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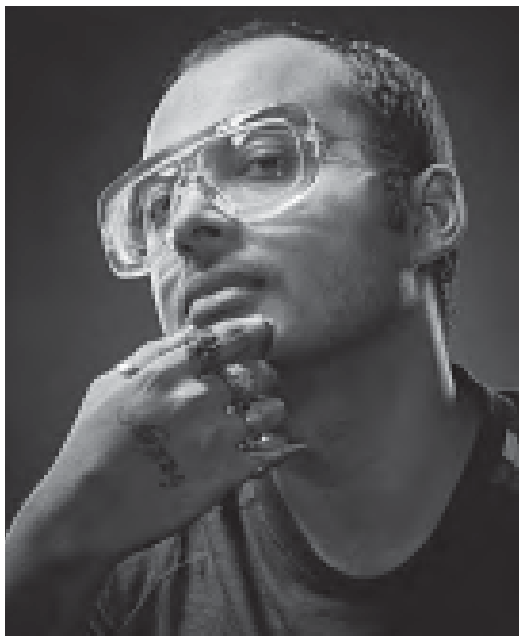
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APRIL 2020 | ₹150

LIFE AFTER COVID-19

THE COUNTRY'S TOP DESIGNERS ON
HOW THE PANDEMIC WILL TRANSFORM
THEIR BUSINESS



Executive Editor's Note



TRYING TO PREDICT THE FUTURE AND FAILING AT IT, HOW FASHION CONSUMPTION WILL CHANGE, AND HOW TO STAY SANE DURING THE LOCKDOWN

have been carrying out live 24-hour updates and, honestly, if anything groundbreaking happens during the day, it will find its way to reach me. Until then, 30 minutes every morning is fine.

Secondly, I decided to cook something every day. Now this is a tricky one. I personally love cooking, but not enough to want to do it every day. I know that there are people out there who might have the skill, but not the inclination. To be honest, I hate the prep. Chopping and cutting is a gruelling task for me. But, having said that, cooking is therapeutic. It has a way of calming the mind, helps you spend time with yourself, and you (mostly) cannot possibly be doing anything else. Cooking induces single-minded concentration on one specific task, which is necessary at a time when you are riddled with too many questions and confusion.

While I have realised that my screen time has increased, I also decided to cut down on binge content and watch a mixed bag instead. Binge content actually doesn't pass time — it's like an aerated drink. It leads to you craving for more. And when you don't find more bingeable content, that is when (almost like a withdrawal symptom) you feel restless and "bored". I interspersed *Money Heist* with a bunch of films, documentaries, and YouTube channels. I don't need to rush to finish the season. I've unfortunately got all the time in the world. Also, something I figured out by myself: When you want to crash, stop whatever you are watching and shift to a sitcom you know by heart. When your brain does not have to stay alert to process new information, it slowly eases itself, helping you sink into sleep. Also, we are constantly consuming intense content which is not sleep-friendly. Shift to *F.R.I.E.N.D.S.* or *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* from *Tiger King* when you want to sleep and you might just doze off faster. Reduce the volume too.

The last point, that really helped me, is getting a lot of hate online: exercise. If you don't have weights at home, do some freehand. Too many home workout videos are available online (that's what models have been doing these days). Get a good workout, at least every alternate day. If you have a terrace available to you, get some sun and fresh air. We are turning into sloths and inaction leads to more lethargy. Do some stretches. Try some yoga. Or blast your favourite playlist and dance. Break a sweat.

But most importantly, wash your hands, don't go out, use a mask, and don't participate in any foolish shenanigans and go viral online. By now, everybody knows that enthusiastic girl clanging her plate and screaming "Go Corona Go" outside her house. She did no one proud that day.

— Arnesh Ghose

No amounts of inspirational quotes and Instagram posts have been able to make us feel safe and secure these two months. If you or your family's health has been affected by the pandemic, I hope recovery is happening successfully. For the rest of us, we are navigating work-from-home, financial crunches, and uncertain futures. These are difficult times. We have never had to put together an issue from home, and it was a learning experience on how to navigate that. Our cover story looks at how this pandemic will change the Indian fashion industry, and some of the country's top designers have come together to share their insights. The industry is battling severe uncertainty and might possibly go through drastic consumption and business changes, according to the story.

I spent the first week of lockdown trying to calm myself. It wasn't an easy task. You want to rabidly read everything available on the Internet. You have too many questions and you want answers immediately. We are used to getting answers immediately. Google is supposed to pop up solutions within seconds, right? Heck, even Siri can philosophically conduct repartees on life and "what does all of this mean". The first week was the hardest. Nobody had any answers and it was a state of limbo that I was not accustomed to. My sleep cycle went for a toss. While my brain had panicked itself into numbness, my body slipped into vacay mode. I entered the second week groggy, tired, and extremely jittery.

That's when I realised that system and discipline, as always, were the only ways to manage uncertainty. I've never had to deal with something like this before, but I knew the symptoms. Like the initial medical response to symptomatically treat the patients affected by the virus, I started dealing with the symptoms of my isolation anxiety. I put together a to-do routine and decided to stick to it as religiously as I could. This is all I have to offer this time: a possible to-do list that can maybe help you too, in staying calm, sane, and in control.

It started with cutting down on news consumption. While that is not an easy step for a journalist, I realised that if I stuck to just 30 minutes of news consumption at the start of the day, I would be fine. Most trustworthy outlets

Contributors



URMI BHATTACHERYYA

In this issue: The many myths of female bisexuality (Page 37)

Describe yourself in three words

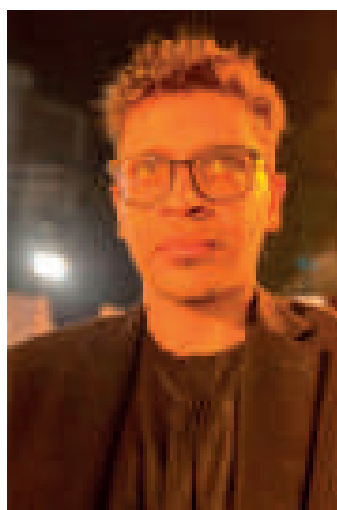
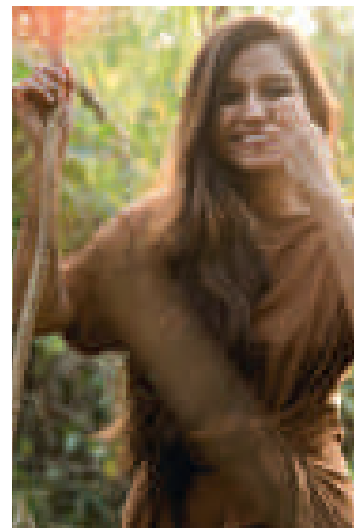
Trash talking feminist

One social media habit you really wish to get rid of?

If the Insta story "views" go up to 14 from 13, this insatiable urge to find out who the 14th is

If you could invite three artists for dinner, who would they be?

Zelda Fitzgerald, Michelle Obama and JK Rowling



JIGAR SHAH

In this issue: Up Close with Harrdy Sandhu (Page 89)

Describe yourself in three words
Ambivert, optimistic and intuitive

One social media habit you really wish to get rid of?

Watching TikTok videos. I just can't stop scrolling

If your life was a movie, what would be the main soundtrack?

Believer from *Imagine Dragons*



ISHA BHANSALI

In this issue: Ask the Expert (Page 63)

Describe yourself in three words

Perennially curious, a bit of a mad hatter with an unconditional love for the arts

One social media habit you wish to get rid of?

Watching short videos, and scenes from *F.R.I.E.N.D.S.* Not sure if I want to get rid of the habit. They're quite a stress buster

What's something that will always be in fashion, no matter how much time passes?

Denims



MINNATI ZAVERI

In this issue: A guide for boomers to be more mental health sensitive (Page 39)

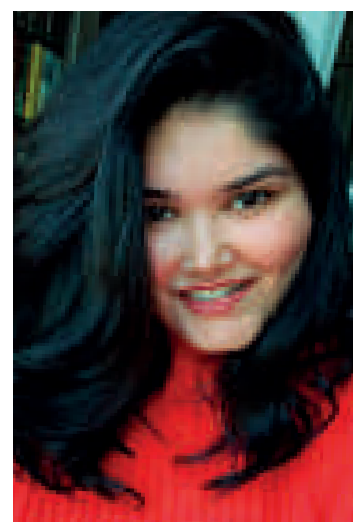
Describe yourself in three words
Empathetic, kind, insightful

One social media habit you really wish to get rid of?

Seeking validation via the amount of 'likes' a post gets

What elements of pop culture will be forever tied in your mind to your childhood?

Watching *Full House* and *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, clip-on and stick-on earrings and chatting on MSN Messenger for hours on end



79

COVER STORY

LIFE AFTER COVID-19

Questions. Questions. Questions. What's going to happen? How are we going to survive this? When will everything go back to normal? Questions that nobody has answers to right now. The fashion industry is grappling with the same bunch of questions. As we try to keep the spirit of moving forward alive at a time when everything is at a standstill, six of India's top designers tell us what they think life will be like after the pandemic – will Indian fashion production and consumption change forever?

It's time for reinvention
by Nimish Shah

The new age of fashion consumption

by Nachiket Barve

Highlighting the heritage of craftsmanship

by Pranav Misra

We shall overcome

by Ujjawal Dubey

A peek into the changing scene of couture

by Shantanu & Nikhil

Developing the new normal **by Kunal Rawal**



69

THE SUBTLE BRILLIANCE OF IRRFAN KHAN

Textbook definitions of acting cannot describe his talent. When we see Irrfan Khan on screen, we don't realise where acting begins and living-the-character ends

BY MAITHILI RAO

FEATURES

73 Why I chose Kerala

By Amit Vaidya

89 Harrry Sandhu: rising above all odds

By Jigar Shah

FOB

06 Radar

11 Working out with fitness trainers

15 Summer reading list

17 The A-List

19 Sarmaya: a museum on the Internet

25 India's first marijuana medical centre

26 How to become a private detective

27 Dating fatigue

29 India's coolest streetwear site

30 Rudhraksh Jaiswal: Chris Hemsworth's new side kick

31 Horror binge-list

33 Weird apps on the internet

34 Upcoming video games



44

Spring/Summer 2020 Trend Report

Uncovering the top trends spotted on the
Spring/Summer 2020 runways

TALK

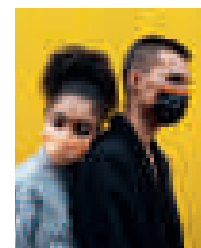
- 35 Why pole dancing is my latest obsession
by **Arnesh Ghose**
- 37 The many myths of female bisexuality
by **Urmi Bhattacheryya**
- 39 A guide for boomers to be more sensitive towards mental health
by **Minnati Zaveri**

STYLE

- 41 Fashion news
- 55 Gucci is bringing back the sneaker
- 57 The Designer:
Raghavendra Rathore
- 59 Beachwear essentials
- 61 Rental clothing in India
- 63 Ask the expert:
Isha Bhansali
- 64 Vegan brands in India

WATCHES

- 67 Watch news
- 68 Tissot India showcases
2020 collection



ON THE COVER

#DAMUR x CSD Taiwan A/W
20-21 Berlin campaign

Photographer: **Silver Nebula**,
@howreggee and @franja54
Stylist: **Damur Huang**
(#DAMUR)
Make-up & hair:
Sandra Specht
Models: **Aldin Zahirovic &**
Aline Tode

RADAR

WHO & WHAT YOU SHOULD BE
CHECKING OUT THIS MONTH

Curated by Arnesh Ghose

Actor/Singer SHIRLEY SETIA

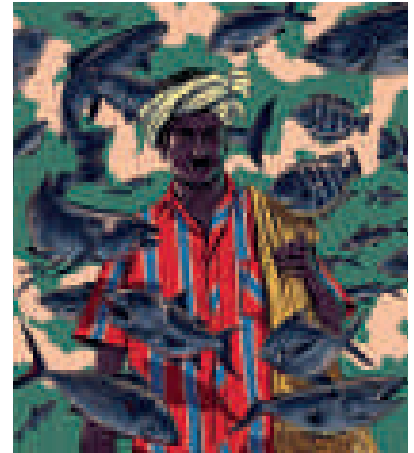
New-girl-on-the-block alert. While Setia has been quite a popular face as a singer for a while, the singer is making her debut as an actor with two back-to-back projects this year. Both of Setia's projects are extremely interesting. On one side, she is starring in the Netflix film, *Maska*, which is streaming presently, and on the other, Setia is ready to make a splash on the big screen with Abhimanyu Dassani in *Nikamma*. Exciting projects and definitely an intelligent move to straddle both mediums. Smart girl. We look forward to this new student of the batch of 2020.





Portraiture

I thought it would be great to go snooping around Instagram to see how contemporary artists are exploring portraiture. Are there new voices, new rules, breaking of rules, the end of classicism, or maybe the revival of it? These three artists have their own distinct styles, building projects that are thought-provoking, visually arresting, and conversation starters.



Illustrator

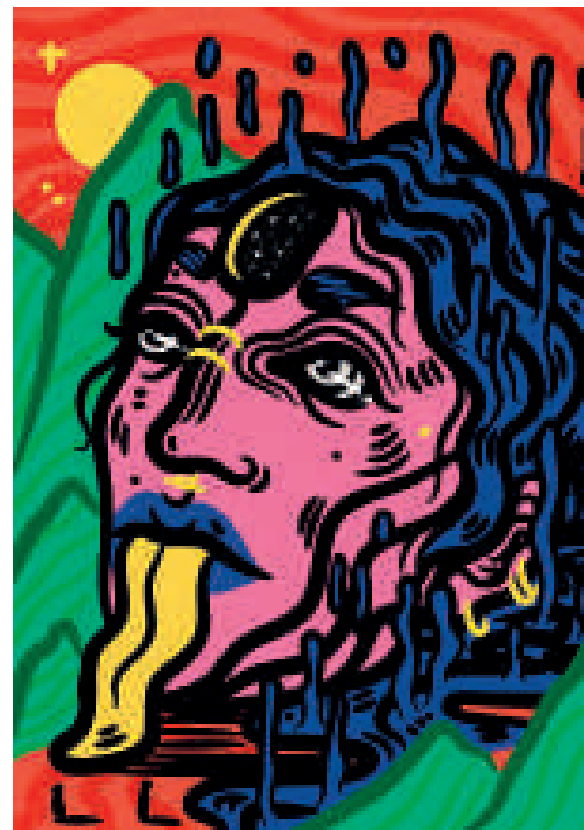
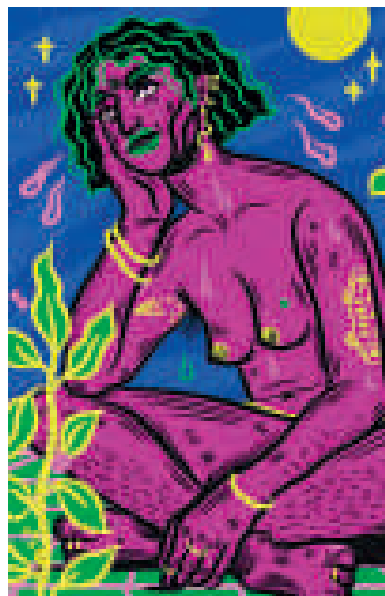
MUHAMMED SAJID

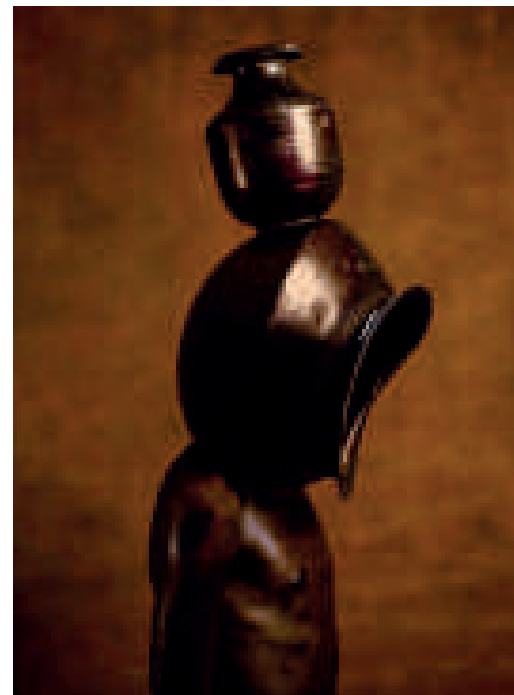
Oscillating between mirroring reality and exploring expressionism, Sajid's works are excellent studies of the human form, while also being individual explorations of a community, gender, or psyche. His portraits can be semi-classical (his female form reminds one of the Bengal school), some are graphic novel-ish, while others are chaotic introspection.

Digital Artist

OSHEEN SIVA

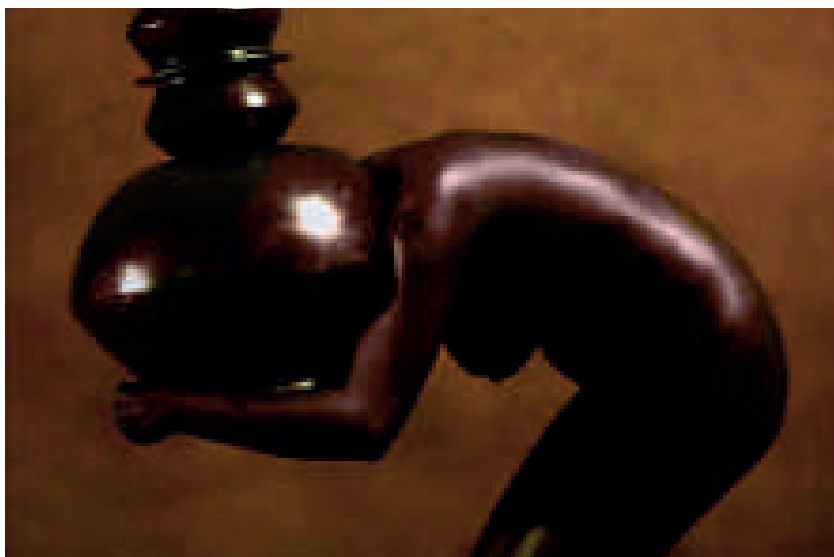
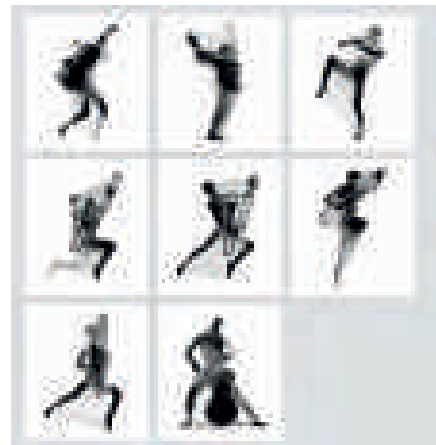
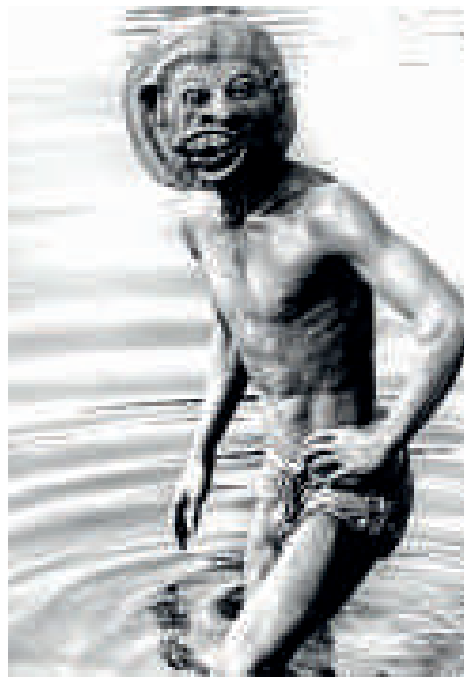
Graphic, unapologetic, and fiercely feminist, Siva's works are both shocking and thought-provoking. Bold lines and vibrant colours dominate her work, presenting women in celebration and distress. Siva's works are extremely powerful — a stifling heat emanates from her pieces, angry and fuming, like embers burning silently.





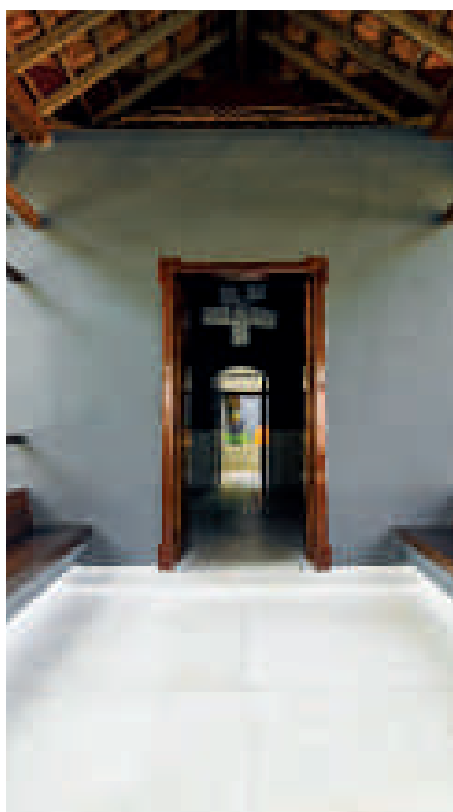
Mixed Media Artist SWARUP DUTTA

From exploring the human form, nudity, gender politics to sexual desire, Dutta's works always aim to understand and probe relationships — with bodies, concepts, ideas, and objects. Always interesting, Dutta has constantly worked with the body and the nude, often breaking norms and bending rules. His works often go beyond the boundaries of space — Dutta exhibited a complete project on the walls of a north Calcutta neighbourhood — encouraging engagement and interaction.



