

The whole grains in brown rice, quinoa and whole wheat bread contain phosphorus. This mineral works alongside calcium to build strong bones and reduce joint pain.

9. Herbs and spices

Certain herbs and spices, like garlic, turmeric, ginger and oregano, have potential anti-inflammatory and bone-strengthening properties. Use herbs and spices without added salt, as too much can increase your risk of osteoporosis.

10. Fortified foods

In most grocery stores, you can find a variety of foods fortified with bone-supporting nutrients like calcium and vitamin D.

Fortified orange juice and cereals can help you meet your daily intake recommendations if you have dietary restrictions.

11. Olive oil

Toss out your vegetable oil, sunflower oil and peanut oil – all of which can increase inflammation. Instead, use a few tablespoons of olive oil for cooking and salad dressings. Better yet, go with the extra virgin variety that is less processed.

Olive oil is an unsaturated "healthy" fat often associated with a Mediterranean diet. It's another source of Omega-3 and a heart-healthy choice!

12. Lentils and beans

Beans and lentils are known for their health benefits. They're an excellent source of protein, fiber and essential minerals. They also have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Black beans, lentils, chickpeas, pinto beans and soybeans are all great sources of anthocyanins – that magical flavonoid that reduces chronic inflammation.

13. Bone broth

Glucosamine, chondroitin and amino acids are well-documented to help maintain healthy joints, while calcium is essential for bone density. Bone broth contains all of these. The gelatin-like substance that comes from cooking bones mimics collagen that occurs naturally in our joints, tendons and ligaments.

Whether or not bone broth can actually stimulate the regrowth of cartilage is a fiercely debated topic in the medical field. But taken regularly as an oral supplement, it has been known to reduce joint pain and increase function for people with arthritis.

Bone broth can be used as a hot broth or as a cooking base or sauce in recipes. Get tips on bone broth preparation from these dietitians..

14. Dark chocolate

Now we're talking! Indeed, chocolate is part of an anti-inflammatory diet. Cocoa, the main ingredient in chocolate, contains antioxidants that can counteract genetic predisposition to insulin resistance and inflammation. The higher the percentage of cocoa in the chocolate, the higher its anti-inflammatory effect.

But remember, chocolate can be high in sugar and fat, so enjoy it in moderation. If you're going to indulge, choose chocolate that is at least 70% cocoa.

Foods to avoid

So there you have it – our 14 recommended foods to reduce joint pain and build strong bones. Of course, there are some DON'Ts when it comes to eating for joint health. Pay careful attention to the effects of foods that can be linked to inflammation:

1. Limit refined grains like pasta, rice and white bread.

2. Keep salt to a minimum. Salt causes fluid retention, which is associated with tissue swelling.

3. Additionally, the Arthritis Foundation reports that limiting salt intake can reduce calcium loss, thereby reducing osteoporosis and fracture risk.

4. Steer clear of processed foods whenever possible

Best Places to Visit in March in India

March, the onset of spring, is one of the most wonderful times to make plans to travel in India. The pleasant and comfortable weather of March makes it one of the best times to visit India. Talking about the best places to visit in March in India includes Goa, Jaipur, Wayanad, etc. These places combine beach, adventure, heritage, hill stations, romance, and exploration. No matter where your interest lies, there is a place to visit in March India that will suit all your moods. The best way to begin your holidays in India in March is by joining in for the celebration of Holi, the festival of colors and love. Besides, Goa also hosts the famous Shigmo Festival during this time.

The experience is warm as people meet their loved ones, splash colors, and water, and try sweets and cannabis in the drink. The festivities take place all over the country. However, the royal Holi in Rajasthan and Lathmar Holi in Uttar Pradesh have their charm. Besides, Rishikesh with the International Yoga Festival, Jaipur's Elephant Festival, and Velas Turtle Festival in Ratnagiri add more fun to the celebrations.

That's not where the list of India's best places to visit in March ends. If you love exploring historical marvels, the calm weather of April month offers great opportunities for exploring the culture and heritage of India. Pick from warm places to visit in March in India like Delhi, Agra, and Jaipur, as there you have some of the best UNESCO sites waiting for your presence.

Looking for wildlife adventures in India? Join the group of enthusiasts visiting Wayanad in Kerala, Jim Corbett in Uttarakhand, Kaziranga National Park in Assam, and Panna National Park in Madhya Pradesh. The fun doubles up if you plan a vacation in March with family as India has a lot in store. Lakshadweep, Shillong, and Kodaikanal are the perfect tourist spots for exploring and enjoying a holiday in India with your loved ones. Not only can you take up fun activities like watching waterfalls and valleys but also visit the zoo and museums.

This month offers a pleasant and tranquil environment for enthusiastic travelers and honeymooners. Book well-crafted tour packages in March in India 2024 to some of the places like Ooty, Darjeeling, Manali, Nainital, Chikmagalur, Coorg, Kodaikanal, and Munnar.