Eat**PERCH WINE & COFFEE BAR, MUMBAI**

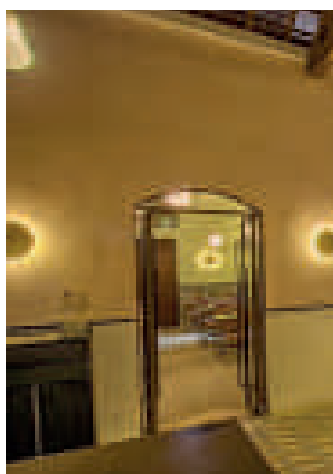
One of Delhi's favourite cafés has arrived in Mumbai, and it is already perched to be a hit (see what I did there?). Before you can ask, yes, the wine menu is elaborate, and the selection of coffee isn't too bad either. The property is spacious and bistro-y, making it another great semi-casual haunt in the city for romantic outings, big gangs, and boisterous family brunches. The Jalapeno Poppers (with chorizo and bacon), Mushroom Duxelle Croquette, Sunchoke and Potato Skins, Shrimp and Calamari with a Lime-Chilli Dressing, and Sangria-braised Tenderloin are great ways to start your meal. The sharing platters also go beautifully with wine and conversations. Definitely dig into the Handmade Tagliatelle with Pork Shoulder and Pickles for mains. The dessert menu is equally delectable. The Warm Banana Bread with Honeycomb Ice Cream and the Double Chocolate Parfait would be my picks.

**Absorb**
MAHÉ, GOA

Some restaurants are meant for the evolved ones, when the experience can be enjoyed to its fullest by patrons and guests who can completely appreciate the art and the effort.

Mahé is not a beginner's course, it's advanced culinary experiments with flavours, textures, and amalgamations of inspirations. The current menu is a beautiful collection of Indian coastal experiences in modern interpretations. The Cured Mahi Mahi with Coriander Oil and Kondattam is an outrageous explosion of rich umami and creamy flavours and texture, the Kerala Beef Fry and the Preserved Aubergine Recheado are winners, and definitely try the Prawns Paturi and the Roast Beef with Kombu Jus and Pickled Radish. The Fish with Moilee Foam, Sri Lankan Mutton Curry and Mahé Fish Curry would be my picks for some heartwarming mains. The desserts — just two — look unassuming and nondescript.

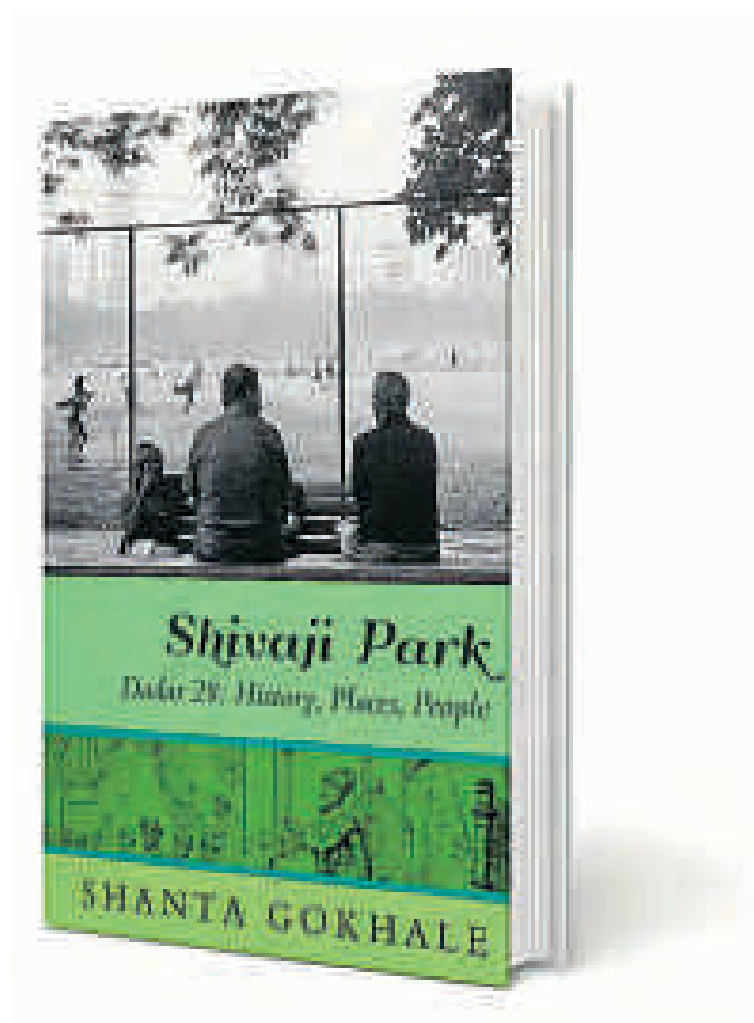
Don't be fooled. I could write an epic poem about how complex yet balanced, delicate yet robustly flavourful the Pradhaman Panna Cotta is. The Coconut Ice Cream with Jaggeried Coconut, Mint and Plantains is a win-win too. Mahé is an expansive and airy property, lazy and luxuriant, definitely where memories are meant to be made.



Listen

99 SONGS OST

A.R. Rahman is back with an album — I don't know when was the last time I actually said that. His film, *99 Songs*, had released the OST last month, and frankly, this is a confusing album to listen to. Rahman seems to have gone back in time to his sound of the 2000s, with simple, personal compositions sans experiment. The ballads in the album (*Teri Nazar*, *Jwalamukhi*, *Sofia*) remind you of *Lagaan*, *Swades*, and *Yuva* — a time when Rahman shed the heavy percussions and multiple layers of the 90s. There is a random Broadway-style *Soja Soja*, an *O Palanhaar*-esque ode to Sai Baba, a college band-like *Nayi Nayi*, and an operatic *The Oracle*, among other tracks. Is it a fun mash up of our favourite Rahman sounds from the 90s? Maybe. Is it possibly one of Rahman's best albums? Maybe not. But it is definitely worth a listen.



Read

SHIVAJI PARK: DADAR 28: HISTORY, PLACES, PEOPLE BY SHANTA GOKHALE

One of the strongest cultural and social voices of Mumbai, author, cultural critic, and longtime resident of Shivaji Park, Shanta Gokhale, brings together key events and individuals in this matchless portrait of a neighbourhood. An uncommon — and oft surprising — biography, through her conversations with friends and neighbours, Gokhale relives the thrill and novelty of moving from congested chawls to flats that ensured privacy, the politically charged decades of the 1950s and '60s, the history of the area and the illustrious people who have contributed to the cultural fabric of Shivaji Park from freedom fighters, musicians, to actresses, cricketers, and artists. Sparklingly descriptive and packed with information, this book is an interesting experiment for Bombayphiles.

DOING YOUR FIT BIT

When it comes to fitness routines, it's essential to know what works for which muscle and what works for which part of your body. To get an insight on working out right, some of the country's best fitness experts share tips, precautions, and bust myths about key muscle groups

By Rajeev Mathew

LEGS

BY JUNAID KALIWALA

Junaid Kaliwala has been a recipient of The Best Personal Trainer Award by *Men's Health*, and named the Best Influencer at the Fitness Excellence Awards ceremony in 2018. He boasts of a 170K plus Instagram following and a successful YouTube channel as well.

TIPS

- ① Prioritise legs like any other muscle. It's a common problem that most people either skip leg day or do not train hard enough.
- ② Go for compound movement first, followed by isolation movement. It is always a smart idea to train the big lifts first followed by other accessory movements. So start your workout with squats or deadlift first.
- ③ Prioritise recovery. Legs are big muscle group and you might get sore for two days after you train them, which is good. However, it is important to keep your recovery in mind. Let your legs recover before you go for another intense session. →

PRECAUTIONS

- ① Make sure you warm up nicely before you jump to the main workout. Warm ups help increase the body temperature, which further prevents injuries. A cold stiff muscle is more prone to injury.
- ② Say no to ego lifting. Keep your ego outside the gym door. Do not train to impress others. Respect your capabilities and get strong gradually.
- ③ Do not take your medical conditions for granted. A lot of people get tempted to try the exercises which are not meant for them. Always remember, prevention is better than cure.

MYTHS

- ① **Squats are bad for knees.** This is the most common myth. As a matter of fact, squats can strengthen your knee joint. The problem comes when you do it incorrectly or do it with an existing knee issue.
- ② **You can't train legs if you have knee pain.** Wrong, this doesn't mean you ignore your legs completely. You can always find alternatives to the exercises that may be problematic.
- ③ **Not feeling sore means your workout wasn't effective.** Not always true since sore muscles are a good indicator of intensity but are not full-proof indicators of a good workout.



➤ ARMS

BY JITENDER RAJPUT

Jitender Rajput has spent close to 23 years in the industry and is known to be a transformation expert. He constantly educates his 240K plus followers with various tips and secrets for better results.

TIPS

- ① Avoid overtraining your arms. A total of 10 sets of biceps and 10 sets of triceps followed by 8-12 reps are good enough. Once a month, you can even add drop sets or super sets.
- ② The first exercise you do should cover the weakest part on your arm. If you are

experiencing fewer peaks in your biceps, then start with the dumbbell concentration curl.

- ③ Keep flexing your arms while you train. It helps your arms grow in size. Also, massaging them after you're done will improve blood flow.

PRECAUTIONS

- ① Train with moderate weights. Don't be overconfident and go for heavier weights at the start and risk injuring yourself.
- ② Avoid arm workouts if your elbow or wrist is already in pain. Or else, apply some ointment, wait, and train with less heavy weights if you want to maintain your muscles.
- ③ Make sure you use gloves if you have

sweaty palms. You would not want to have a slippery hold on a rather heavy weight.

MYTHS

- ① **Using steroids or hormones are the only sure-shot way of growing your arms.** False, proper exercising and good diet is more than enough.
- ② **You can't grow your arms if you can't lift heavy weights.** That's untrue, consistency is more important than the weights you lift.
- ③ **Constant exercise will grow your arm size.** No, you need to understand how muscles work and give them time to build and breathe sometimes as well.



SHOULDER

BY PRANAV SAINI

Pranav Saini is a certified personal trainer and fitness influencer who currently has over 110K followers on Instagram. He runs a YouTube channel where he gives tips on not only fitness but also on grooming.

TIPS

- ① Give importance to the cuff. Most people only realise rotator cuffs exist after they get injured, which is why your rotator cuffs deserve extra attention.
- ② Always start your shoulder workout with rear delt exercises, such as rear delt flies. Setting up your workout in this manner will create symmetry and keep you healthy.
- ③ For each exercise, you should do 20 to 30 reps, three to five times. Keep your range of motion small at the beginning and increase it over time. If you choose to use weights, start small and increase a little each week.

PRECAUTIONS

- ① Watch your elbows. Whenever you're doing an overhead press, you always want to have your elbows directly under the bar so you can create tension on the delt from the start.
- ② Pay attention to structural imbalance. Most people injure their shoulders due to structural imbalance — shoulders that are overdeveloped in the front and too weak in the rear.
- ③ Don't lift too high. The problem is that most people invariably lift the weight too high, which can lead to shoulder impingement.

MYTHS

- ① **You don't need to train your rotator cuffs, since it gets all the exercise it needs while you do other exercises.** This is false and you should definitely divert your attention to the area.
- ② **Empty-Can exercise is good for your shoulder.** The Empty-Can exercise can actually be bad for your shoulders, especially if you have had an injury before.
- ③ **You can use the same weight for every shoulder workout.** Not true, each area may need different forms of weights dedicated to it.



CARDIO

BY VEDARRTH THAPPA

Vedarrth Thappa is one of the country's leading CrossFit athletes and coach.

TIPS

- ① Implement interval weight training to build muscular endurance and ability to move large loads for longer distances and quickly. Interval training can also help you mix things up and make your workout more interesting.
- ② Be aware of your capabilities and the limitations of your heart. You should know your heart rate and train according to your heart rate zones.
- ③ Try to include an aerobic type of training in your cardio routine. This will effectively help build capacity and threshold.

PRECAUTIONS

- ① Make sure you always warm up before you

get into the workout and cool down after you are done.

- ② Learn to pace yourself. Always know when you can, and need to push yourself, while also keeping your body's limitations in mind.
- ③ Most important of all, don't forget to keep your body hydrated. Dehydration can be harmful to your health.

MYTHS

- ① **Cardio is most effective on an empty stomach.** No, this can actually have drastic effects on your body and even cause muscle loss.
- ② **More cardio assures more fat loss.** False, you also need to take your diet in mind and integrate other types of workouts for better results.
- ③ **Cardio causes muscle loss.** Not at all. In fact, bad nutrition and absurd crash diets may contribute more to muscle loss.

BACK

BY KARRAN KHARAS

Karran Kharas is a lifestyle and fitness influencer who has had a meteoric rise on social media in the last few months. He provides personal training, curates personalised diets for his followers and is a major supporter of chest hair.

TIPS

- ① Always start with deadlifts. Deadlifts create the main foundation to build not only a huge back, but an overall massive physique.
- ② Stick to the basics. Pull ups and rows are all you need for overall back development after you've hammered your lower back.
- ③ Do not forget to train your posterior deltoids. They are usually weak and are more often than not, left neglected.

PRECAUTIONS

- ① Use proper form, especially the right breathing technique. You certainly don't want to injure yourself by doing things the wrong way.
- ② Increase your weights gradually. It is important you don't rush into it and feel like it's more than you can take.
- ③ Always make sure you go through the full range of motion.

MYTHS

- ① **Rows increase back thickness and pull-downs increase width.** Truth is, both the movements target the lats, the difference lies in trap involvement. Rows target the mid traps, while pull-downs target the lower traps better.
- ② **Deadlifts only help in powerlifting.** False, because while it does build power, it is also an excellent exercise to create massive hormonal response and stimulate growth.
- ③ **Mind-muscle connection is all you need.** Actually the mind muscle-connection is a by-product, it shouldn't be the goal. If you use proper form, mind-muscle connection will automatically happen.



WEATHER BY JENNY OFFILL



Suggested by
Elizabeth Flock

"My recommendation for a great summer read is "Weather" by Jenny Offill, which has recently released. It's a book about the end of the world, via the climate and political crisis in America. But it's also funny, emotional, and totally relatable for anyone concerned about the state of things, anywhere in the world. Offill tells the story in quick, clever fragments, so it's also very readable, whether you're on the train, in bed, or at the beach. I'm about to read it a second time."

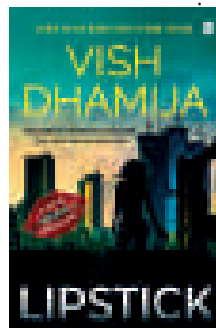


LIPSTICK BY VISH DHAMIJA



Suggested by
Seema Anand

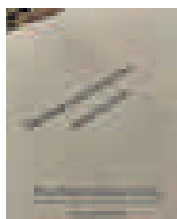
I am an absolute sucker for old fashioned crime detective fiction. And if it stars a strong, sexy, brilliant female as the lead detective - I'm completely hooked. DCP Rita Ferreira, heading up the crime branch at Mumbai's Crawford Market Police HQ, outmanoeuvring bad guys and stopping the world in its tracks with her fabulousness, is the perfect ice cold drink for a hot summer evening. Light, witty, extremely well researched - a must read.



THE HEART ASKS
PLEASURE FIRST
BY KARUNA
EZARA PARIKH

Suggested by **Aanchal Malhotra**

"This book will be out in May. Poignant and topical, Karuna Parikh's debut novel obfuscates the boundaries of land and religion. Set in an age of growing xenophobia, it is a book that offers us the frailties of love, and the power of empathy. Parikh's gift of language draws the reader in from the first sentence."



SUMMER READING LIST 2020

*As we look at a summer that's more
home bound, 12 authors recommend
books that you could curl up in bed with,
and blissfully enjoy the holidays*

Curated by Samreen Tungekar



A SONG OF ICE
AND FIRE BY
GEORGE R.R.
MARTIN

Suggested by **Durjoy Datta**

"Martin's last book is going to come out this winter, so before that, everyone needs to read this. It is a series of epic fantasy novels by him, so there is enough time to read all the Game of Thrones books (as they're known). I am definitely reading and rereading to wash off the memories of the show."



GIRL WOMAN OTHER BY BERNADINE EVARISTO



Suggested by
Abeer Hoque

This book is the 2019 Booker Prize winning novel by Bernadine Evaristo. It's about women, and how their roles, relationships, and ambitions are mediated by history, patriarchy, immigration, capitalism, and more. The book follows 12 women in England over several decades, each chapter filling out a different point of view with masterful, mesmerising character development. I've never read a book that's so compulsively readable that wasn't plot-driven.



NORWEGIAN WOOD
BY HARUKI MURAKAMI

Suggested by **Sreemoyee Piu Kundu**

Norwegian Wood, among other Murakami geniuses, is one of the most beautiful love stories. Fragile and awakened the vulnerability of love in the modern world. It broke my heart and mended it as well. It's the perfect summer romance to indulge in, and a book I always carry with me.





GHACHAR GHOCHAR BY VIVEK SHANBAG AND WHAT DO WOMEN WANT – ADVENTURES IN THE SCIENCE OF FEMALE DESIRE BY DANIEL BERGNER

Suggested by Shunali Khullar Shroff

Ghachar Ghochar is a thin but elegant novel that is a masterfully told story about a complex, almost dysfunctional family. The story opens in an old Coffee House in Bangalore where the narrator unburdens himself to its phlegmatic but wise waiter, Vincent, morning and night. A line in the book sums Ghachar Ghochar perfectly: "It's true what they say — it's not we who control the money, it's the money that controls us." Shanbag employs an economy of words and narrates a story that keeps you restless right till the end.

What Do Women Want – Adventures In The Science Of Female Desire by Daniel Bergner is a book that has surprised not just men but also women (blame it on systematic brainwashing through centuries). The book weaves together a detailed study, anecdotes and lab experiments to debunk many myths about female sexuality. The writer uses research to make a point that women's sexuality is still bound by strict ideas about evolution.

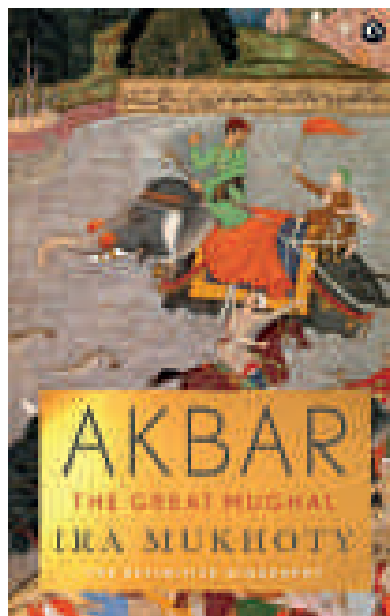


MALEVOLENT REPUBLIC BY KAPIL KOMIREDDI



Suggested by Tripurdaman Singh

Kapil Komireddi's *Malevolent Republic* is a short, arrestingly brilliant, and devastating history of modern India. From the sins and failings of the Congress to the accelerating decay of democracy under the BJP, Komireddi's blistering critique pulls no punches, and offers a chillingly tantalising glimpse of what India might become – 'culturally arid, intellectually vacant, permanently aggrieved and implacably malevolent.'



AKBAR: THE GREAT MUGHAL BY IRA MUKHOTY

Suggested by Manu Pillai

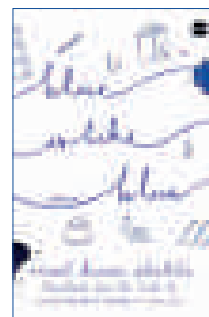
Ira Mukhoty has written a splendid new biography of Emperor Akbar. For one of India's greatest kings, it is surprising that we haven't seen a good biography in recent years, and Mukhoty fills the gap with great sophistication and style, telling us everything from Akbar's personality on the battlefield to his intellectual curiosity. Written with ease but without compromising on research, this book promises to be one of this summer's highlights in India.



BLUE IS LIKE BLUE BY VINOD KUMAR SHUKLA

Suggested by Annie Zaidi

I recommend *Blue is like Blue*. It is a new collection of translated stories. The originals, in Hindi, by Vinod Kumar Shukla are quite well known. These stories appear on the surface to be almost unbearably ordinary. However, their power lies in the telling of what is unremarkable, for it lingers the way dust does on surfaces around the house.

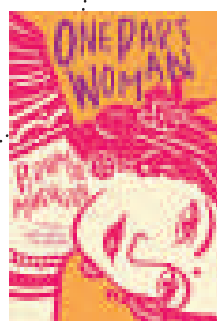


ONE PART WOMAN BY PERUMAL MURUGAN



Suggested by Meghna Pant

This must-read book is another gem from the translation pool in India. The love between the couple, the stabbing degradation of being childless in our society, and the vividly painted life of the rural South were the high spots in the novel. As a writer, I found that the foreshadowing with the portia tree was beautifully rendered by the author. It also helped me add Murugan to my recent favourites, like KR Meera and Vivek Shanbag.

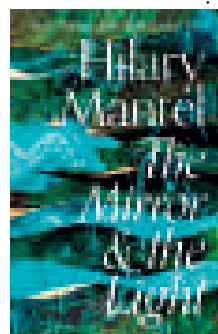


THE MIRROR AND THE LIGHT BY HILARY MANTEL



Suggested by Ira Mukhoty

Intrigue, ambition and murder. Hilary Mantel's new book, *The Mirror and the Light*, last of her trilogy set at the Tudor court of Henry VIII, has all the elements needed to enliven those languid summer months. At 880 pages, this may be the only book you read, but Mantel's lyrical prose and her deft story-telling will keep you enthralled by the court of the bloodiest of the Tudor kings.



The A-List

Your monthly 'how to spend it' guide for all the cool new gadgets

By Ashwin Rajagopalan



◀ FLAGSHIP CLASS:

Samsung's Galaxy S20+ is the middle child in the brand's S20 flagship line-up. It's probably the Android flagship to beat now, with its svelte form factor that finds the ergonomic balance between an immersive 6.7-inch Dynamic AMOLED screen (1440 x 3200 pixels / 525 PPI) and the perfect heft. The 120Hz refresh rate is fluidic — sheer joy whether you're gaming or watching videos or just scrolling webpages. The rear cam is the other talking point and incorporates a 64MP telephoto lens that allows you to shoot up to 30X (hybrid) zoom. The S20+ is lighting quick — it's propelled by an Exynos 990 processor that teams up with 8GB of RAM and 128GB of internal memory aside from support for external storage.

Rs 73,999 onwards

▼ PIMP MY RIDE:

Looking to upgrade your car audio system? Check out the Pioneer DMH-Z5290BT, Pioneer's new car audio system for India. It features a 6.9-inch wide display with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay connectivity. Other connectivity options include smartphone videos via WebLink, Full HD video playback via USB and compatibility with Spotify. The DMH-Z5290BT is kitted with a 13-Band EQ for advanced audio settings, 3-way network mode, and an advanced sound retriever for superior sound output. **Rs 24,490**



▲ DOUBLE VISION:

Nikon's new pro cam — Nikon D780 — represents a big leap in the Nikon FX-format DSLR. It boasts of two autofocus (AF) systems that ensure a more versatile and agile performance. The D780 features a 51-point AF system that takes on an algorithm equivalent to Nikon's FX-format flagship — the Nikon D5. The 180K-pixel RGB sensor is the key to enhance the accuracy of the advanced scene recognition system. It impacts the overall performance of AF, AE (Automatic Exposure), and AWB (Automatic White Balance). It's video ready too, from time-lapse videos to 4K UHD to slow-motion mode, with approximately 120-fps super-high-speed continuous shooting in full HD. **Rs 1,98,995**



◀ BACK YOUR LIFE UP:

The 2020 line-up of My Passport storage drives from Western Digital is lighter, smaller and comes in a choice of four colours: black, blue, red and midnight blue for Mac Drive. There are two versions formatted for macOS and Windows 10. The Windows 10 version features a USB 3.0 connector that is compatible with USB 2.0 while the My Passport for Mac drive is formatted

for macOS and has a USB-C connector to deliver plug-and-play storage out of the box. The new My Passport is less than an inch thick (1.91 cm) and weighs 40 gm lesser than its predecessor. My Passport comes with WD Discovery software for WD Security (password protection and 256-bit AES Hardware Encryption). **Rs 4,499 onwards**



▲ WEIGHTLESS WONDER:

Mi's new Dual-Driver In-Ear earphones are the perfect everyday accessory and are kitted with 10mm and 8mm dynamic drivers that deliver rich bass and crisp treble. The outer shell features premium carbon while the anodised aluminium cavity perfected with a zircon sandblasting procedure makes the earphones lightweight, scratch proof and fingerprint resistant. The 3-button operation also supports voice assistants. We dig the magnetic earbuds and the tangle-free braided cable that enhances tensile resistance and durability of the wire. **Rs 799**

► FITNESS FANATIC:

Casio PRO TREK Smart WSD F20, the brand's new hybrid smartwatch is aimed at outdoor enthusiasts. Both variants of this hybrid find the perfect blend between style and outdoor performance and are water resistant (up to 50m). The watch is enhanced with an advanced GPS function to display the current location on a colour map. Trekking off the grid at a remote location? No problem. Maps are available for offline use while miniature sensors that measure altitudes, atmospheric pressure and directions are combined with a variety of versatile apps to support a bunch of outdoor activities. **Rs 30,000 onwards**



► STYLE AND SUBSTANCE:

Garmin's new line of hybrid smartwatches aren't just high on style, they tout a hidden smart screen with health and fitness tracking data, and smart notifications for text messages, social media updates and calendar reminders. Garmin's vivomove series includes vivomove 3/3S, and vivomove Luxe. They're ready for the boardroom and resemble a traditional wrist watch with real ticking hands and an elegant dial. But it's the fitness features that set them apart; there's Innovative Body Battery, a unique feature to monitor body energy levels at any given moment and heaps of built-in indoor and outdoor sports apps. **Rs 24,490 onwards**



▲ RUN LIKE HELL:

Thomson's BNB-01 Neckband is the perfect running accessory. These in-ear wireless earphones are powered by Bluetooth 5.0 and have been designed to use less power and enhance battery life. There's a 110mAh powerhouse battery that guarantees eight hours of playtime. The BNB-01 is equipped with 10mm drivers that deliver rich, pure HD Sound. These noise-isolating earbuds block up to 90 per cent of ambient noise, so you can tune into your playlist with minimal external interferences. They come with an IPX5 rating, you're protected against water splashes and the occasional run through a drizzle. **Rs 2,999**

A MUSEUM ON THE NET

Sarmaya is not a museum you go to, it's a museum that comes to you

By Mayukh Majumdar



At the heart of Sarmaya is a carefully curated repository of art, artefacts and living traditions from the larger Indian subcontinent. And to think it all began with a Vaseline jar full of old coins from the princely Southern state of Travancore is, well, a little astonishing to say the least.

What is Sarmaya, but? To put it simply, it is an online museum. Unlike other museums that occupy physical space, Sarmaya does not adhere to boundaries of time. Hence, events that took place two centuries ago will be on the same page as a breaking story.

Sarmaya has many objects in its collection and has a plethora of genres under its canopy, from numismatics, photography, folk and tribal art, engravings/etchings, cartography to modern and contemporary art. The collection is categorised into 11 themes and seven genres on the website. But where are the physical copies of these digital prints? They are housed in the Sarmaya archive in Mumbai, which is a temperature-controlled storage space overseen by

Komal Chitnis, Sarmaya's manager.

The museum may have been launched in 2015, but its foundations were laid in 1948, when founder Paul Abraham's father moved to Delhi from Kerala. When Abraham reached his teenage years, his father gifted him a Vaseline jar full of old coins from Travancore. A young Abraham was thoroughly intrigued and this love for coins led to a passion for old maps.

So why the name, Sarmaya? And why not an actual museum?

"Over the years, I've learnt Urdu for a variety of reasons, mainly because it helps me interpret one of the genres in the collection — the coins. I came across the word Sarmaya, which means 'collective wealth'. That's the idea of Sarmaya. Our venture is our collective heritage and therefore, our collective wealth and can be shared with everyone," says Abraham.

He says they were hunting for space for the museum, but there were too many barriers. "Space in our country is a huge privilege and unfortunately, most museums are for the privileged and the

elite. Also, we wanted to be a young museum. Many museums take the point of view of the expert or the academic who is educating the masses. We don't see ourselves as that at all," says his partner and Sarmaya's brand custodian, Pavitra Rajaram, who is also the former lead designer at Good Earth.

Abraham uses a list of skills and tactics to source items for the collection. "Sourcing for Abraham is a full-time job and he is at it day and night," says Rajaram. While some artefacts are acquired through dealers and auctions, others are sourced from exhibitions and the by-lanes of old cities.

Everything in the collection is original work that has been purchased by Abraham for the Sarmaya Arts Foundation. While for coins, old books, photos, engravings and indigenous art, there is no permission required, acquiring contemporary art is also not much of a hassle, as long as the name of the artist is mentioned. "Usually, it is the privilege of the person or the institution that has purchased the art or the artefact to be able to display it," says Rajaram.



◀ VIEW OF LUCKNOW (1860)

Collector's comments: "This view of Lucknow is particularly beautiful as it shows the large contingent of British troops entering the city via the famed Rumi Darwaza. We love this for its panoramic view of the great city of Lucknow, just prior to it being ravaged by the British."



▶ MASSACRE AT CAWNPORE (1858)

Publisher: The London Printing and Publishing Company Limited

Collector's comments: "Battle scenes are particularly intense, especially when they are about extracting revenge for an act of brutality. As one of the big Cantonment towns during the Mutiny, Kanpur was ransacked by the marauding mutineers. What stands out in this polychrome engraving on paper is the sheer ferocity of the encounter."



◀ THE LAST EFFORT AND FALL OF TIPU SULTAN (1858)

Artist: W. Daniell R. A

Engraver: J. B. Allen

Collector's comments: "This moment of Tipu's fall in 1799 has been immortalised by many painters and artists, and this version by Singleton is a masterpiece. Especially poignant is the additional rendering of the handover of Tipu's sons as hostages to the British."

▶ NIKUSIYAR RUPEE (1719)

Commissioned by Emperor Nikusiyar

Collector's comments: "This is one of the best objects in the entire Sarmaya collection. It's a rupee, issued in 1719 by the Mughal Emperor Nikusiyar (one of Aurangzebs many great grandsons), who sat on the throne for just a few days. Only two things denote kingship: the issue of coin and the reading of the Qutba in your name. Both these momentous acts occurred in the few days Nikusiyar sat on the throne in Agra. Only two specimens of his issued coinage are known to exist. One with a reclusive collector outside India, and the other with Sarmaya."



▶ THE CITY OF DELHI BEFORE THE SIEGE (1858)

Publisher: Illustrated London News

Collector's comments: "This original etching and engraving by Thomas Sherratt captures a deeply significant moment of history. When the British captured the city of Delhi by storming Kashmiri Gate, one of the entrances to the city of Shahjahanabad, they captured the Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar, effectively ending the rule of the 330-year-old Mughal dynasty in India."



▼ GANDHARA BENT BAR (2500 YEARS OLD)

Collector's comments: "This is one of the oldest objects in the Sarmaya collection. It is a coin that is nearly 2,500 years old now. The coin is a silver Shatamana (denomination) from the Gandhara Janapada and was probably issued in a mint in the north west of India, in what was then the Gandhara region. These were among the first Indian punch-marked coins struck. Abraham was amazed to find it in auction and acquired it for its sheer antiquity and historical importance as one of the first ever coins to be struck on the Indian subcontinent."



► MAP OF HINDOOSTAN DIVIDED INTO SOUBAHS (1815)

Publisher: R. Wilkinson, London

Collector's comments: "This map depicted the administrative structure and territories of the Mughal Empire as defined during Akbar's time and as detailed in the *Ain-i-Akbari*. In many ways, each of these Soubahs ended up nurturing provincial ambitions and the eventual break away into smaller kingdoms, some of which became the states of modern India."

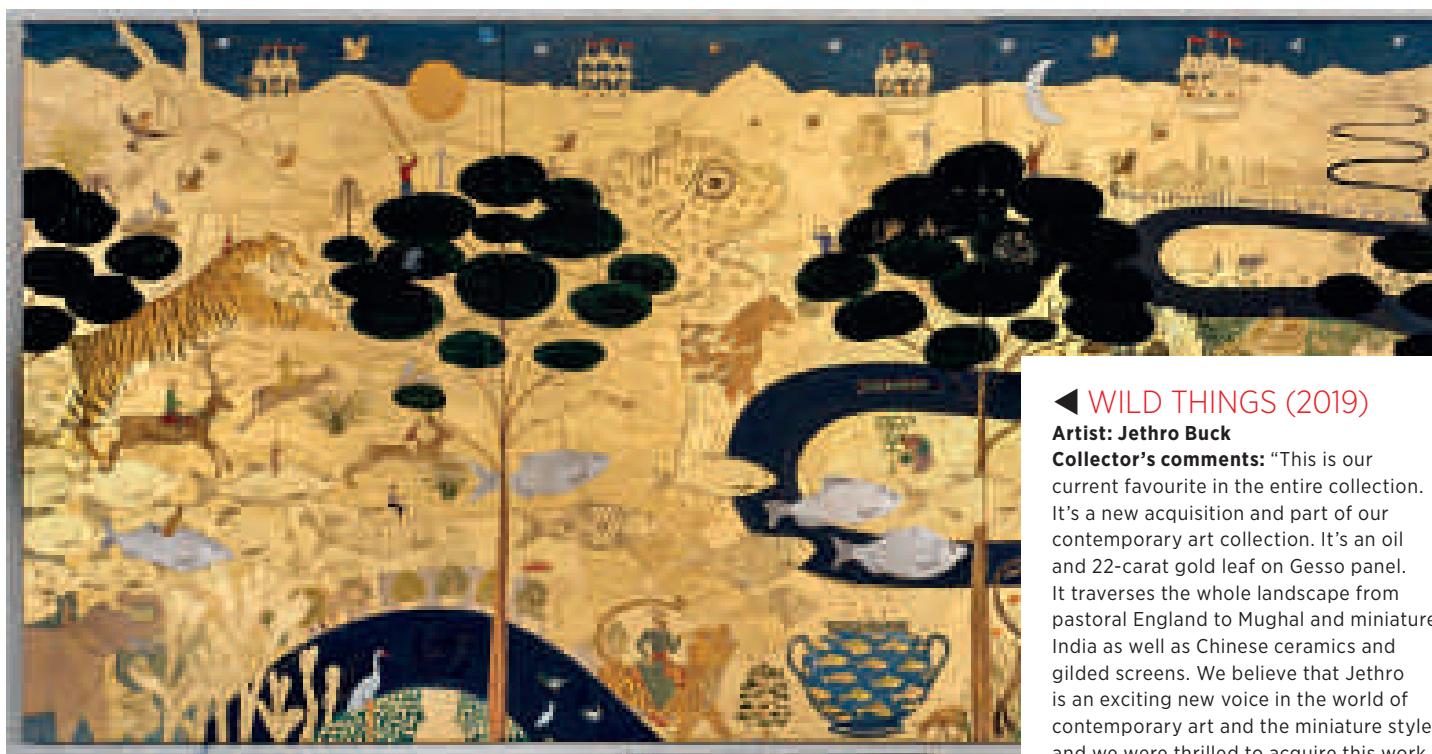


◀ VIEW OF WATSON'S HOTEL OR ESPLANADE MANSION, BOMBAY (1880s - 1900s)

Photographer: Unidentified

Collector's comments: "This albumen print of the erstwhile Watson's Hotel was shot somewhere in the late 1890s. It's of particular interest today because until it collapsed a few months ago, it was the oldest cast iron structure in India, completed in 1869. It's heartening to see that instead of being demolished as first suggested, it is now being restored. This is also a beautiful panoramic view of the Kala Ghoda area and the Arabian Sea beyond it. Rumour has it that Watson's is where Mr. Jamsetji Tata was turned away, prompting him to build the Taj Mahal Hotel next door."

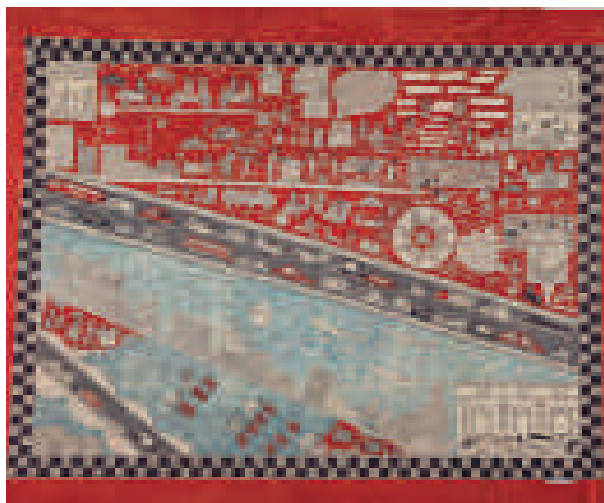




◀ WILD THINGS (2019)

Artist: Jethro Buck

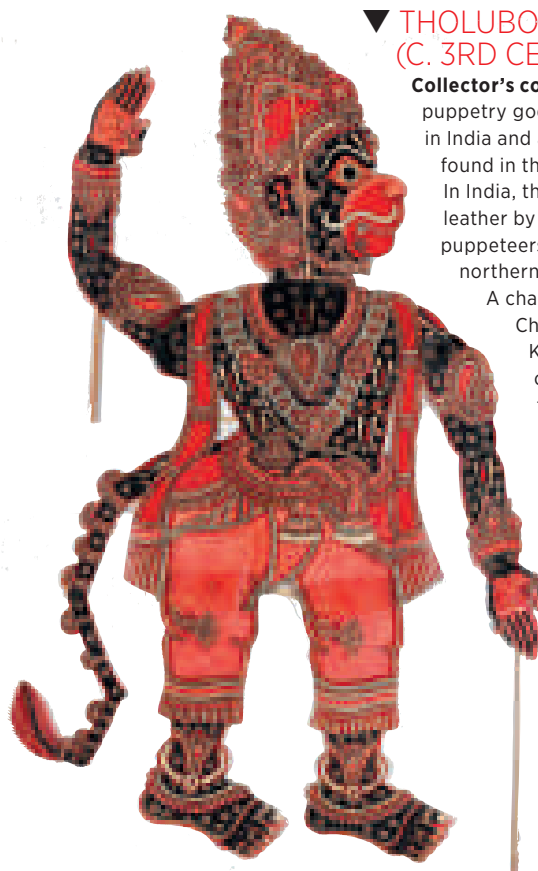
Collector's comments: "This is our current favourite in the entire collection. It's a new acquisition and part of our contemporary art collection. It's an oil and 22-carat gold leaf on Gesso panel. It traverses the whole landscape from pastoral England to Mughal and miniature India as well as Chinese ceramics and gilded screens. We believe that Jethro is an exciting new voice in the world of contemporary art and the miniature style and we were thrilled to acquire this work."



▲ MATA NI PACHEDI

Creator: Sumit Chitara

Collector's comments: "Paul has long appreciated the art of Mata ni Pachedi, a ritual textile drawn by the Vagari tribes of Gujarat. Rajaram was not a big fan but on a joint visit to the home of one of the Mata ni Pachedi artists, we noticed his 15-year-old son making the most amazing contemporary drawings in the traditional style. We were both fascinated and commissioned a work on the spot. We told him to forget the Gods and Goddesses he was training to draw and just draw whatever his heart told him to. The result was this beautiful textile art, in the style of a Mata, where he tells the story of an age-old craft being made in a city environment that is rapidly modernising. The water tower in Ahmedabad, the buses and buildings, the river Sabarmati and the Vagaris making their ritual textiles by the river bank, all find a place in this one-of-a-kind work."



▼ THOLUBOMMALATA (C. 3RD CENTURY)

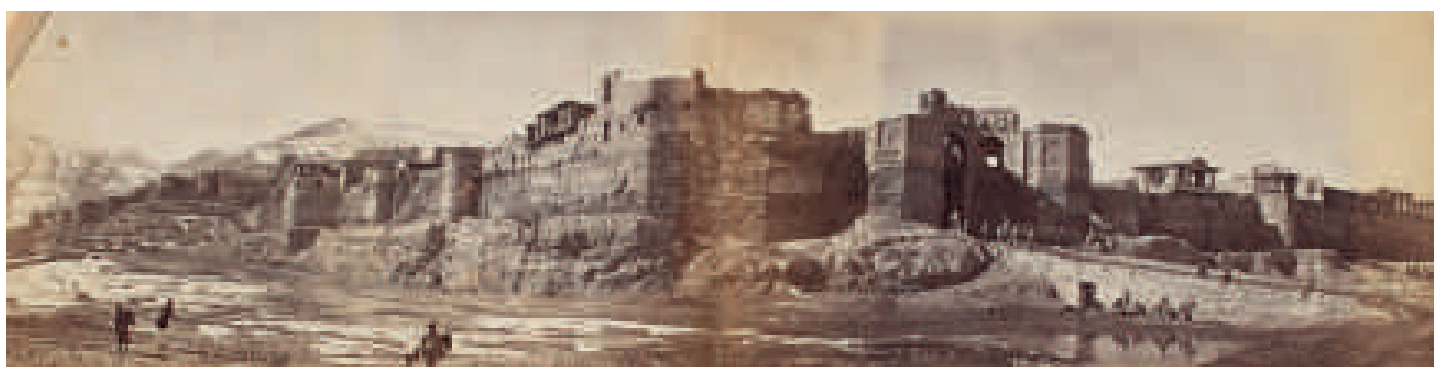
Collector's comments: "The art of shadow puppetry goes as far back as the 3rd century in India and a migrant strain of this art is also found in the Wayang puppets of Yogyakarta. In India, these puppets are made of goat leather by a community of traditional puppeteers in the Rayalseema region of northern Karnataka & Andhra Pradesh."

A chance encounter with the artist, Chidambara Rao, at a Paramparik Karigar exhibition has developed, over time, into a deep and abiding friendship. They have begun to document the many puppet characters who populate the Ramayana and are part of the Sarmaya collection of Indigenous Art. This piece is a spectacular 5-foot-tall Hanuman rendered in traditional black and red pigments on stretched goat leather. The Sarmaya collection has over 200 leather puppets, some of which are more than a century old. However, in keeping with our philosophy of honouring contemporary craftspersons, we collect puppets that are new as well as old."

► THE SIMPSON ALBUM (1890s)

Named by Benjamin Simpson

Collector's comments: "One of the most prolific collectors of the 19th century photography, particularly of Indis, was a Swede named Sven Gahlin. When he passed away, his estate gave most of his collection to the auction house, Sotheby's, to be sold. On a holiday in London in the summer of 2018, we popped into Sotheby's and actually saw another album — of native princes in full regalia and were keen to bid for that in auction later in the year. Another well-known British collector outbid us on the album of Indian royals. We were rather disappointed but chose to stay on for the rest of the auction and then began to bid on this album; a rare collection of early photographs from Orissa and the North East. Like with the earlier album, it boiled down to the British collector and us, but this time we prevailed. We were so excited and in retrospect felt we had actually got the rarer album of the two since the documentation of the North East at the time was much rarer than photographs of Indian royals."



▲ BALA HISSAR (C. 19TH CENTURY)

Photographer: John Burke

Collector's comments: "This is one of Paul's most favourite photos. He had asked all his dealers to locate photographs of the boundaries of the erstwhile British Empire, in India and when a private dealer found this photo of Bala Hissar, a fortress in Afghanistan that marked the north western boundary of the Empire he was thrilled. As a South Mumbai resident, he had visited the Afghan Church, that was built in 1842 to commemorate the lives of the fallen soldiers in the Anglo-Afghan Wars and their subsequent retreat from Kabul. So, it was wonderful to have a photograph that connected these two bits of history. The photograph was taken by John Burke, who took two separate photos that were then stitched together to create a panoramic view."