Manali

Manali is a beauty of the Himalayas nestled in Himachal Pradesh. It is mentioned in mythology as the origin of human civilization. Modern-day visitors are attracted to the evergreen pine groves, snow capped mountains, whispering forests, cascading waterfalls, and perennial Beas' swift-flowing waters. Manali remains a favorite in India's travel scene throughout the year, but it only gets better in March. The Phagli Mela is a perfect opportunity to witness the simple mountain lifestyle, and also, the river rafting cup is scheduled for this month

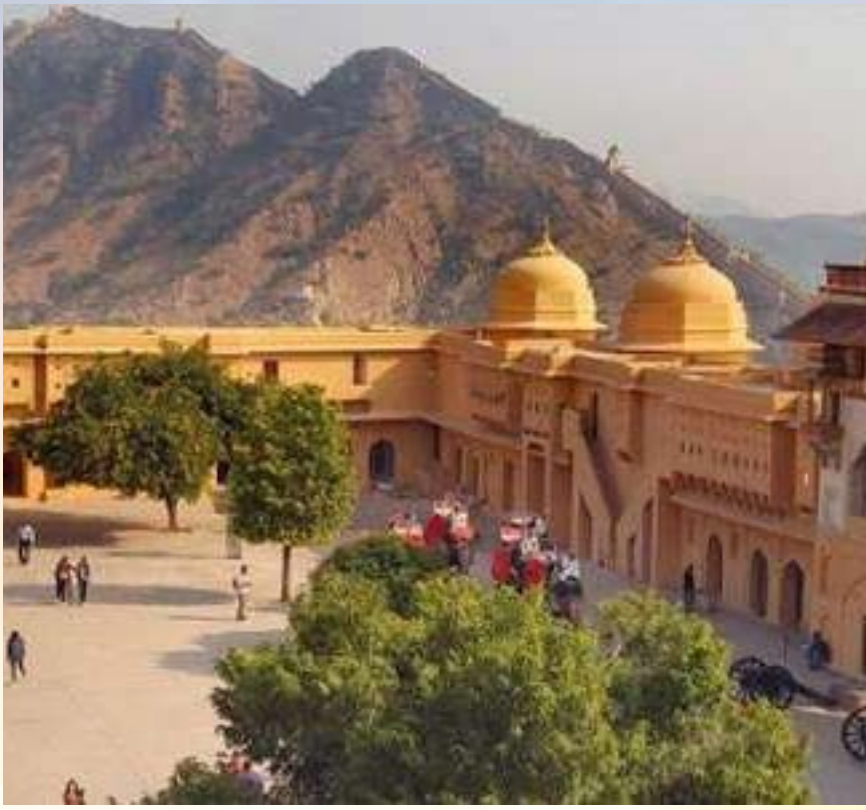
Andaman

Beach heaven like no other, Andaman Islands is among the best places to visit in March in India. Once called Kalapani, Andaman was the location of life imprisonment for revolutionary rebels during British rule. As a result, it has become an ideal destination for a peaceful vacation with the family or a romantic escape. Andaman Island has sun-kissed beaches with crystal clear waters, a tranquil environment, and colorful coral reefs. Elephant Beach, Barren Island, and Mahatma Gandhi Marine National Park are a must-visit. Scuba diving, swimming, glass boat ride, snorkeling, and other water sports are quite popular here during March when the weather is splendid.

Plan a beach holiday in March in India with our Andaman tours.

Rajasthan

Rajasthan never fails to mesmerize people, even in March. Just as gold shines brightly in the sunlight, the royal state exudes matchless summer charm. During the day, the sun bothers a bit but stargazing at night offers a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Exploring Jaipur while traversing India's Golden Triangle makes summer vacations in India memorable. Udaipur, the 'Venice of the East,' is yet another beautiful place to visit in Rajasthan in March. If not sightseeing, staying at a luxury hotel will surely appeal to your senses!



Wayanad

Nestled amidst the Western Ghats, Wayanad is famous as a lush green heaven. Its clean environment, mesmerizing locations, cool breeze, and exotic wildlife make this tranquil destination a must-visit during March. The place is known for its rich culture and history and attracts a lot of travelers for the same reasons. It is a perfect place to visit in India in March to enjoy a laid-back vacation with loved ones, be it with the family or on a honeymoon. Visit the popular attractions, meet the exotic wildlife and partake in trekking

Darjeeling

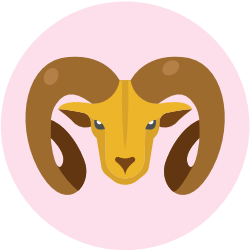
Fondly referred to as the 'Queen of the Hills', Darjeeling is located in West Bengal. It is a perfect getaway from chaotic city life during March. Known for its aromatic tea and lush tea estates, Darjeeling houses the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, more popular as the toy train. Its splendid weather, several tourist attractions, exotic wildlife, monasteries, and lush scenic beauty attract tourists every year in decent numbers. For adventure enthusiasts, there are plenty of adventure activities.