Leaves That Heal

The city of Bengaluru welcomed the country's first medical cannabis store, possibly opening the door for many more such centres

By Rajeev Mathew



The medical properties of cannabis are not a new-found discovery. Today, countries like Canada and Uruguay have recognised that and decriminalised marijuana, while countries like USA and New Zealand are seriously considering going down the same path. In India, this plant's unique properties were recognised thousands of years ago in the Atharva veda. But fast forward a few thousand years, and we haven't made complete use of the plant that we helped discover. A man and his company want to change that, keeping in mind to stay within the boundaries of the law.

Sourab Agarwal is the founding trustee of the Medicinal Cannabis Foundation of India and managing director of HempCann Solutions, an Odisha-based startup that aims to provide research-backed, cannabis-infused medicines. Agarwal spent years researching on cannabis' possible benefits and soon decided to start HempCann. "I became aware of the worldwide movement around cannabis and realised the benefits of this godherb. I started researching more into the subject and got to know about our more-than-thousand-years history with cannabis. I was not able to stop myself from researching more on the topic, and soon

learnt about the plant's ability to provide more than 25,000 useful products. At that point, it seemed unfair to ignore and keep a magical plant like this away from the public, so I decided to do something about it."

HempCann Solutions had set up shop online and started selling its cannabis-infused medical products. Trade stayed over the web until they decided to take things to a more grounded level. They opened up their first store — VEDI Wellness Centre — in Bengaluru on February 1. Since then, they have garnered an impressive customer-base with an age range of 30 to 55 years, and with a majority looking for an alternative to treatments like allopathy or homeopathy. Customers have come in search for solutions for various problems ranging from physical health issues like loss of appetite and bowel movements to mental health related issues like anxiety, insomnia, depression and more. The store keeps stocks of various other ayurvedic and herbal products along with its wide range of cannabis-infused offerings, but they can only be purchased after consulting their in-house doctor.

But why in Bengaluru? Well, there were actually a lot of factors taken into consideration to make that decision. "We



In India, the cannabis plant's unique properties were recognised thousands of years ago, but we haven't yet made complete use of the plant that we helped discover

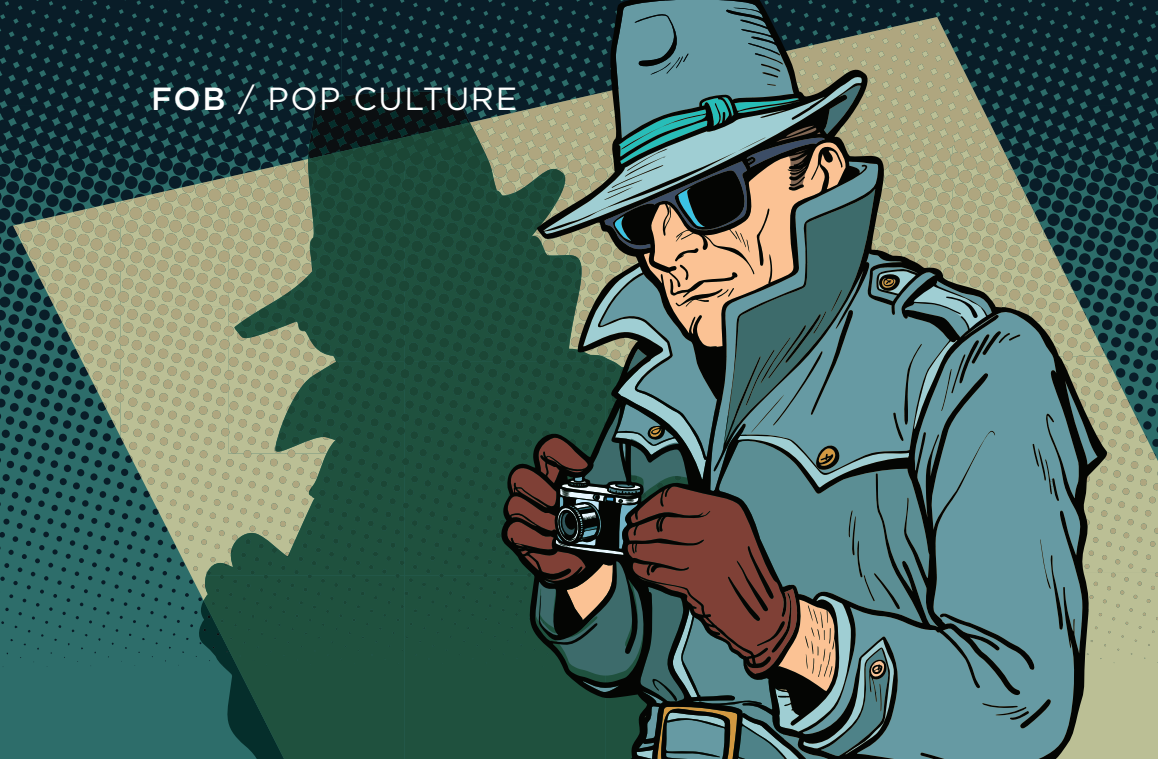
selected Bengaluru to open our first clinic because of the number of online queries we were receiving from the people of Bengaluru. They were enquiring if we have any set-up in the city where they can consult our doctors and also buy the medicines. The people of Bengaluru are open to new ideas and information and also willing to adapt to new treatment methods."

If you are a bit fuzzy on the law permitting and banning the use of cannabis, here is some clarity. The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act is the primary act dealing with cannabis for medical use. It bans the use of flowers and resin of the cannabis plant, which is the part that is crushed to get high, but bhang, hemp plants or the leaves and seeds of the cannabis plant are out of the purview of the NDPS. The Act also allows for the medical use of cannabis, and it gives the state government the power to permit, control and regulate the cultivation of any cannabis plant as well as the production, manufacture, possession, transport, sale, purchase and consumption of it (excluding charas). Since HempCann manufactures all of their cannabis medicines using only the leaves of the plant, everything is openly operated under the legal boundaries.

HempCann eventually has the goal of setting up several outlets across India. Their aim for the clinic is to provide education and awareness about the use of cannabis medicines and also provide quality patient care in a calm and peaceful clinical setting.

Looking at their current response and popularity, they don't seem far away from achieving their goals. ☺





Sneaky Business

Students today have a wide array of career choices to pick from, but an edgy and not-so-legal line of work — being a private detective — has seen a spike in enrollments **By Rajeev Mathew**

It is quite exciting to think about private investigation as a legit career option. Sure, an engineer, or a doctor are the ideal Indian parent-approved ways of doing things, but there is no harm in breaking the norm once in a while and going for something a little different. But how edgy is too edgy? People are bringing out their inner Sherlock Holmes or Hercule Poirot, maybe even Byomkesh Bakshi, if you are patriotic that way, by enrolling in courses to become private detectives.

The job will definitely offer you all the thrills you would expect from a career like this. So, what's the problem? Well, it is technically still not legal in India, but they're also not illegal. In 2007, the Private Detective Agencies Regulation Bill was introduced for licencing and regulating private investigators. Among other things, the bill would require detective agencies to have a licence from a central or state board to operate, as well as strictly regulate the functions of a private investigator. But the bill has still not been passed, which forces private investigators and agencies to be confined within that little grey area.

So, how do you become a private investigator in India? This is where it gets a little tricky. Since India does not recognise or has been unable to categorise private detectives as legal or illegal, one can't acquire a diploma or a degree in this field.

But, online courses are available and they're all being provided by private detective agencies in the country. Akriti Khatri is the founder of one of India's leading all-women private detective agencies, Venus Detectives. Khatri pioneered this movement and helped create India's most expansive course in private investigation. The course is categorised as a hobby course and is divided into a three-month course and six-month course. A three-month course comes with 15-day on-job training and a six-month course comes with 30-day on-job training. The subjects include chapters like Indian and international history of detectives, case studies, surveillance, inquiry methodology and other hardcore investigation techniques.

Dipti Satpathi and Priya Bharadwaj are two trainees who took the online course and are now currently being trained under Khatri. They both have had their fair share of exposure to the subject of criminology, a subject of their interest. Satpathi believes her interest for this vocation came because of where she comes from. "I come from a family where my father is a criminal lawyer. I also became a lawyer and I am an evidence specialist. I have always been familiar with this subject and I think that's what attracted me to it."

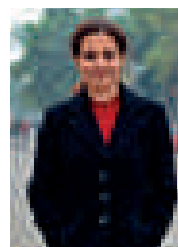
Now, if an individual does decide to get into a gig like this, convincing the folks at home might not be the easiest thing in the

world. Parents fear their child is making a career that is not yet legally recognised, or could soon become highly regulated or even illegal. Apart from that, the aspect of safety is primary, especially for parents with daughters. "The main reason why parents don't approve of their kids doing this job is because of safety. My parents are aware I work at this agency, but I have not told them that I go on field because they would not be happy with that. I told them I just have a desk job and my job only includes looking after office operations. If I told them the truth, I don't think they or any parent would understand because of the circumstances we have to be in or the situations we have to deal with," says Bharadwaj.

The online courses will undoubtedly add to your theoretical skills as a private investigator, but most of your skills can only be sharpened by heading out in the field. Khatri had a peculiar introduction to this career, but learnt the fundamentals quite quickly. "I was always interested and passionate about being a detective, and I got my chance when a private detective agency advertised in a newspaper, looking for people. I got the job, but I was made to sit at a desk for almost three weeks. But I found out later, it was a test of my patience. Since my boss saw that I was a 21-year-old enthusiastic girl, my level of patience was something that he needed to be sure of."

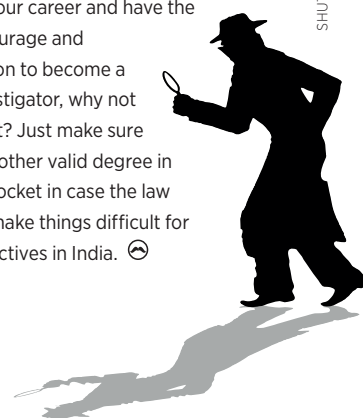
So, what does it take to become a private investigator? "Passion and enthusiasm is highly important, but you also need to pair that with patience and presence of mind. In our field, just enthusiasm and no patience can get you in a lot of trouble. Apart from those things, you yourself need to be absolutely sure that this is what you want to do. People will taunt you and say what you're doing is not legitimate, but you need to have immense passion for this work and only if you do, should you decide to join this line," says Khatri.

So, if you were looking to do something edgy with your career and have the patience, courage and determination to become a private investigator, why not give it a shot? Just make sure you have another valid degree in your back pocket in case the law decides to make things difficult for private detectives in India. ☹



Akriti Khatri is a private detective and the founder of Venus Detectives, an agency that offers detective services as well as online courses on the subject

SHUTTERSTOCK



Dreading The Dating Clamour

Being on a dating app can sometimes feel more mechanical than magical. Fellow dating app users describe their experience with the exhaustion of incessant scrolling, and mental health experts give a lowdown on how to navigate dating fatigue

By Samreen Tungekar

“When you’re talking to eight to 10 people at the same time, the “what’s up” becomes really tiring to answer. The texting becomes lame after a point,” says 33-year-old Ektaa, a journalist based in Delhi. Ektaa is one of many people experiencing dating fatigue, which, in simple words, is exhaustion from the constant and overuse of dating apps.

How many times have you abruptly ended a conversation with someone because exchanging pleasantries, getting a lowdown on what someone's looking for, and then the same "Hey" three times a day just got on your nerves? When something begins to induce stress rather than reduce it, a burnout is inevitable. Dating fatigue is a result of the same.

Deepika Singh from Delhi says she has tried out almost all dating apps, and uninstalled them for various reasons too. “I left Aisle in a month because I hardly got any matches, and on the other hand, on OkCupid, I got so many messages on the first night that I uninstalled it the next morning,” she says.

Singh feels that the newness and originality also diminishes. “A lot of people use the same standard text for their bio, and it’s harder to find someone who can hold my attention. Secondly, while it was fun and self-indulgent to talk about myself earlier, now it gets repetitive and exhausting and I really don’t feel like going through the same routine of telling my name, what I do, what brings me here and the likes,” she says.

Srini Swaminathan, 40, from Chennai, installed dating apps a few years ago just out of curiosity. "In a few months, I got dormant on two apps that I had been active on and since then, I have been on and off them, with almost a year of no dating apps at all on my phone because I have felt fatigued or just done. I am quite active on social media and make many connections there, which I am content with," he says.

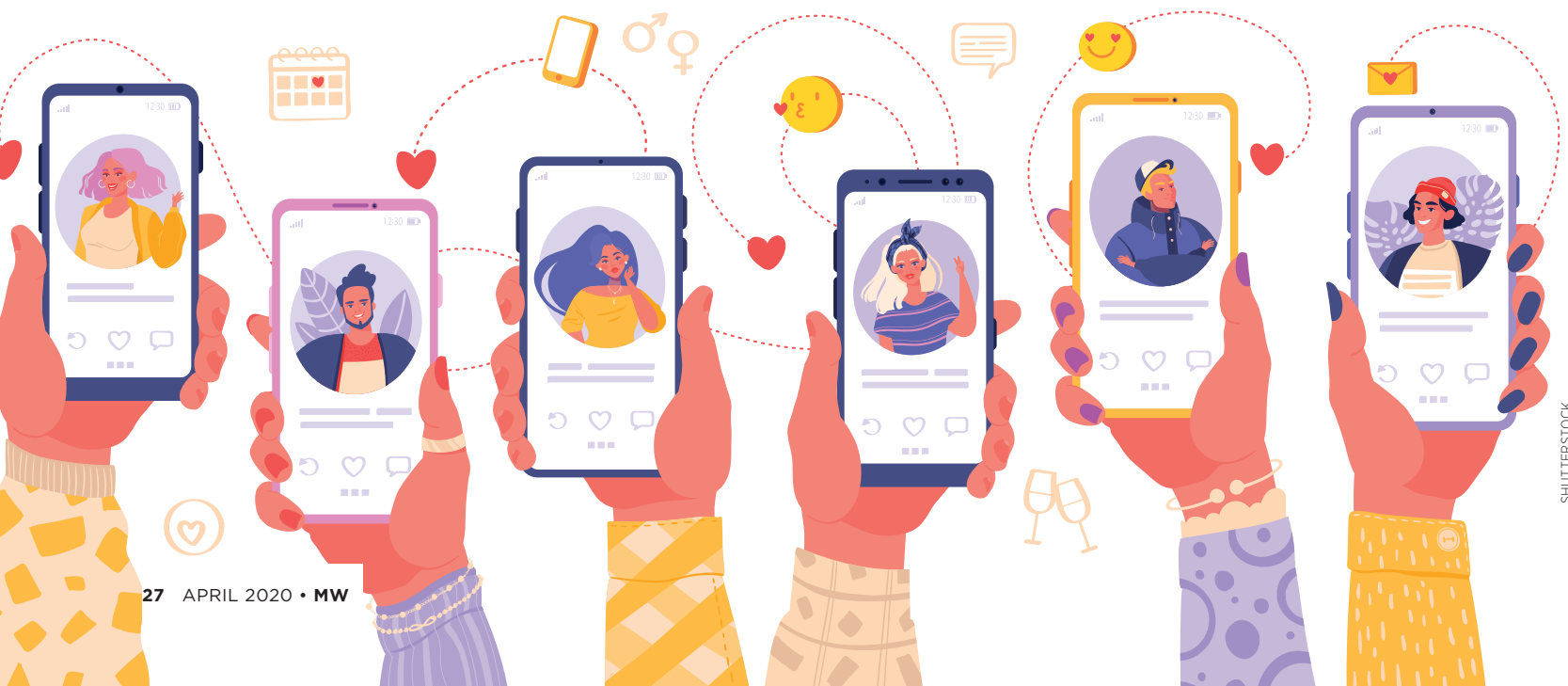
Swaminathan feels that high expectations, instant gratification that leads to disappointment and not approaching a virtual connect with the same respect and sensitivity that one would with a real life connection is what leads to dating fatigue. "People also bring their baggage to every new connect and act carefully, leading to

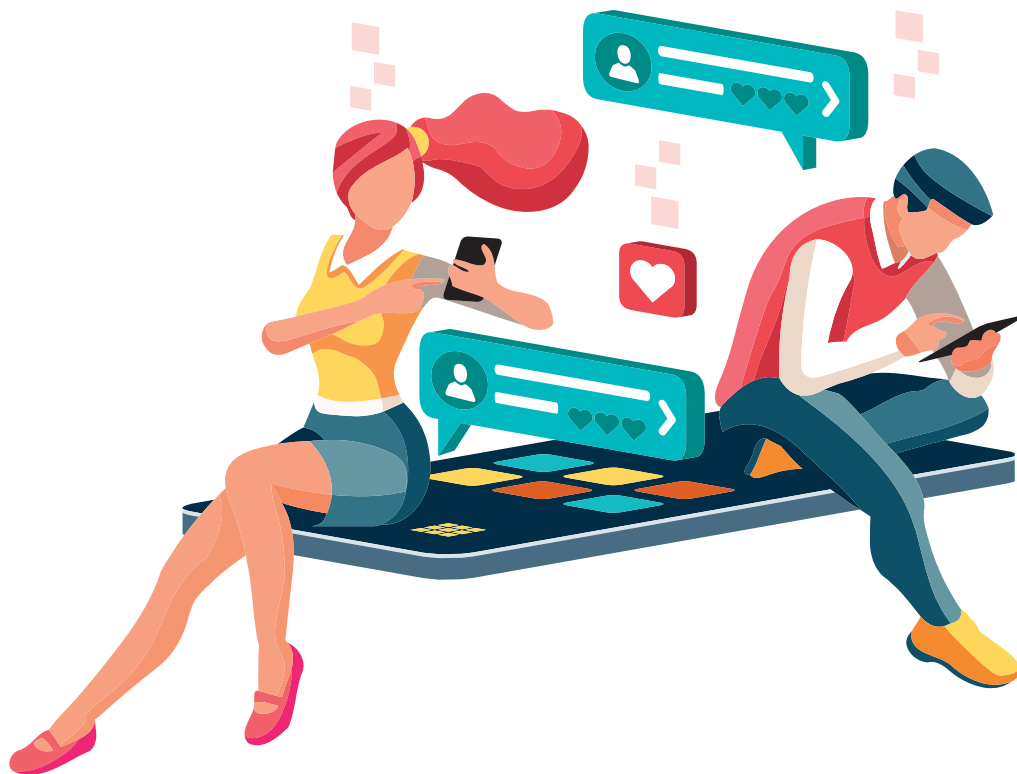
a longer time and effort to actually move ahead, exchange numbers or meet,” he says.

Another factor that most people feel leads to feeling exhausted is ghosting, a recurring phenomenon in the digital age. Dhruvi Shah Mota, a digital creator from Mumbai, says being ghosted got to her. “I have been on dates where I have been stood up. I was on almost all the dating apps. But I realised it was becoming very transactional. I was quite open to meeting people, but there were people who just weren’t interested in making the effort to meet or even exchange numbers. And many of them ghost, even after meeting. I’ve been at that place where I’m like I don’t want to do this and just uninstalled all the apps. I think the ghosting is what caused my fatigue,” she says. Swaminathan also feels like a lot of distress is caused because of ghosting.

For Shasvathi Siva, an entrepreneur, the fatigue comes from just too many conversations all at once, and quickly skipping from one to another. "There is no attention span left, very little conversation, and we end up swiftly moving on and forgetting to find a connect. While the want to date is there, it's also tough to find one decent conversation, she says.

To deal with the fatigue, people keep reinstalling and uninstalling these apps. Siva doesn't uninstall apps, but she can go for weeks without remembering they exist when she feels exhausted. Ektaa installed





apps thrice, but ended up deleting them all. Swaminathan has lost count of the number of times he has uninstalled and reinstalled, and puts his apps on snooze mode when experiencing fatigue. "If I feel a sense of fatigue, I just go off them for a few weeks and then get back if I am traveling or feel like I have the energy," says Swaminathan, while Siva chooses not to respond to messages and shut down her apps.

We may debate the pros and cons of using technology to date, but more and more dating apps are on the rise, and so are the number of users on them. Bumble has over 85 million users globally and more than a billion first moves made since the app launched in 2014. Priti Joshi, VP Strategy at Bumble, says since its launch in 2018, Bumble India's user base has quadrupled to surpass three million users. Mr. Snehil Khanor, CEO and co-founder of Truly Madly, shares that the app has around six million registered users in total, 22 per cent of which are women. "50 per cent of our users are above 28, and 70 per cent are above 26. On our platform, people are mostly looking for serious relationships," he says. On the other hand, a Tinder spokesperson reveals that as of the third quarter of 2019, Tinder had nearly 5.7 million subscribers and Tinder India is among Tinder's top 5 growing markets and the largest in Asia. Mint put out a Google report released last May, revealing the dating app sector was said to be valued at \$100 million in the next five to eight years.

Clearly, dating apps aren't going

anywhere, but neither is the overwhelming access to it.

From a mental health perspective, Smriti Joshi, lead psychologist at AI life coach start up Wysa, draws a parallel between online shopping and online swiping. "There are too many choices available, which makes it hard to analyse what is right for you and what isn't. The process of being emotionally and cognitively involved with multiple people can lead to feeling overwhelmed. People also use apps when they aren't stimulated much, but want to look at something that makes them feel better. For example, I go to a shopping site and keep adding things to my cart. I am not going to end up buying everything I add to cart, but it does make me feel better to browse," she analyses.

Dr Milan Balakrishnan, consultant psychiatrist in Mumbai, feels that when people's expectations mismatch, it creates a certain frustration. "Fatigue sets in because the whole concept of dating apps is based on impulsive decisions and can be exhausting for someone who is looking for long-term companionship. Incessant swiping right or left is based on perception of what a person is like and very often, it isn't the true picture. The breaking point for dating fatigue is when self doubt starts creeping in," he explains.