Nainital

For those who wish to avoid the freezing winters of Nainital, March is the best month to visit here. The entire hill station indulges in the aura of a 'new beginning,' i.e., spring season. Apart from visiting Naina Devi Temple, and Bhimtal Lake, one can participate in festivals like Phooldeyi and Bikhauti.

Crystal Gaze **March 2024**

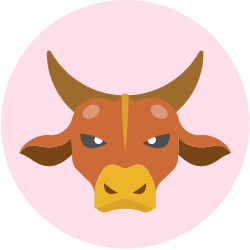
Loveena (Tarot card Reader, Numerologist)



Aries (March 21- April 19)

Long lost friend will Surprise you. Be grateful for all the miracles taking place around you. Your dreams will be manifested. Finances are highlighted.

Angel msg- Open your arms to receive gifts from your Creator.



Taurus (April 20- May 21)

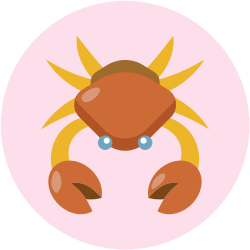
Aim high, to achieve your Success. All legal issues will be sorted out. Be Open to settling abroad. Financial Stability is assured now. Only good times are ahead now.

Angel msg- Stop worrying about the money, angels are blessing you with lucrative options.

Gemini (May 22- June 20)

Welcome the New dawn in your life, Spread your wings. Your dreams will be fulfilled. Health needs Care and attention. Youngsters will meet Someone interesting.

Angel msg - Ask and you shall receive, angels are blessing you.



Cancer (June 21- July 22)

Universe wants to gift you so much and time is now. Money inflow is encouraging. All blocks in your relation and finance are over. keep charging ahead.

Angel msg - A change of residence is indicated, bringing positive energy in your life.

Leo (July 23- Aug 22)

Angels are blessing you with good fortune and pleasant Surprises. Abundance in money is coming your way. Universe is in a generous mood.

Angel msg - Celebration period begins for you. Soar with happiness.

Virgo (Aug 23- Sept 22)

Look forward to gains in Financial investments. Visualise your dreams. Rough phase is over. Travel for work will be beneficial. Let new energy come in your life.

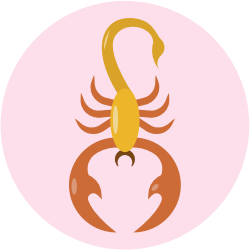
Angel msg - Heaven is working behind the scenes to help you.

Tel no- 9619035624
Email id- loveenastro@rediffmail.com

Libra (Sept 23- Oct 22)

Investment in property is highlighted. Career is energised for financial Abundance. Travel abroad for work will bring prosperity. Keep charging ahead.

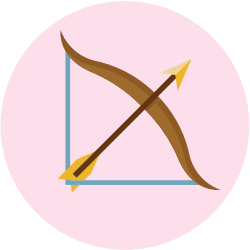
Angel msg - Angels send a special blessing just for you.



Scorpio (Oct 23- Nov 22)

Angels are guiding you to new horizons, Spread your wings. Time is right for new career opportunities. New growth and money inflow in work will bring relief to you.

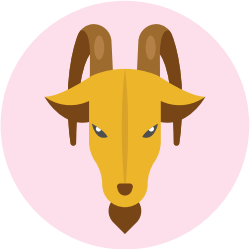
Angel msg - Angels have heard and answered your prayers.



Sagittarius (Nov 23- Dec 21)

Visualise your dreams, Stay optimistic. Smooth road ahead, happy outcome is assured. Setbacks in career are over. Property issues will get settled.

Angel msg - Angels are guiding & protecting you.



Capricorn (Dec 22- Jan 20)

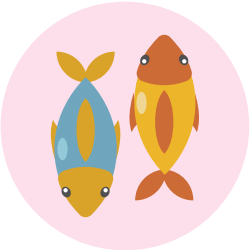
Good days are coming ahead. Universe bestows generosity on you.Release your doubts to heaven. You are going closer to your goal.

Angel msg - Time for changes, & new beginnings. Perfect time to move forward.

Aquarius (Jan 21- Feb 18)

Rainbow of happiness is coming, wheel of Fortune has begin to turn and life will flow smoothly. Deals will be finalised, Aura is energised for financial gains.

Angel msg - Angels will manifest miracles in your life.



Pisces (Feb 19- March 20)

You will touch heights in your Career. You will sweep obstacles to one side, and will achieve your goals. Happy outcome is assured. Look forward to new growth & progress.

Angel msg - Take advantage of divine timing and make your move.

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