Psychotherapist Smiti Srivastava, who has done her training research in online romantic relationships, has worked with multiple clients who have experienced dating fatigue. "I think I can safely say that

for the age group between 18-35, more than 70 per cent of my clients have found themselves swiping left/right, waiting for someone's long pending response, being ghosted or even compulsively dating," she says.

Srivastava says the fatigue starts from the lifestyle that we're currently living where we get to be who we want to be, behind a screen. "With everything moving to digital based platforms, we're not only getting compulsively busier and preoccupied, we're also essentially living two identities. The online one as well as the offline one. This way of living in itself is very exhausting," she says.

Therapists believe that as is the case with any form of fatigue, it is very important that you don't push yourself further and take a breather immediately. One of the first few things to do, they say, would be to take a step back and take a break. "When you're ready, you can always go back there," Srivastava says.

Balakrishnan suggests taking a week long break, and get back on with a more authentic profile. "Don't be disheartened because of a few wrong people and don't let it create self-doubt."

Joshi suggests going slow. "Take it one person at a time, try and initiate a conversation with one person instead of incessant swiping, get to know someone before moving on to someone else. Set very clear boundaries for yourself of what you're okay with and how much you want to share," she advises. ☺

Therapists believe that as is the case with any form of fatigue, it is very important that you don't push yourself further and take a breather immediately. Step back, and take a break



Streetwear Encapsulated

Meet Bhavisha Dave and Meenakshi Singh - the two minds behind India's most diverse streetwear webstore

By Rajeev Mathew

Bhavisha Dave and Meenakshi Singh

met when they worked together at PUMA India. During their time there, they bonded over their mutual love for streetwear and constantly joked about starting something of their own. The jokes turned into talks, the talks turned into discussions, the discussions turned into execution and the execution resulted in the birth of CAPSUL — India's most diverse webstore for streetwear.

Dave was exposed to streetwear and all of its components from an early age. "Growing up, I was influenced a lot by streetwear culture as I was a speed skater. I loved watching the X-Games and the NBA. I was also a huge hip-hop fan, so it feels like life has come a full circle considering that I've been lucky enough to be able to start my own business based on this culture."

Singh, on the other hand, was introduced to the culture as her career steamrolled ahead. "I spent four years as the creative head at PUMA India followed by a three year stint as the commercial marketing manager for the

EEMEA regional team. In the process, I was getting exposed to not just European street culture but also emerging progressive cultures in Africa, Middle East as well as India."

The journey getting to this point was far from easy. They had to divert most of their money to bootstrap the business, and put in countless hours into research, meetings, and convincing the big names of streetwear to trust them and send them their products. Once they ticked that out, they assembled a loyal and committed team full of individuals who would have their backs.

The website first started out at the end of 2017 with just a handful of brands. It quickly caught on and word spread that there was an Indian website where you can purchase streetwear products that were never available in the country. As they grew more popular, they naturally expanded their business and more streetwear brands appeared on the website. But Dave and Singh had bigger plans. Their vision for CAPSUL was more than just a website to shop from, they



wanted to make it a movement and an entity that garners its own loyal community. They wanted to use the growing momentum of streetwear in India, to educate more and propagate streetwear around the country. That is when they started 'WORD on the Street,' which aims to provide a platform for India's street culture community and brings together tribes representing streetwear, sneakers, art, and music.

The timing of CAPSUL's origin was impeccable. It came at a time when there was a void for streetwear in the country but there was a small, budding culture that was on the cusp of exploding. "Streetwear is an attitude, it's the fashion expression of street culture. An almost universal sense of style among Gen Z and millennials, the proliferation of Instagram and the gradual acceptance of comfortable, functional clothing, including tees, hoodies and cargos, as work wear have catalysed the streetwear movement," says Dave.

Singh adds, "Streetwear has opened the doors for men to participate in the conversation about fashion, and it is not bound by seasons. All these factors together make for a long cycle we're seeing for streetwear."

Dave and Singh have big plans for CAPSUL. This year, they are ready to add three new brands to their already impressive roster, conduct more 'WORD on the Street' events, host digital popups with Indian streetwear labels, and drop their very own collection. And another thing they plan to do this year, is clearly, not slow down. ☺

CAPSUL came at a time when there was a void for streetwear in the country but there was a small, budding culture that was on the cusp of exploding

Thor Has A New Sidekick

Started from countless hours auditioning, now he's here, starring opposite one of Hollywood's biggest stars, Chris Hemsworth. 16-year-old Rudhraksh Jaiswal has come a long way, but he's determined to go even further **By Rajeev Mathew**

Rudhraksh Jaiswal was just your usual school kid. Apart from studying, he spent most of his time focusing on swimming, and trained to become a state-level swimmer. However, the acting bug bit him quite early in his life. He gave his first audition for a popular soup brand and eventually kept giving auditions for various ads and shows. He started from the bottom and came up the hard way, hustling in and out of audition rooms and recording countless tapes. It almost felt like he was spending more time in audition rooms than his own living room. He managed to bag the role of Sahadeva in the magnum opus, *Mahabharata*. But once that stint was over, Jaiswal was, once again, looking for more work. He spent more than one and a half years waiting to get his next big break. As much as he liked shows, being in movies was always his ultimate goal, as for any actor. He bagged a few roles in small-budget Hindi films. But apart from that, he still had a long way to go.

But all said and done, things soon took a different direction for Jaiswal. And in this context, 'a different direction' actually means skyrocketed upwards. Jaiswal eventually landed a role that made him the center of a Netflix film, and that too, opposite Chris Hemsworth.

Jaiswal will be seen in *Extraction* (formerly called *Dhaka*), Netflix's next big-budget action drama directed by Sam Hargrave and written by one-half of the Russo Brothers, Joe Russo. Apart from Jaiswal, other well-known Indian names including Randeep Hooda and Manoj Bajpayee, are also part of the film.

Jaiswal still remembers the first time he met Hemsworth. "We were shooting in Ahmedabad. I was getting my hair done, and out of nowhere, Chris sir emerged. I sprung out of my chair and went up to him and introduced myself, quite shyly, actually. He greeted me with a smile and replied with a warm "What's up, mate?" I was completely star-struck. I shared how

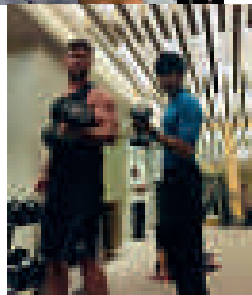
I was a huge fan of the *Avengers* and even recited his iconic dialogues from the film," he says.

Jaiswal has proudly been posting about Hemsworth and him bonding on the sets. Everyone around him was getting regular updates about what it was like working with the star. There are many posts of them just hanging out on the sets, reciting some Bollywood dialogues, etc. Jaiswal and Hemsworth's professional relationship soon



turned to friendship. They were hanging out after shoots, played sports together and even started working out together. Who better to train you than one of the fittest men on the planet? Apart from being a friend, Hemsworth soon grew to become a mentor and teacher to Jaiswal. "On the sets, he gave me a lot of tips and guided me through everything. What to do, what not to do, how I could improve, etc. And whatever he's said has stayed with me," said Jaiswal.

As much as he remembers his first day with Hemsworth, he also remembers his last day with because of a very special incident. He recalls, "On the last day of the shoot, I went to hug him. I then bent down and



"When I touched Chris sir's feet, he asked what I was doing. I told him this was a way of giving respect, so he touched my feet too and hugged me"

touched his feet. He was so surprised and asked me what I was doing. I told him that this was a way of giving respect and to everyone's surprise, he bent down and touched my feet and pulled me into a tight bear hug. His humility really has no bounds."

Apart from *Extraction*, Jaiswal has a few other projects he's already worked on and some in the pipeline. He's already built an impressive portfolio and has proved his acting chops on several occasions. The action-drama will help put him in the spotlight and be another feather in his cap. There's no doubt that he still has a long way to go, but *Extraction* has surely given him an impressive headstart. ☺



The **Jump-Scare** Binge-List

Watch these at your own risk. From demonic witches to flesh-tearing zombies, these shows have all the forces that'll compel you to sleep with the lights on

By Rajeev Mathew

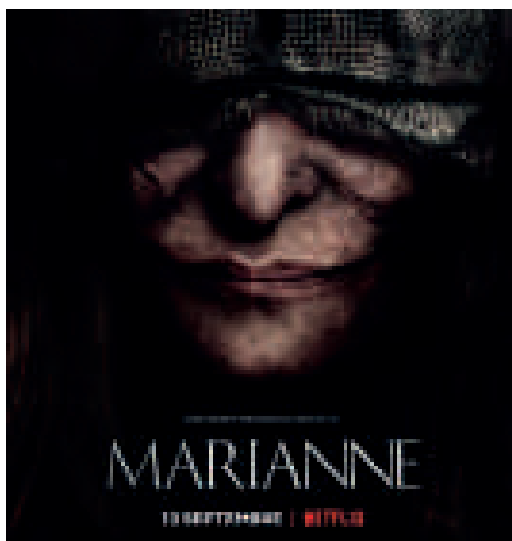


▲ **THE PURGE (SEASON 2)**

Moving away from the witches and zombies, we move to scarier things — humans. *The Purge* premiered as a film back in 2013 and turned out to be quite the hit. It was eventually turned into a series by Amazon Prime Video and is currently on its second season. It retains the same premise as the film, but is a lot more elaborate this time, while promising the same thrills the original film offered audiences.

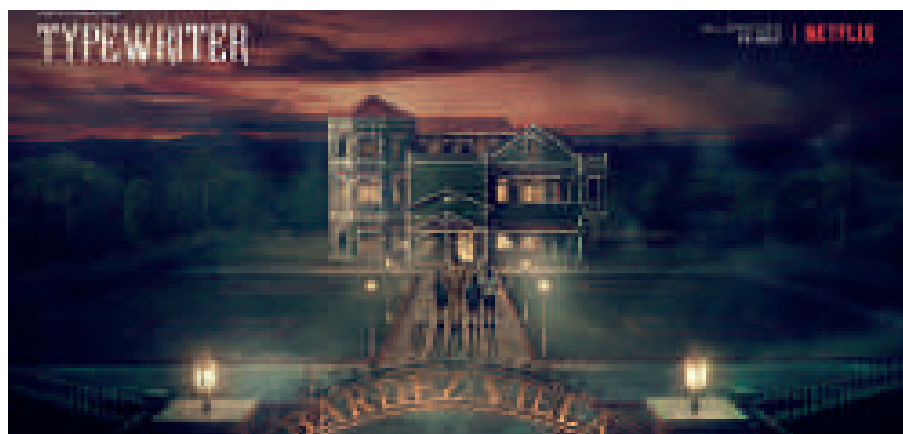
► **THE HAUNTING OF HILL HOUSE**

The 'ghost of your past' phrase takes a whole new meaning with this one. *The Haunting of Hill House* is a Netflix original horror series that is loosely based on Shirley Jackson's 1959 novel of the same name. The series follows the return of five siblings to the house they grew up in, which happens to be one of the most haunted houses in America. Mike Flanagan, the veteran horror film-maker, helped create the series.



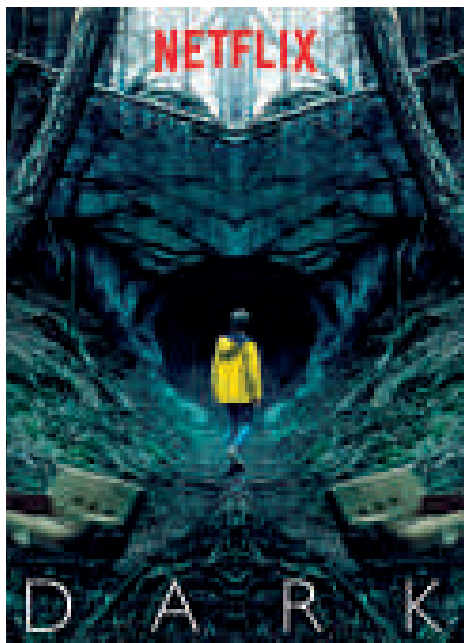
◀ **MARIANNE**

Said to be one of the scariest pieces of work you could see on screen, *Marianne* follows the life of a horror novelist named Emma Larsimon, who has to fight her own demons, literally. Marianne is the demonic witch created by Emma. The witch possesses people and wreaks havoc into Emma's life. This Netflix original series is bone-chillingly terrifying and promises some sleepless nights.



◀ **TYPEWRITER**

Typewriter aims to cement India's place in the horror series segment and it successfully manages to do so. The Netflix original stars Purab Kohli in the lead, who plays a police inspector trying to solve three murders who all seem to have a connection — a haunted mansion. The inspector finds himself teaming up with a group of amateur ghost hunters who share the same interest — to uncover the malicious secrets of that house.



▲ *DARK (SEASON 2)*

Dark is Netflix's first German original series now and easily one of its eeriest. A small German town is dealing with the sudden disappearance of two children. But in the search for them, dark secrets are reopened and the town doesn't feel the same anymore. The concept of the show is unique. It is a trilogy series divided in 'cycles', which represent timelines. Currently in its second cycle (or second season), a third season is rumoured to arrive by mid-2020.

► *DRACULA*

Dracula sees the 400 plus-year-old character coming back to life in 2020.

While it is still based on the classic Bram Stoker novel, it goes into a slightly different tangent along the way, giving viewers a new look at Count Dracula. This Netflix original is a mini-series consisting of just three 90-minute episodes, but don't worry, it has enough creepiness to induce nightmares.



◀ *BLACK SUMMER*

What's horror without some good ol' zombies? *Black Summer* is a zombie apocalyptic horror-drama that revolves around a mother and daughter who are separated during a zombie outbreak. The mother sets out to search for her daughter while keeping one primary goal in mind — survival. This Netflix series has all the ingredients of a great zombie drama and definitely sets itself apart from the regular, stereotypical cheesy zombie storylines.



◀ *KINGDOM (SEASON 2)*

What happens when you take a period drama set in South Korea and add zombies to it? The result is Netflix's *Kingdom*. After a plague kills villagers and the king, the prince comes into power and ensures his people's safety to keep from a plague that is killing people and turning them into blood-hungry zombies. After a successful first season, *Kingdom's* second season ensures to deliver a strong plot filled with the same thrills and chills as the first season.

There's **An App** For That?

► **IFRENCHKISS**

Worried about being a bad kisser? Are you scared that you might be putting off potential partners for not kissing them correctly? In case you need an app to figure that out, here's one. iFrenchKiss wants to save you from getting embarrassed. But seriously, this app, which probably says more about its users than it does about its developers, analyses your technique as you kiss the screen and gives feedback.

Cost: Free

Availability: iOS



The App Store is a world of its own that can be explored to no extent, no matter what you're looking for. But there are things in life that can still be done without an app. However, you'll find an app for that too, albeit quite redundant. Here's a list of apps that will make you go 'Huh?'

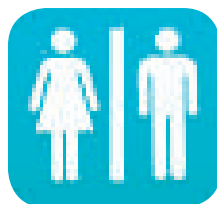
By Sanika Achrekar

► **PLACES I'VE POOPED**

The name is enough to gross you out. Mark your territory with this map of where you've done your business. All you need to do is add a location with a 'Bomb's Away' button after you've finished your business. You can also go back and see every place you have been. It doesn't just end here; you can share your location on Facebook and follow your friends to see where they have pooped. You can attach images and rate every location.

Cost: Free

Availability: iOS and Android



◀ **ELECTRIC SHAVER**

The Electric Shaver app displays a picture of a shaver on your smartphone's screen with the live camera view as the background. The app even imitates the sound of the hair trimmer, complete with vibration. You can choose the colour and thickness of the hair

as well. Another great use is that you can move it like shaver and prank your friends with it. Makes no sense, but exists.

Cost: Free

Availability: iOS and Android



◀ **VIRTUAL CIGARETTE SMOKING**

If one of your friends is trying to quit smoking, you can introduce them to this app called Virtual Cigarette Smoking. It displays a virtual cigarette on your smartphone's screen and lets you

pretend that you're smoking one. You can even blow on your smartphone to make the cigarette 'burn' faster. It's the virtual version of the Phantom cigarette candies of childhood.

Cost: Free

Availability: iOS and Android

► **INAP@WORK**

If you want to get out of work, just say something and get out of it. You don't need an app. However, the idea behind iNap@Work would make it sound like you're working while, in fact, you're actually sleeping. You can preset certain sounds such as clicking, typing, crumpling paper and stapling to occur by choosing options 'Often' or 'Never' depending on your preference.

Cost: Free

Availability: iOS



◀ **\$1000000**

Have you ever wondered how does counting a million dollars feel? Well, this app will easily help you know that. You can choose to count the money in either \$50 or \$100 denomination. There are different swipe gestures you can use to count the bills. A completely pointless

app with a million dollars inside it.

Cost: Free

Availability: iOS



◀ **IDRINK WATER REMINDER**

Yes, we're the generation that needs a reminder to hydrate. If you suck at keeping track of your water intake, Drink Water Reminder is for you. The app's primary purpose is to nudge you at a set interval so you're drinking water throughout the day. You can fill in your details such as the time you wake up, the time you go to bed, and how often you want to drink water and you'll get customised reminders.

Cost: Free

Availability: iOS and Android



CYBERPUNK 2077

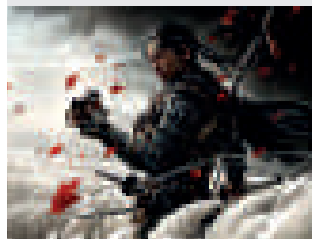
CD Projekt Red is the studio that gave one of the best games in the world – *Witcher 3*. Now, they're back with *Cyberpunk 2077*, a game set in a new, complex society that's filled with bad guys, massive guns, cybernetic implants, and a lot more that add to the madness. As a bonus, Keanu Reeves will be starring in the game as well. **Expert view:** While it's unlikely to capture the lightning in a bottle that was *Witcher 3*, *Cyberpunk 2077* will still undoubtedly be worth paying attention to when it launches — Julie Muncy (*Wired*)
Release date: 17 September, 2020

GHOST OF TSUSHIMA

Ghost of Tsushima throws you right in the middle of ancient Japan. You play as a Samurai who is on the path to take his country back from the grips of the Mongols. The open-world game promises some breathtaking visuals, intense samurai sword fights and a storyline that will keep you hooked till the end.

Expert view: Sucker Punch has created a realistic, vibrant world overflowing with colour and beauty, but as a backdrop set against a brutal, real-life conflict full of war and violence — Andrew Goldfarb (*IGN*)

Release date: 26 June, 2020



THE LAST OF US PART II

Seven years after the first chapter was released, Sony Entertainment and Naughty Dog revealed *The Last of Us Part II*. While the first game primarily revolved around Joel, who was given the duty to keep Ellie safe, the second part will now put us in Ellie's shoes, who is now all grown up. The game promises the emotional roller-coaster of the first game, packed with some scary survival challenges.

Expert view: *The Last of Us Part II* looks incredibly harrowing and intense, not to mention incredibly well-produced — Andrew Hayward (*Stuff.com*)

Release date: 29 May, 2020

Gaming Mania

2020 has a lot in store for gamers and we've compiled a list of five upcoming games that we're most excited for, and what gaming experts have to say about them **By Rajeev Mathew**

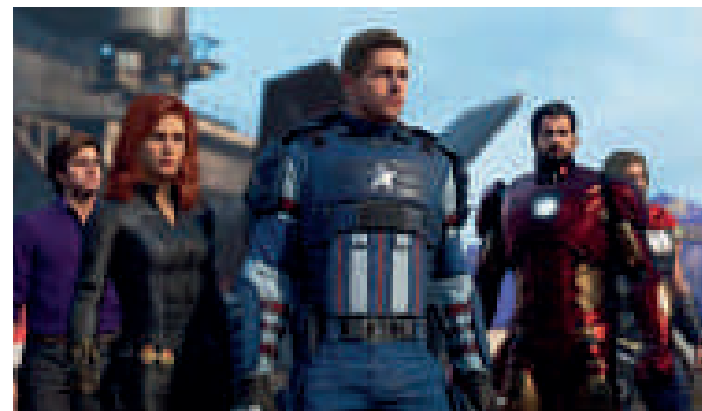


WATCH DOGS: LEGION

Watch Dogs games have always given the player the freedom to control and take over an entire city by hacking your way through, and the third game doesn't stray away from that. *Watch Dogs: Legion* will still let you be the hacker in a post-Brexit London city teeming with ultra-futuristic inventions and places and people for you to hack. Ubisoft, however, decided to postpone its release and announced that it will be released for the holiday season at the end of the year.

Expert view: It's clear that *Watch Dogs: Legion* is a big departure for the series in terms of tone and Ubisoft is putting a lot of work into as one of their big marquee releases — Hayes Madsen (*ScreenRant*)

Release date: Late December, 2020



MARVEL'S AVENGERS

Almost as soon as the *Avengers: Endgame* craze ended, everyone was greeted with the first look of the upcoming Avengers game. But the initial release date of June was pushed to September after it received mixed reactions from fans. Expect a game with some good ol' superhero action paired with a comic-book oriented storyline.

Expert view: *Marvel's Avengers* opens up to different types of gameplay, ranging from high-action flight missions as Iron Man to more Batman: Arkham Trilogy-like stealth and combat sections as Black Widow — Jordan Ramée (*GameSpot*)

Release date: 1 September, 2020

Why pole dancing is my latest obsession

This is a first-hand account of why pole dancing is a fantastic workout for men — and how men react when I say that to them

By Arnesh Ghose

Ever since I saw Jacqueline Fernandez enthusiastically take to pole dancing on Instagram, I have been intrigued by the possibility of, maybe, just maybe, trying it out myself. When Jackie started putting out her histrionics with the pole, it, sort of, felt real, you know? You watch pole dancers in cinema and wonder “but they have been training all their lives as dancers, of course they will be able to do it”. You see strippers live in Amsterdam or Vegas and think “well she isn’t putting in as much effort as she should, but poor thing, this is a rough life”. Then you see somebody putting in the effort, and doing a smashing job of it, and realise that “everybody can do it if they just put in the hard work”. JLo did it in *Hustlers*, at her age, and you just want to hide under a rock and cry in shame.

I have been tracking a bunch of pole fitness classes in Mumbai for a few years now, and nobody offered classes for men. I don’t know why. While I don’t see the need to desexualise the dance form (we don’t desexualise Salsa or Bachata, now, do we?), we need to definitely deshame it. So, when one of my writers enthusiastically pitched a story on Arifa Bhinderwala (she’s on Instagram as [aarifa.pole.burnt](#)), I asked him to take it a step ahead.

“Ask her to host a class for the men of MW.”

“Errr...excuse me?”

“Yeah. She is going to teach us how to pole.”

“Umm...okay.”

Bhinderwala agreed. Thankfully. We landed up at this lovely studio space — called The Space — and what followed was a two-hour sesh of getting our asses handed to us. Bhinderwala looked like a weightless and ultra-graceful nymph amidst a bunch of bumbling, uncoordinated buffoons, who seemed to have been introduced to their limbs for the very first time. We scraped, chafed, crashed, fell, groaned, screamed, and winced. It was a fun class.

On a technical level, pole dancing requires you to come in with substantial upper body strength, and helps build your core and lumbar support. It is extremely effective in strength building, balance, coordination, and left brain functions. Pole is not easy at all. But when you start looking at pole dancing from a socio-sexual and gender dynamic perspective, it leads to a very complex conversation. While pole’s roots are in mallakhamb (India), Chinese pole acrobatics, and

ghawazi (Egypt), it was the usual “eroticisation of the East” by gentlemen’s clubs in the West, in the early 1900s, that turned it into a sensual form of visual entertainment for men. It was soon incorporated as an act in stripping performances,



SHUTTERSTOCK

and became something for men to enjoy. So, however difficult and beneficial it might be, pole bears the weight of historically being a form of entertainment, and something that women practice for men. Hence, globally, pole dancers and fitness instructors have been battling mental blocks and casual toxic masculinity before they can hone — and explore — the craft.

My resolution for this year has been to try out new things. It is not a particularly groundbreaking resolution, but I have been having a lot of fun sticking to it. So, when Bhinderwala graciously asked me to join her beginner's course, I obviously said yes. While my team — most of them identify as heterosexual — had come out of that first session as invigorated as me, this is a list of things men told me when I shared my enthusiasm for pole dancing with them:

"You want to become a stripper?"

"I'm sorry, I am straight, so I won't do that shit."

"Stick to the gym, bro. Lift weights. All this frou-frou shit is for them yoga bitches."

"You don't need to know pole to strip."

"Haha! Men don't need to do that."

"They teach you that shit? I thought only hookers know how to pole dance!"

"Again, tell me why you want to be a stripper suddenly?"

To be honest, I wasn't expecting this amount of unnecessary bullshit to come my way, and I realised that it would be easier to ignore than navigate it. Straight men have an almost rabid curiosity for the stripper pole. It is an experience to be ticked off bucket lists, I guess. Like what "going to Bangkok with guy friends" is for middle-class Indian men. Most straight guys have a "that time I went to the strip club" anecdote, and those who don't, curiously wait for it to happen to

them. It is an obvious power trip, right? The thought that "a woman will undress for me, for my pleasure, on my command" is a boner-inducing power dynamic that men would love to indulge in. Along with that, "I am allowed to misbehave, cat-call, wolf-whistle, make it rain, have her give me a lap dance when I tell her to" are glorious add-ons. So, does that mean that men have not evolved beyond the Neanderthal? That they need a "safe space" to objectify women because society does not allow certain behaviour that they would, otherwise, regularly and unrestrictingly indulge in? Is that why the "cool chick" is the one who is morally ambiguous and is sexually experimental? Do men love "bad girls" because, at the end of the day, "bad behaviour" is all they want to reduce women to?

And is that why, when women turn something like pole dancing into a self-love and self-care exercise, men cannot handle it, because all this time they thought this sensual performative art was for their consumption only? And because men assumed that this was something only for their consumption, they cannot grapple with the option of participating in it?

Evidently, a simple pole dancing class raised a bunch of uncomfortable questions related to gender dynamics.

When I walked into my first class with Bhinderwala, I felt like I had been allowed into the inner sanctum of a goddess coven. I picked a pole at the back of the class, to have as much of a fly-on-the-wall perspective as possible. I was the only man in the batch. I saw women of various age, shapes, and sizes, uninhibitedly shed clothes and stretch in basic underwear, readying themselves for the class. I smiled. It was a safe space for them too, a space where they didn't feel judged or "looked at", because, I feel,

Pole bears the weight of historically being a form of entertainment, and something that women practice for men. Hence, globally, pole dancers have been battling mental blocks and casual toxic masculinity before they can hone — and explore — the craft

women are most bothered by the male gaze. If you removed standards of accomplishment and beauty that exist in our society, all established by men, you realise that women are not judgemental of women, because they know the challenges and journeys of the gender. Which is why the "male gaze" doesn't have a positive connotation, and why a "female gaze" doesn't really exist. It doesn't need to. I saw women help each other out. I saw them help me out too. They complimented each other, encouraged each other. When Bhinderwala helped me do my first climb, she slammed her body against my knee, aiding my grip, and casually said "don't worry, I got you, I am strong" to boost my confidence. She is an excellent teacher, skilled at her art, but also knows exactly how to encourage you without being oppressive or demanding. She builds that safe space for everyone to feel strong, beautiful, confident, and sexy. I felt all of those things without even knowing that I needed that self-love boost.

I step out of every class exhilarated, never tired. But always bruised. My bones ache. The next morning I feel like my legs will fall off. My back feels like Jell-O. That's when I sense my privilege, and send out a prayer for all those hard working women out there who do this for male entertainment. The men they perform for will never have a hundredth of the strength they have to muster every day — on or off the pole. ☹️



MW's Executive Editor is also the magazine's resident hedonist. An

encourager of excesses, Ghose likes his humour, coffee and chocolate very dark. A biryani-loving cinephile with an eye for avant-garde, if you have a delicious story, he will eavesdrop.

The many myths of female bisexuality

While bisexual men battle biphobia, women deal with being sexually fetishised, constant talk about 'threesomes' and the usual 'it's just a phase'

By Urmi Bhattacheryya



When a woman announces she's bisexual at a dinner table, a social gathering or in bed, usually one out of two things will happen:

She is sized up amorously by diners, social gatherers, or her current paramour, and thought to be "easy" and/or "loose".

She is sized up dubiously by diners/ social gatherers/current paramour and thought to be inclined to cheat on her partner.

Both of those two things can be chalked down to the simple truth: she likes men and women, and she cannot lie.

And then, of course, there's the entire archaic malarkey about threesomes

25-year-old Suryatapa, a journalist from Delhi, says, "Biphobia can be terrible against bisexual men – I have seen it. For them, it's almost worse than that against gay men. For us, it's the opposite. It's fetishised and sexualised."

Parthavee, a 28-year-old media professional, laughs off the idea of a threesome when it is thrown at her. "It inevitably is. Particularly at parties, where couples will ask me to come along with them to their houses, without even asking me if I'm okay with it. I actually hate the idea of a threesome and never want to do it."

She continues, "What's problematic is that this assumption doesn't just come from straight people, but from within the queer community as well."

According to Human Rights Campaign, a bisexual "is someone who can be attracted to more than one gender; but adults and youth who identify as bisexual sometimes describe themselves differently... it includes people who identify as pansexual, queer, fluid and other labels that suggest potential attraction to more than one gender."

Biphobia is real, and a very real problem. The aversion towards bisexuality and/or bisexual people as individuals or as a group can take the form of both

denying that bisexuality even exists, or perpetuating myths and stereotypes about that identity.

The doubts are insidious, the suspicions harmful, the dismissiveness fearfully real.

Shyama, a 33-year-old sales professional in London, recalls being open and out in relationships from the get-go. “I’ve always been very vocal about liking both men and women – and this was a time when 377 still made it a criminal offence in India. I’ve only ever had one same-sex relationship while I was still in India, and she was a lesbian. We both explored our sexuality together.”

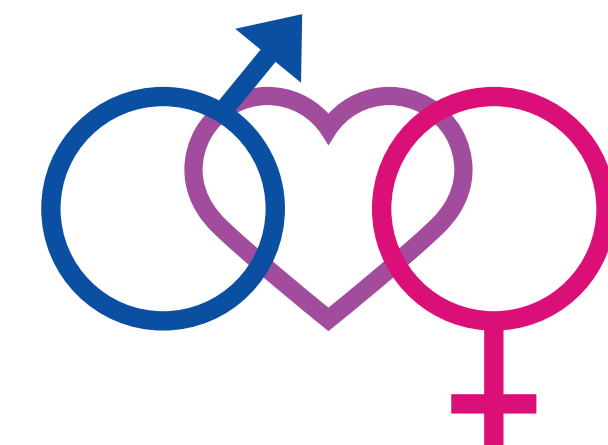
At the time, she wasn’t sure of who she was, having only been physical with a woman. Since, she’s been with men — of whom, she recalls — at least one asked her to a threesome with him and another woman. “We attempted it, but he really wanted me to act out this male heterosexual fantasy of two women and him. I’m not very keen on threesomes, I find them very intrusive.”

“What people don’t understand,” she says, wistfully, “is that it doesn’t work that way. I think being bisexual for people is their pornographic fantasy come to life.”

For Suryatapa, it has “thankfully not been something I have needed to explain. Lately, I’ve been dating more queer girls, so it’s not been an issue. Even when I’ve dated a straight guy, I’ve noticed he was careful about what he said. But I don’t know if that’s because of the circle I’m in. I cannot be in relationships with people who I have to explain things to anymore.”

She does recall, however, an unfortunate time in the beginning of her dating trajectory, when she found herself catering more to a “straight girl” stereotype. “I felt like I had to cater to certain idea of femininity, so I kept my hair long, etc. That’s when I noticed people were really surprised when I expressed my interest in girls.”

Parthavee has little patience for adverse audience participation,



Biphobia is real. The aversion towards bisexuality and/or bisexual people as individuals or as a group can take form of both denying that bisexuality exists or perpetuating myths about the identity of a bisexual person

though. “I just snap. Earlier, my exes who were men would go around flaunting my bisexuality to their other guy friends, which was humiliating. With women, they’re more understanding and I’ve barely had to explain it at all. My current relationship is finally with someone who gets it. For him, cheating is cheating — whether it’s with a guy or a girl.”

Misconceptions abound aplenty about bisexual people “having it easy” because they can always flaunt a person from the opposite sex to their parents instead of a same-sex partner. But a love affair (or indeed, a casual hook-up) doesn’t work like that. Besides, Shyama is intent on shattering the awful myth that she’s heard nearly all her life — that “bisexuality is just a phase”. That she’ll grow out of it.

“I think parents are really smart — no matter how much you think otherwise, they always know. My ex-girlfriend was home a lot on ‘sleepovers’ and I got the sense that they knew. I’ve chatted with my mother about my bisexuality and, all things considered, she’s quite cool — although she said, *‘lekin pura lesbian mat ban jaana. Ladke se hi shaadi karna’*.”

Parthavee came out to her mother and brother in 2017, and was happy to see that they weren’t disappointed. “In fact, my mom asked me what it feels like, etc. But I cannot let the rest of my family know. I’m financially independent enough to not suffer if they cut me off. I’ll miss them though.”

Suryatapa thinks she was privileged by the fact that her older sister identifies as a lesbian. “My sister’s always been out. When she was 10 years old, she’d borrow a buck from my mom to buy a rose for her female teacher who she had a crush on. But since we come from a small town, people would always be calling up my parents to speak shit about her. So, whatever my parents had to go through, they already went through with my sister. And by the time I came out at 18, it wasn’t so major.”

She rues the fact that they’re not “accepting”, but “they’re not ‘shitty’ about it. “I make it a point to talk about everything LGBT with them all the time,” she laughs.

Shyama remembers a time when an old work colleague warned her not to touch her breasts on a sleepover. She laughed and said that she wouldn’t touch anyone’s breasts, for that matter, without their consent. She recalls, also, the time a friend said she wouldn’t want to introduce her to her fiancé for fear that she would “steal him away”.

If the distrust is something that bothers her at the micro level, at the macro, she’d like to see bisexuality get its due. “Just don’t brush it off as a phase someone goes through. Also, don’t consider us as opportunists as people sitting on the fence and having the best of both worlds. I’m sorry if it bothers you that we can like both sexes.”

Parthavee agrees. “I also want more people to know that bisexuality doesn’t mean hypersexuality. A person’s libido has nothing to do with their sexual orientation.” ☺



The author is an independent journalist, a feminist and chronic pain warrior, trashy-reality-TV-watcher (like you wouldn’t believe) and a reader of reads. She’s currently authoring a book on survivors of sexual violence.



Ok Boomer, let's be more sensitive about mental health

As members of the Baby Boomer generation (those born between 1946 to 1964) reach their golden years, most are turning on its head the meaning of what it means to be an older adult in 2020 **By Minnati Zaveri**

Retirement and rocking chairs are swiftly being replaced with remarriage (post a separation or divorce), frequent trips to the gym, more travel, more socialising, etc. much more than their parents ever indulged in. But while Baby Boomers are seemingly living the life, there is one aspect they tend to struggle with with reference to overall wellness — mental health.

Why is normalising ill mental health such an integral cog in the working of today's society?

Because talking about mental health saves lives. You see, only when one has sound mental health, can they really start to flourish. Allow me to expound on that.

Let's paint a picture, shall we?

Imagine a strapping young lad; let's call him Samar. Samar has taken time off work because of a flu. In the usual three to five days he recovers and resumes work, effortlessly and efficiently.

What his family and colleagues see is their dear one just out of the clasp of the pesky flu. What they don't see is

the constant insomnia, suicidal feelings and ideations, and the almost-zero appetite Samar has been battling quietly.

Samar is going through, what they call in the medical world, as Clinical Depression.

Sure, Samar is physically fit at the moment, but mentally he's already planned his suicide.

The above painted picture is akin to seeing yourself in several pictures but realising your smile never really reached your eyes.

How do we go about changing the narrative? Let's start by gently yet firmly including mental health as a parameter across different aspects of life. Take, for example, the hiring process in companies, large and small. A good percentage of HR Managers are Baby Boomers and it's important they start to read between the lines (even more so) of the many resumes they receive and one-on-one interviews they conduct.

Does the applicant seem unusually disturbed in how they describe themselves? This may indicate low self worth.

Today, I have modified my resume to include empathetic, patient, and insightful as strengths. Why? 'Empathetic', because that gives me the superpower to put myself in someone else's shoes, grasp their perspective and then tackle any personal or professional situation that may arise. 'Patient', because it allows me to take in all aspects of a situation before lending it my reaction. 'Insightful', because that makes clear that I'm not only observant

If you're a Baby Boomer and would like to manifest changes in the conversation about mental health, let's start with your children

and self-aware, but will also not shy away from using that insight into bettering my colleagues.

If you are a Baby Boomer and have honoured me by reaching the end of this article, allow me to take two more minutes of your time. If you'd like to manifest some changes with regards to the conversation of mental health, let's start with your own children. Here's a quick check list:

1. Start small

Son or daughter just come home from work? Ask them how their day was; did their horrid boss do anything special today to tick them off? How did they tackle that tricky situation at work today? And build from there.

2. Leave unhelpful statements at the door

The likes of: "It's all in your head", or "Anxiety? That's preposterous; you just need to calm down!", or "Just snap out of it".

Instead, employ helpful statements such as:

"I may not completely understand what you're going through, but I support you 100 per cent", or "What can I do to help? Would it be okay if I just sat here with you?"

3. Learn about mental health on your own

Take time out to do a little research and reading on what someone close to you might be going through. This way, you're better equipped at understanding the problem from a holistic view and are better able to help them. Plus, it saves them from explaining what they're going through.

It's really on us to encourage our near and dear ones to not only openly talk about their ill mental health, but also seek timely help. Hey, Baby Boomers, let's do this together. ☺



Zaveri is a senior content manager and writer by profession

and a strong mental health advocate by passion. She runs a mental health page, @greaterthan65, on Instagram

Style

INSIDE:

RAGHAVENDRA RATHORE
TREND REPORT S/S20



Monk Strap Shoes Are Here To Stay

The monk strap shoe is one of the most classic footwear styles of all time.

Elegant and fashionable, they can be slipped on and off, and are suited for the perfect gentleman. The finely crafted monk shoe adds a hint of formality to most outfits. Meanwhile, the straps add a tone of playfulness to any outfit. In today's world, a sleek pair of monk strap shoes is the mark of a fashion-forward yet traditionally-inclined modern man. When wearing an all-black suit, it's best to stick to a pair of black single monk strap shoes for a formal look. Other suit shades such as grey, navy, charcoal, and beige can be enhanced by a pair of brown double monk straps.

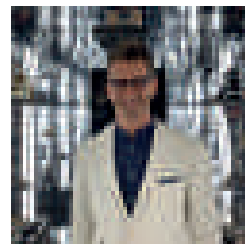


↑ COACH INTRODUCES SS'20 COLLECTION IN INDIA

Coach has introduced their Spring Summer 2020 collection in India. Inspired by authentic self-expression in New York City, the collection features 78 different archive-inspired bags (each for the brand's 78 years), in an '80s colour palette. The women's collection showcases a plethora of classic and chic accessories like lunchbox pouches, sandals and city sole sneakers along with graphic T-shirts, leather trench coats, pants, blouses, and skirts. The menswear collection features casual accessories like saddle and handle cross-body bags, colour-blocked backpacks, and printed belt bags. The ready-to-wear designs range from leather raincoats, jackets, and pants along with graphic sweatshirts and tank T-shirts.

↘ H&M GROUP PLANS TO BRING FASHION LABEL COS TO INDIA

H&M is planning to bring another fashion label, Cos, to India. The world's second largest fashion retailer said in the past that they were exploring possibilities for its other labels to tap India's growing fashion market after the success of the H&M brand. The group's other brands include Weekday, Monki and Araket. "They are planning to open two outlets each in Delhi and Mumbai starting next year," one of them told *The Economic Times*. "They are also exploring to bring a couple of their other fashion brands." Cos (Collection of Style) is a mid-market brand priced slightly higher than H&M with more than 290 outlets in 44 countries.



← YOOX NET-A-PORTER CEO STEPS DOWN

After 20 years, Federico Marchetti, the chairman and CEO of luxury e-tailer Yoox Net-a-Porter has stepped down. He founded Yoox in 2000, in the very early days of online fashion. "As planned, we are in the early stages of implementing a succession plan for the next CEO of Yoox Net-a-Porter, with me staying on as chairman to ensure a smooth transition and set the new CEO up for success," he said in a statement. In 2015, the site merged with Net-a-Porter, another luxury e-tail site that was purchased by luxury conglomerate Richemont in 2010.



← DIOR'S RENAUD DE LESQUEN NOW CEO OF GIVENCHY

Givenchy has announced the appointment of Renaud de Lesquen as its new president and Chief Executive Officer, according to international publications. He is currently the president and CEO of Dior America and will step into his new role at GIVENCHY from April 1. He succeeds LVMH veteran Phillips Fortunato, who guided the company through two very different creative directors, Riccardo Tisci and Clare Waight Keller. Commenting on the arrival of De Lesquen, Sidney Toledano, chairman, and CEO of LVMH Fashion Group said, "I had the opportunity to work very closely with him at Dior Couture and I am convinced that this appointment will lead the maison to further growth and success."

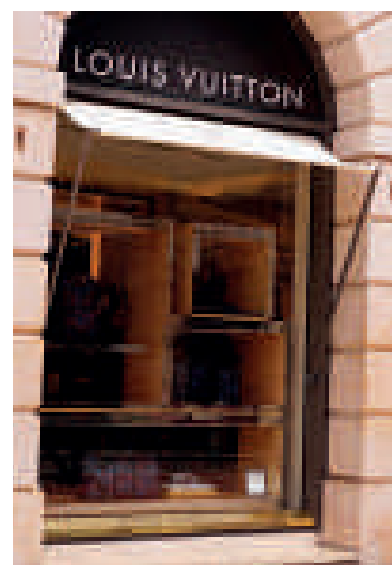
→ JEAN PAUL GAULTIER APPOINTS SACAI'S CHITOSE ABE FOR HAUTE COUTURE A/W20

After half a century in fashion industry, Jean Paul Gaultier retired after his Spring 2020 show in January. In March, the brand revealed that Gaultier would be handing over the creative reins to a different designer each season. Japanese designer Chitose Abe from Sacai is the first designer to participate in the new project and will showcase her collection for the house during the Haute Couture Week. "The idea of different designers interpreting one haute couture brand came to me in the '90s for a Parisian Haute Couture House who found itself without a designer," explains Jean Paul Gaultier. "I am pleased that this concept will become a reality now with Chitose Abe as the first guest designer. I admire her work, we have many things in common creatively and a similar vision. I am glad to give her the complete freedom."



↑ ROLEX ANNOUNCES MENTORS AND PROTÉGÉS FOR 2020-2021 ARTS INITIATIVE

Four of the most influential artists in their respective disciplines – Spike Lee (Film), Phyllida Lloyd (Theatre), Lin-Manuel Miranda (Open Category) and Carrie Mae Weems (Visual Arts) – have been named as mentors in the 2020-2021 Rolex Arts Initiative. These world-renowned innovators will spend the next two years in close collaboration with an outstanding young artist to exchange ideas and ensure that artistry is transmitted across generations and geographic boundaries. "We, at Rolex, have been privileged that, for nearly two decades, dozens of the most genre-defining artists have lent their time and expertise to the Arts Initiative," said Rebecca Irvin, Programme Director. "The four new mentors who join the initiative's community of creative greats have broken new ground in their respective fields and we look forward to the impact they will have on their protégés, as they pass on their devotion to their art in this cross-generational exchange."



↑ LUXURY BRANDS PROVIDE HELP DURING CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

With the global coronavirus outbreak, luxury brands like Louis Vuitton, Prada, Chanel, Dior among others are providing aid in their very own ways. The French fashion house Louis Vuitton's owner, LVMH, will use its perfume production lines to start making hand sanitiser. Italian fashion brand Prada has announced that co-CEOs Miuccia Prada and Patrizio Bertelli have donated ICU units to three different hospitals in Milan. While Chanel has announced production of face masks and gowns in its workshops in France, Dior plans to reopen a Baby Dior workshop factory in Redon to produce masks for healthcare personnel.

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TREND REPORT

Spring / Summer 2020

UNCOVERING THE TOP TRENDS SPOTTED
ON THE SPRING/SUMMER 2020 RUNWAYS

CURATED BY NEELANGANA VASUDEVA

Dip Dye

The traditional dip dye technique is back this season. It's not quite grown up, but it's definitely slicker and is seen in some really interesting patterns and silhouettes

DIOR HOMME

ERMEGENILDO ZEGNA

BURBERRY

RALPH LAUREN



SALVATORE FERRAGAMO

LOUIS VUITTON

HACKETT LONDON

GUCCI

TOM FORD

PAUL SMITH

DIOR HOMME

Rosy Tinge

An abundance of fuchsia, rose, and neon pink made a mark on the Spring/Summer 2020 runway, breaking all gender boundaries. Is pink the new black? Well, not sure about that, but it's definitely a colour that needs a place in your closet

BURBERRY



Get Some Clarity

A variety of translucent pieces have been spotted on the runway this season. It's a great way to keep yourself mostly covered but stay cool in the summer heat

DIOR HOMME



CANALI



LOUIS VUITTON





TODS

ERMENEGILDO ZEGNA

PAUL SMITH

SALVATORE FERRAGAMO

TOM FORD

Be A Rebel

Seen on jackets, trousers and also shirts, leather seems to have left the colder climate to make its debut at the SS20 runway. It's definitely not leather weather, but this trend seems to be a designer favourite this season

Twin Sets

Coordinated uppers and bottoms in artsy patterns and vibrant summer prints seem to be the coolest combination in men's fashion this season. It's perfect for men who have trouble putting a look together

ERMENEGILDO ZEGNA

GUCCI

LOUIS VUITTON

DIOR HOMME



White Out

An all-white look might be a little too bold to step out in, but guess what? This is the time to embrace it

CANALI

CORNELIANI

DIOR HOMME

LOUIS VUITTON

Z ZEGNA

TREND REPORT

Spring / Summer 2020

IT'S TIME FOR A RECAP. THESE ARE
THE TRENDS FROM SOME OF OUR
FAVOURITE BRANDS THAT YOU SHOULD
BE LOOKING OUT FOR IN 2020

SCOTCH & SODA

MARKS & SPENCER



ETRO AVAILABLE AT
THE COLLECTIVE



AMERICAN EAGLE



TOMMY HILFIGER



SELECTED HOMME



WRANGLER



TOMMY HILFIGER



Tropicool

Get ready for palm
trees, bright patterns
and colourful florals,
the tropical fashion
trend is here for the
new season



DIESEL



SELECTED HOMME



ETRO AVAILABLE AT
THE COLLECTIVE

Pocketed Uppers

Part of a wider utilitarian trend, pocketed uppers clearly are a thing this season. The key pieces? Safari jackets, denim overlays and shirts



CELIO



DIESEL

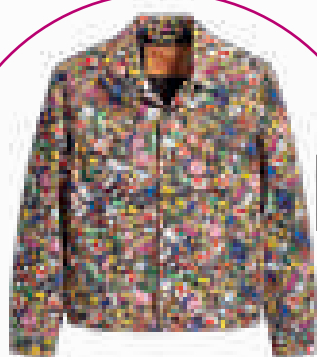
TOMMY HILFIGER

Cartoons All The Way

Just face it, your favourite cartoon characters from the 90's are fashionable now. It's one of the most unexpectedly cool trends for spring summer 2020. If you are looking for some fun this season, this is the trend to embrace



TOMMY HILFIGER



LEVI'S



LEVI'S



LEVI'S



JACK & JONES

Jean Story

The jean reign is back with a bang yet again this season with some of the coolest statement pieces that are hard to miss

TOMMY HILFINGER

LEE COOPER

WRANGLER

NUMERO UNO

HACKETT LONDON

RALPH LAUREN

DIESEL

DIESEL



NUMERO UNO



ZODI



UNITED COLORS OF BENETTON

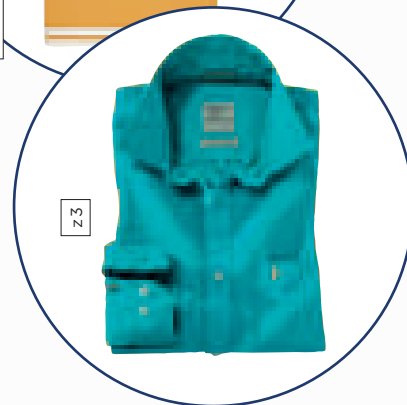
WRANGLER

Very, Very Bright

As is typical for spring summer trends, punchy solids and bright pairings emerge as a hero yet again. It's time to splash your wardrobe with the liveliest of tones. Basically, the brighter and more outlandish the colour combo, the better



FRED PERRY



Z3



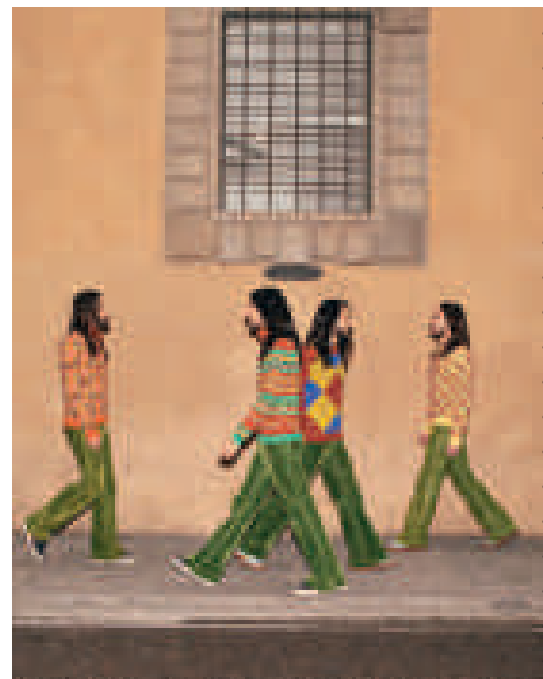
CELIO



TOMMY HILFIGER



STYLE / THE BRAND



Bringing Back The Sneaker

Gucci takes the sneaker game a notch higher by bringing back one of the most suave pieces from their archives

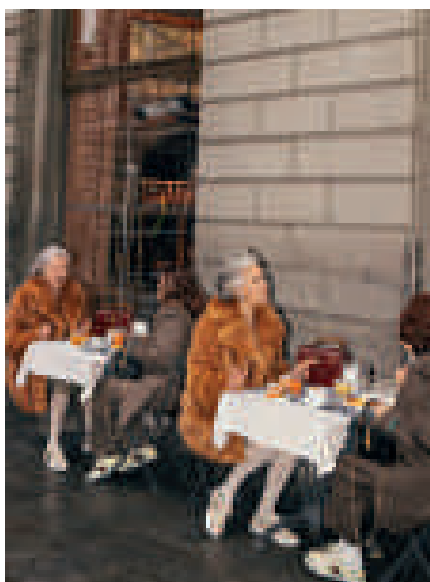
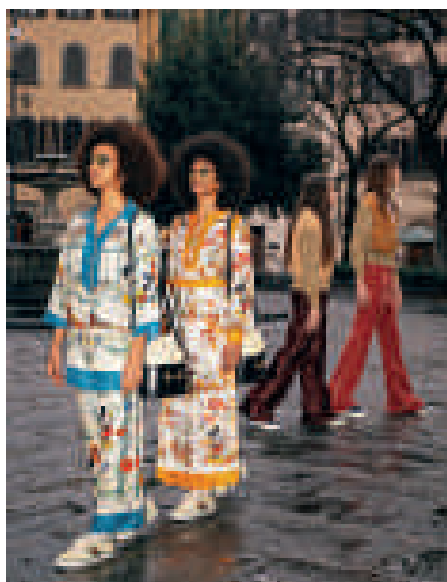
A sneaker is not just a shoe, a sneaker is a statement. The trend around sneakers has given a lot of brands a run for their money, and as tastes evolve, so are the collections that cater to the millennials today. Classics are high in demand, and retro is the new cool. From patterns to the comfort that original detailing had, everyone wants a taste of vintage, in keeping with modern twists to fashion.

Recalling their original retro sneaker from the archives, Gucci has launched the Gucci Tennis 1977 sneaker, updated to suit the needs of the modern wearer. With different, distinctive prints that uphold the heritage but at the same time, add an eclectic style, the collection has seven styles, displaying a sense of versatility. For those who want the classic and safe approach at a relatively informal outing, opt for the light blue sneakers with the white GG print. Looking for a pair that stands out for being fun? Go for the brown ones with tiny Mickey Mouse prints. For those who prefer their footwear collection to be more edgy, the printed sneakers in cotton piquet would be the absolute right choice.

Tick the search of a good summer shoe off your summer essential checklist, because be it vintage, sporty, or modern, Gucci's got it all. ☺



Recalling their original retro sneaker from the archives, Gucci has launched the Gucci Tennis 1977 sneaker, updated to suit the needs of the modern wearer.





STYLE / THE DESIGNER

Emperor Of Luxuries

If there's one quality that designer Raghavendra Rathore is synonymous with, it's class, all the way. In a conversation about going from womenswear to menswear, the designer explains why his brand always stuck to its signature style and what essentially defines his aesthetic – a bespoke way of life

By Samreen Tungekar

Almost 26 years ago, a small studio in a house started tailoring bandhgala jackets. No one knew back then that this formal silhouette will become an important part of what India brings to the fashion platforms across the world. This was fashion designer Raghavendra Rathore's small start of the Jodhpur bandhgala, which 26 years later, stands to be one of the most universally appealing suits in global fashion.

Rathore, who has worked at Oscar de la Renta and Donna Karan before launching his label, is one of the most respectable names in luxury and bespoke menswear. A bandhgala, as much as it might be readily available in the market, is all about the fit and the customisation, and Rathore has been instrumental in bringing it to the country's notice. Celebrities like Saif Ali Khan (and his little one) have worn the designer's outfits among others. In 2018, the designer launched a collaboration with Italian menswear label Ermenegildo Zegna and Reliance Brands Ltd (RBL).

Going places, yet retaining his classics, is a path Rathore has smoothly taken. He gives an insight on his ideas and his journey, and vouches for slow fashion.

You completed 25 years in the fashion industry last year, and over time, the menswear aesthetic has gone through a complete change. How has your design aesthetic evolved in keeping with the times?

Twenty-five years ago, it wasn't elementary to imagine that the world is going to rush to a sustainable direction, one that is subtle, slow pace, relies significantly on reusability and encourages going back to nature. In

the 80s, this was quite the opposite and in the 90s, opulence ruled. So, it would be incorrect to say that one had the foresight to see the prominent paradigms shift. But as a designer, what I found amusing was localisation. Honing on skills, crafts and heritage of our past did catch my attention, and I started to work on modifying the ancient dye of design, to readapt it to the modern consumer, with a contemporary edge. In other words, my journey has not only been my story, but also a story of the evolution of society's love for supporting our rich heritage and everything that is customised.

You are the reason why the bandhgala has become known as a quintessential Indian silhouette. What about the bandhgala makes it so special?

Every brand communicates an individual message to the people that follow it and takes pride in sharing the vision through its products. The bandhgala's story is that of permanence, one that is present regardless of the perils of the changing fashion world, with its tenacity and global appeal. And that's the brand story of Raghavendra Rathore Jodhpur too. It's classic.

As a designer, you are known for your concentration on the design than on the overall 'show' of an outfit. How important is it to focus on intricacies to enhance the overall look of a costume?

In menswear, especially today, subtlety is key. Also, the customer is changing, and so does the details of the product, in keeping with the customer's access to trend information on the screen of a mobile. As a



designer, your product has to be relevant, especially in luxury products. Every detail connects to create the experience that a modern shopper considers to be the reason why they are engaging with the product.

What's the most inspirational thing about being a designer from India, with so much heritage and history to work with?

The 1,200 years of Indian legacy & culture is embedded in our design code. What sets us apart from global brands is the unique bandwidth of origins we have. Festivals, rituals and the cultural diversity of India preserves a special place on a global stage for homegrown brands when they are exposed internationally. For brands that are catering to the vast demand in India, the same aesthetics work beautifully to create our ecosystem of fashion, which is hardly governed by what trends are accessible on the international runways. What I'd like to see change in the Indian fashion scene, though, would be more high streets, retail environments, both brick-and-mortar, as well as online.

What are the biggest roadblocks you've faced as a designer?

Every challenge is an experience for achieving new standards for excellence. On an average, most brands take about 25 to 30 years to be well accepted socially, and become known for something that they excel in. The most challenging thing for most designers is to be able to put the finger on what the customer wants from you. The challenges of understanding consumer preferences takes time and that's generally the root of complex hurdles most designer brands go through.

Do you think Indian silhouettes have kept up with the changing times and evolving aesthetics?

Yes. The world has become seamless, and the impact of an idea in one corner of the globe impacts across. Designers across the globe thrive on the inspiration that the community conjures up, culturally, socially and other fashion aesthetics. In fact, the relevance of Indian design aesthetics has profound impact on global fashion.

According to you, what is the most advantageous point of designing menswear today, when there's a bigger market for menswear? And what's the most disadvantageous point?

Well, we started as a womenswear brand but took a U-turn a decade ago,

pre-empting and foreseeing the impact of the menswear on the India retail market. With confidence, I can say that it was the right decision, even though the perils are not being as cyclic, broad-based product-wise, as womenswear.

A-listers from Bollywood swear by your designs. Even little Taimur Ali Khan has worn a RR outfit. As a country that tends to follow trends set by celebrities, what's your take on the relationship between Bollywood and fashion in India?

Different segments cater to a diverse audience. In the overall luxury segment, the impact of Bollywood is minor. Still, as you move down the chain, there is no doubt that India thrives on inspiration from the silver screen. So our attempt in all the projects that we have done with Bollywood is to inspire classic clothing on the big picture so that it has an impact on people in the country. The brand has oscillated its design sensibilities, basis stories, the plot and the character sketch that the directors work with the team on. It's an interesting connect.

Despite what might have changed, you've stayed true to your signature style. How did you do that and why?

My brand, Raghavendra Rathore Jodhpur, is synonymous with the look that is inspired by the bandhgala suit, so we keep away from what would not only confuse the customer but also would give the brand a meaningless existence. It's simple, as a designer and as a brand, the attempt is and will be to provide the most comfortable bespoke experience in creating a world-class wardrobe that is suitable for everyone in any geography.



What's it like to be one of the most prominent designers at a time when lines between what's menswear and what's womenswear are blurring, making fashion more accessible and more of a personal choice?

The key to anything today is customisation, that's what the customer takes inspiration from. Both menswear and womenswear are heading into a paradigm that is dictated by the customer. Convenience, comfort, semi-trendy are the key words. People from the luxury segment would prefer to wear clothes that are personalised for their character, but for people at the bottom of the pyramid, fast fashion still rules. There's more possibility of blurring the lines in the fast fashion sense, the blurring is in fact very high, but I don't feel that's the case for the people who are at the top of the pyramid, in that sense.

A buzzword the fashion industry is swearing by, is sustainability. How sustainable do you think the Indian fashion industry is at present, and is sustainability more than just a buzzword?

We need to understand that responsible fashion is the need of the hour. And everyone plays a part in it. For our part, as a brand we believe in staying away from synthetic and fast fashion and keeping the design aesthetic as ethical and meaningful as possible. The idea is to design and manufacture bespoke clothes in a way that benefits weavers and artisans without impacting the climate and environment. ☺

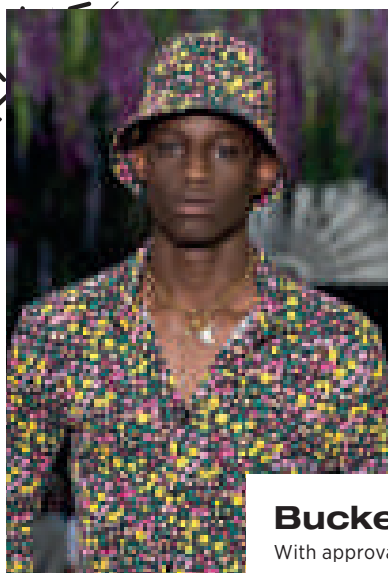
In the overall luxury segment, the impact of Bollywood is minor. But as you move down the chain, there is no doubt that India thrives on inspiration from the silver screen



Beachwear Essentials For The Season

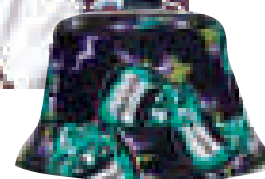
If your plan is to sit on the pristine beaches and sip pina colodas, might as well do it with stylish clothing and accessories straight off the runways. We have picked a few pieces that you might like for your upcoming coastal adventure

By Sanika Achrekar



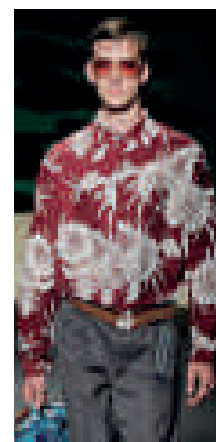
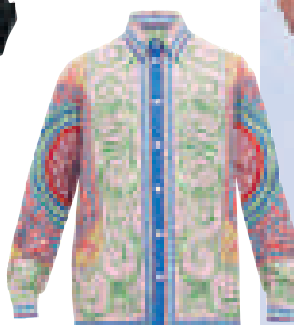
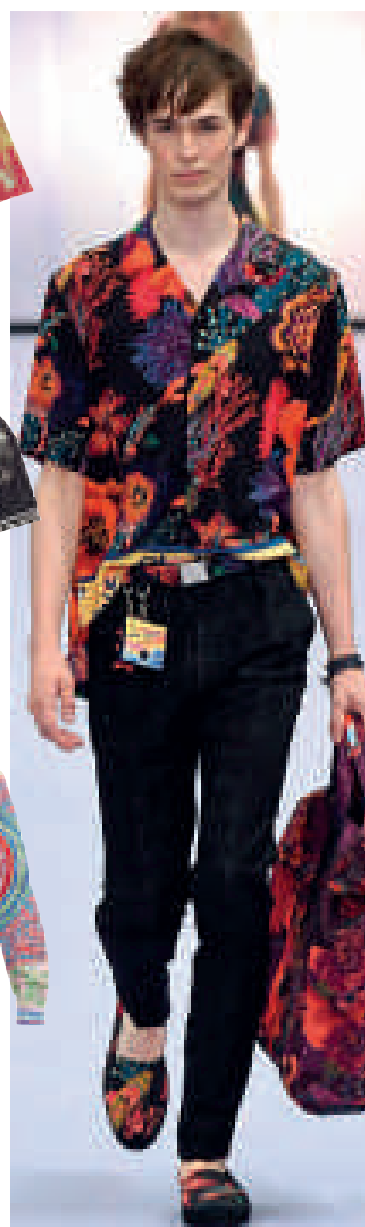
Bucket hats

With approval from all aspects of runways, bucket hats are the hottest trend for summer 2020. Beachwear clothing are the bucket hat's best friend. The key is to pair it with plain tees and chinos with canvas sneakers, making it a simple yet relaxed vacation outfit. If you're looking to keep things minimal, a plain colour block hat is the way to go but if you're trying to make a statement, experiment with some patterns.



Printed shirts

When we say printed shirts, it ranges from old-school Hawaiian shirts or new baroque-printed ones. Beachwear shirts tend to be more colourful and picking the right shirt along with correct companions is the tricky part. The best way to make a printed shirt pop is to frame it with comparatively low-key pieces.



Weekender bags

A weekender bag, or as some like to call them, leather duffle bag, is an essential item every man should own, as it serves the purpose and looks good at the same time. The importance of the right bag for summer travel can't be overstated. You are going to be at the beach and should need something sharp and durable with the right amount of spacing for a few days worth of clothing.





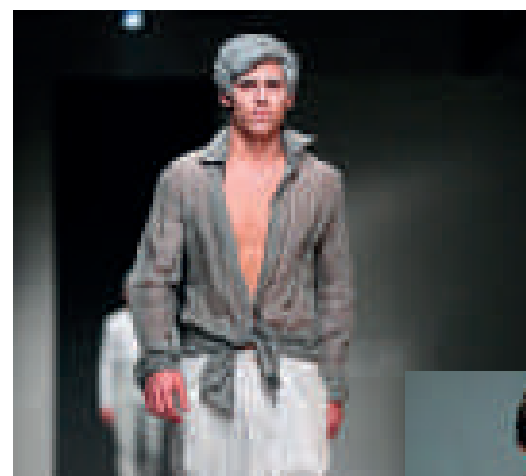
Go short

Is it even a beach party without neatly tailored shorts? Investing in the right swim shorts will double up your everyday wardrobe. A perfect pair of shorts that's cut slim and ends a couple of inches above the knees can be easily paired with Cuban-collared shirts or even a simple plain white T-shirt. This summer, make chino shorts your best friend and pair them with loose cardigans, linen blazers and striped shirts. Opt for summer colours like sand, navy, pink or denim blue.



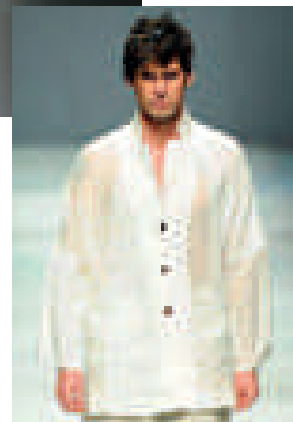
Espadrilles

Bored of the same old flip-flops? Go for the classic espadrilles this time on the white sands. A combination of shoe and sandal, espadrilles pose an ideal choice for a holiday footwear. Solid colours like white and navy are very versatile but don't be afraid to mix it up with a fun pattern or some bolder colours.



All Linen

When it comes to staying cool by the beach or pool, linen is the fabric to be embraced in this heat. A linen suit is an ideal item for an evening pool party or a summer wedding. In a shade of tan, a simple two-piece allows you to beat the heat and still look smart, and a linen shirt can be worn with basically anything for a laidback appeal.

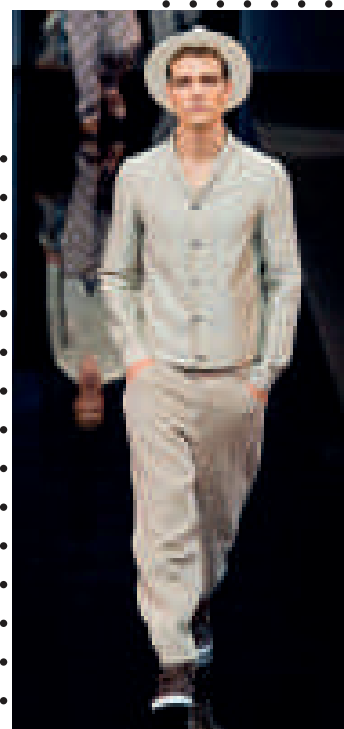


Sunglasses

It goes without saying that sunglasses are a must-have item on your beach vacay list. This perfect accessory is going to add an extra dose of style while protecting eyes from sun rays. In terms of style, bold colours and geometric shapes are trending, while classic shapes and patterns from Rayban are favourites for a reason.



Whether you're at the pool or beach or just out and about, it's important to wear sunscreen at all times.



RENT *is the* NEW BUY

From weddings to important occasions, here are startups that have made it possible to rent clothes, and changed the way we shop **By Sanika Achrekar**



THE CLOTHING RENTAL

Founded by Shilpa Bhatia



Why rental clothing?

It makes economical, environmental and practical sense. When your need is temporary, why buy something permanent.

Where and how did it start?

We started out in late 2005. Our founder, Shilpa Bhatia was a reputable stylist for many TV commercials and films. Often, the shoots would require a certain outfit for a period of 2-3 days but soon after, they didn't need it. While the director wanted high-priced aesthetic, the producer was always pulling the budgets down. That led us to invest in a small inventory of popularly needed merchandise, primarily for the media industry. However, over time, even regular consumers started finding value in our concept.

How does the platform work?

It's fairly simple, you need to come in with your event concept and date. For example, you have a corporate interview with an MNC on March 25, so you ideally approach us in time for us to help. Tell our team about your size and preference (colour, style or fit). You can either come in person and try the outfit or work with our team over email or phone, or order online.

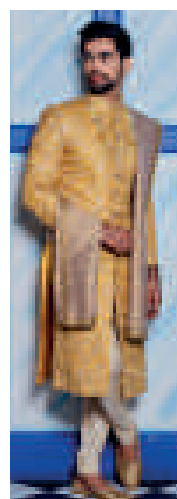
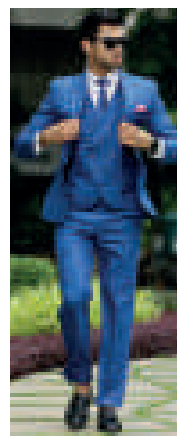
What is the major consumption difference between men and women?

Women like to try multiple styles and visit multiple stores and enjoy the shopping experience. Comparatively, men are willing to pay a higher price for convenience. They hate going to multiple stores or even trying multiple outfits, they want it simple and easy, and they would gladly pay delivery and pickup fee if it reduces their travel time. They are more trusting as online shoppers.



FLYROBE

Founded by Aanchal Saini



How did it start?

The business idea was born when we observed that younger generations wanted a new outfit every time they went out. They were bored of repeating the same outfits, it was all about posing for pictures in one outfit and never wearing it again.

How does it work?

Earlier, we were only digitally present, but we realised people needed to try out clothing for big events, like their wedding or their best friends' weddings, especially when it's expensive clothing. So we built stores where you can try outfits. You can also place an order on the app or the website by giving your body measurements. Later, it's altered and delivered to your house. You have an option of renting it for the period of four to eight days.

Is the consumption driven by social media?

Yes, it is driven by social media because that is where people learn about it and start using the platform. For example, you use Uber not because you cannot afford a car, it's just the way the world is moving. Women want similar outfits as celebrities. So, they are much more driven by social media, whereas, the percentage of men is comparatively less driven by social media.

What is the consumption difference between men and women?

55 per cent revenue comes from renting menswear as they are adaptive. Also, men are not emotionally attached to their clothing. For menswear, we have three categories: sherwanis, tuxedo suits and Indo-western. Only in the Indo-western category, we feel there's a constant variety of colours like pinks, yellow and orange.

What was your investment when you started?

When we started, there was no one to look up to. We put in about 2 crores and in terms of turnover, we are fine. But when it comes to return on investment, we are still burning money. However, we're also the biggest in profitability.





STAGE 3

Founded by **Sabena Puri, Sanchit Baweja and Rina Dhaka**



Why rental clothing?

India is embracing the sharing economy across sectors with the emergence of platforms like Uber, Netflix and AirBnB. Our idea is to create a sharing economy for fashion consumption that enables people to experiment with fashion without having to worry about the commitments of a piece.



Where and how did you start?

Stage3 was launched in 2015 with a mission to change the way fashion is consumed in India. We want to create a different kind of energy around fashion by making it fun, accessible and available to everyone. Having a board that consists of industry leaders like Gautam Kalra, Arjun Sawhney, Amaira Shroff and having Rina as a co-founder helped in getting designers on board. With time, we've established a name for ourselves and are now working with most designers on a revenue share basis.

What is the return on investment?

We have been growing exponentially since inception. In the last Financial Year-Over-Year growth, we saw a four times increase in revenue and a similar increase in our customer base. We have over 70K signed up users and about 50 per cent of them are transacting customers who have contributed close to 40K transactions till date.

How does the platform work?

From the customer's perspective, a customer can choose an outfit from our website for the occasion date they want it for. If they prefer, we have a team of professional stylists who can also help them put a look together that's perfect for the occasion they're looking for.

What is the major consumption difference between men and women?

The modern Indian millennial man is very fashion conscious, and is willing to spend on experiences. We have observed that men, compared to women, are even more open to the idea of renting, given that occasion wear for them has higher social obsolescence. According to our data, men are more style and fit conscious, relative to designer labels.



CANDID KNOTS

Founded by **Shweta Poddar**

How did it start?

During my cousin's wedding, I spent a minimum sum of ₹ 10-20,000 on my outfits and I would not want to wear it again. I thought how many people would not be repeating the same dresses again, and we did not get anyone who would wear it more than three times. That's when I thought this is an idea to pursue.

How does your platform work?

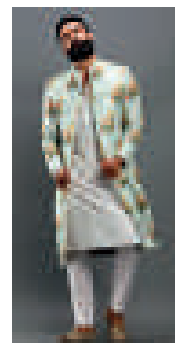
We're based in Bengaluru and we only do menswear at present. We have both online and offline options. The entire collection is listed online. You can either place an order online and we deliver a day in advance to the event. Even if it is a one-day booking, the tentative date is one date before the event. We usually send our customers two to three sizes. The customer tries them on, picks the best fit and returns the other pieces.

What is the consumer behaviour pattern you've observed?

We had started off with both men and women, but we saw more traction with men. We get about 50 orders a day. If a city like Bengaluru has such a huge response, cities like Delhi and Mumbai would be even better.

What is the future of rental?

It is going to be huge as people have started adapting to the system. The traditional way of owning things was the last generation, now they are mainly interested in saving the same money for vacations.



ASK THE EXPERT

Fashion and wellness conundrums, deciphered and explained by celebrity stylist Isha Bhansali



► **How can I wear animal print at the beach without looking tacky?**

When you do animal prints, you need to be minimal with your entire look. If you're doing a T-shirt in animal print, make sure the rest of your look is solid. Same goes for a button-down shirt. Do it with a tee inside. Additionally, instead of opting for a fiery animal print, try to opt for the same print in other colours — like monochrome or pastels.

► **What colours should I opt for an evening beach party?**

The best thing about any kind of beach



party is that you can embrace all colours and effortlessly get away with it. Even if it's a multi-coloured shirt. Whether they're pastels or jewel tones, colour is not a problem when it comes to looking suave at a beach party. Just ensure you don't overdo it in one look.

► **I don't like to wear flip-flops to the beach. What other options do I have?**

If flip-flops aren't your scene, then strappy sandals could also be another option. Just make sure your feet are well-manicured. If you prefer closed shoes then espadrilles are the best. They're



easy breezy in usually canvas or linen, and soled with cork so they're comfortable as well. You can also choose some fun colours in them.

► **What are the best brands to buy espadrilles for men in India?**

Toms is the most popular brand for espadrilles for men. Don't know if they have a standalone store in India but they're definitely available online on all online Indian fashion giants. Benetton and Vans also has a range of espadrilles. You'll also find some similar styles at Vans that may not be exactly espadrilles, but slip-ons without laces, which can be perfect for the beach. There's also a brand called Native — they have standalone stores and they have a great range of beachwear. They'll also have a collection in rubber,

which are comfortable to get into and move about, and also come in fun colours.

► **Is the baker boy cap a suitable option for resortwear?**

Well, usually a baker boy cap gives a vintage feel and it's usually teamed with tweed. But if you want to take it for a beach vacay or cruise, then why not? Just make sure it's not in wool or tweed and it's mainly in cotton, and in a fun colour.



► **I want to try out silk robes on my vacation. Is it a good option or is it too weird?**

A silk robe over your swimming trunks is not weird at all. Just make sure you buy a fun printed robe, unlined and breezy robe when you shop for it, and not one that's meant to be worn as elegant nightwear over your PJs.



Taking The Vegan Route

Once known as a short-lived fad, veganism is now a mainstream concept in fashion. By inventing plant-based fibres and other eco-friendly materials, brands are establishing the future of fashion. Here are six such brands and their journey down the vegan path

By Sanika Achrekar



←ARTURE

Founder: Shivani Patel

What: Arture is a sustainable and vegan accessories brand specialising in wallets and accessories that use cork fabric as an alternative to the leather.

Why did you feel the need to start a vegan brand?

I wanted to start a sustainable brand, and that meant it needed to be cruelty free but also environmentally conscious.

What were the challenges you faced?

Getting consumers to understand what cork is, how it's different. Since it's a material that people haven't been exposed to in this form, they often assume it may be hard or brittle, whereas it's very soft.

What's the difference between the buying patterns of men today versus five years ago?

In the past, we often saw women buy men's wallets as gifts to men. However, now we see a larger number of men buying the wallets themselves. They're also asking more questions and trying to understand the products better.

→MALAI

Co-founders: Zuzana Gombosova and Susmith CS

What: Malai specialises in creating and developing bio-based composite that looks and feels like leather. The final product resembles the aesthetic and functionality of leather.

Why did you feel the need to start a vegan brand?

We began with an idea to explore the potential of one material — Bacterial Cellulose — that happens to be vegan. Only over time, we decided to keep the vegan credentials of our materials.

What were the challenges you faced?

Firstly, we have never run a business before. Secondly, we were introducing a completely new material to the world, a lot of education and explanation had to be given from our side to familiarise the public



with what we do. And then, of course, the funding is a never-ending search.

What's the difference between the buying patterns of men today versus five years ago?

We observed that millennial men prefer to buy products that they know more about in terms of origin, whether they were ethically made and what the brand stands for. In the older generation, not much has changed in terms of consumer behaviour.





↓ MONK STORY

Co-founders: Abhinandan Jain and Nilesh Jain

What: Monk Story makes shoes from synthetic leather that retain their form and are usually very durable.

Why did you feel the need to start a vegan brand?

In a world full of cruelty and a nation of not-so-fashionable men, we started to think about starting a vegan footwear brand. While researching, we figured out there are no good vegan footwear brands across the nation. During the research, we saw two gaps in the market, the first being the lack of a stylish vegan market and the second being no affordable designer footwear brand. So we just took the step to make the world a stylish place.

What were the challenges you faced?

Vegan fabrics were a major challenge. Three years ago, leather alternatives were not durable. But not all. Secondly, making the audience believe that vegan leather is durable and stylish was a major task. Earlier, vegan brands always positioned themselves as an alternative to leather. But vegan products are not an alternative. They should be the first choice.

What's the difference between the buying patterns of men today versus five years ago?

Five years back, men didn't have many options. In the past two to three years, we have seen that men are excited to try unique products. Instead of getting one shoe at a higher price and running those shoes for years and years, men now prefer having four to five shoes for different outfits and different occasions.

↑ AULIVE

Co-founders: Wamika Shekhawat & Yashraj V. Rathor

What: Every Aulive product is made from superior vegan leather. In their 2019 collection, they introduced bags made with pineapple leaf fibres.

Why did you feel the need to start a vegan brand?

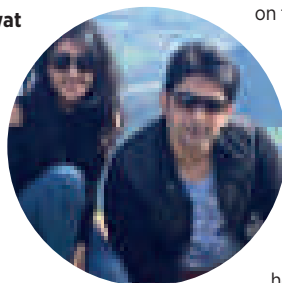
I came across a YouTube video showing animals being skinned alive for their fur. It was enough to give up leather and fur in fashion. However, I've always loved how leather looks and the elegance that comes with leather accessories. In 2016, I got the idea to start my own brand, and I began looking for quality alternatives. Our Italian artificial leather is one of the closest alternatives in terms of quality and feel.

What were the challenges you faced?

I wouldn't call it a challenge, but an integral part of the movement of ethical and fair brands is creating awareness. Consumers are not aware of quality alternatives in the market. It's also a matter of building trust since plant-based leather alternatives are a new entry.

What's the difference between the buying patterns of men today versus five years ago?

Most men have begun questioning brands



on their ethical practices.

Lately, we have been coming across a lot of well-researched men who want to purchase products that have a genuine ethical interest in making a change. There is a positive shift towards small homegrown brands. Men desire quality and they would rather buy only one thing, but that one thing should be worth the quality and price.





↓ A BIG INDIAN STORY

Founder: Anuradha Alurkar



What: A Big Indian Story is the first Indian brand to experiment with pineapple fabric, Pinatex, and believes in preserving the rich heritage of India.

Why did you feel the need to start a vegan brand?

Over one billion animals are killed every year for leather. There is a need for creating cruelty-free, sustainable alternatives to leather. Consumers are increasingly making conscious choices. The vegan movement is growing and we wanted to be the first movers in this space.

What were the challenges you faced?

We faced challenges relating to import duties and customs processes. We were the first Indian brand to import Pinatex. The customs team held it up for days and they cut up a huge piece of it for so-called lab testing, although it came with lab test papers and all adequate documents.

What's the difference between the buying patterns of men today versus five years ago?

Today, men are far more aware of fashion trends and conscious about the brands they choose, and going vegan is picking up. Also, there are more men shopping online and are open to trying out new brands.

↑ SAUVAIT

Founder: Dhruv Sanghvi

What: Sauvait offers cruelty-free and handcrafted footwear with customisation as an added service.

Why did you feel the need to start a vegan brand?

I started out with the sole intention of converting users of leather products to cruelty-free material. Our brand redefines luxury by using sustainable materials like hemp, vegan leather, and coconut leather, and recycled polyester.

What were the challenges you faced?

We faced a lot of challenges in finding the right manufacturers and sourcing premium vegan leather. Another challenge was dealing with people who had and still have the impression of faux-leather being of bad quality and not durable, which isn't true.



What's the difference between the buying patterns of men today versus five years ago?

The new wave of retail for men is all about creating neurologically connecting experiences with customers, personalisation, easy accessibility of the product at your doorstep. I feel men are embracing individuality more, which is why we see them experimenting nowadays, and not sticking to the mainstream footwear designs.



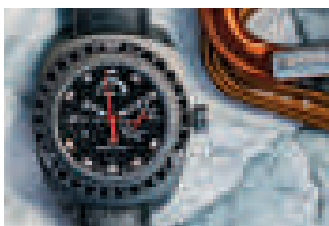


FAVRE-LEUBA PROUDLY CELEBRATES 283 YEARS OF WATCHMAKING LEGACY

Since its inception in 1737, Swiss watchmaker Favre-Leuba has been crafting timepieces that showcase their Swiss engineering brilliance while proudly promoting Swiss mountaineering. 283 years later, they are still proudly on that same legendary path. Favre-Leuba's pioneering philosophy has transcended eras and generations with watches that carry the same values and principles they were built on. To celebrate their anniversary this year, Favre-Leuba celebrated two of its most prolific periods in its long history: 1960s — the era of exploration and new beginnings, and 2010-2020s — the time of high-tech discoveries, the times in history that Favre-Leuba engineering was at the forefront.

In 1962, Favre-Leuba achieved a technological milestone with the Bivouac when it became the first mechanical wristwatch with an inbuilt altimeter (measuring up to 3,000 meters) and barometer. Half a century later, in 2017, another record was broken by Favre-Leuba when they created another engineering marvel with the return of the legendary timepiece — the Raider Bivouac 9000. The watch can measure altitude all the way up to 9,000 meters, being the only wrist timekeeper to mechanically do so. Nicolas Hojac, one of the fastest modern speed-climbers, and Ueli Bühler, legendary Swiss mountaineer and mountain guide, set out on a mission to test both watches in the Swiss Alps. Bühler took to the mountains with the original Bivouac on his wrist, while Hojac wore his new-era Raider Bivouac 9000.

To support athletes in this passion (but also to make it safer) was Favre-Leuba's goal all along. Favre-Leuba has always been committed to their promise of bringing out the best of Swiss engineering and technology and marrying it in one timepiece, year after another, with an aim to keep that going.



BLANCPAIN ANNOUNCES THEIR PARTNERSHIP WITH THE MICHELIN GUIDE

Blancpain has shared a successful relationship with the world of haute cuisine for more than 30 years now. Blancpain timepieces have adorned the wrists of some of the world's most skilled and famous chefs, in addition to its roles as official timekeeper of renowned culinary contests and reviewer of the world's finest restaurants in its corporate magazine *Lettres du Brassus*.

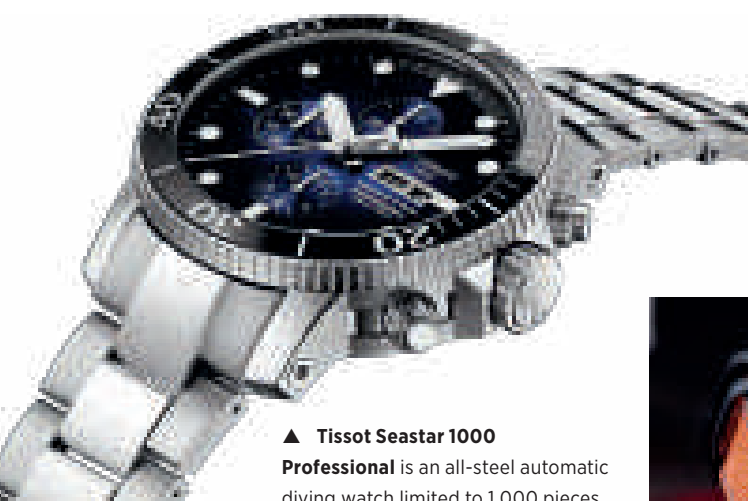
Blancpain intends to reinforce that bond with its latest collaboration with the Michelin Guide. This new long-term and wide-ranging partnership is assured to make its mark on the international gastronomic scene when the two giants work together to promote their touchstones of excellence, passion and expertise. Blancpain's luxury watchmaking and haute cuisine both abide by strict discipline and intricate precision paired along with a subtle blend of tradition and creativity. As a faithful curator of time for almost three centuries, Blancpain will accompany the Michelin guide in its quest to seek out the most exceptional talents around the world.



TISSOT INDIA SHOWCASES 2020 COLLECTION

The brand launched its new collection at a three-day summit and show in Chandigarh in February this year

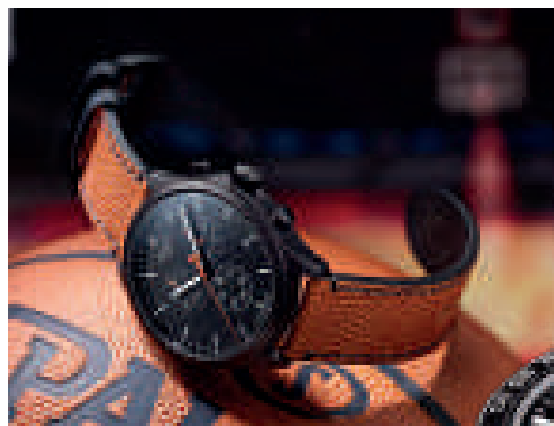
Tissot India showcased its new range of watches for 2020 at a glittering three-day show at the luxurious The Oberoi Sukhvilas Spa Resort in Chandigarh. The crème de la crème of the watch industry, horology experts and cognoscenti from across India were there to see the collection. Tissot also highlighted its new retail concept with illustrative graphics, unique customer experiences, and striking brand ambassador visuals. Since it was the Valentine's Day week, there was a special display of the T-Wave watch amidst a rosy pink floral setting. Here are some of the highlights from the show:



▲ **Tissot Seastar 1000 Professional** is an all-steel automatic diving watch limited to 1,000 pieces. It resists a magnetic field of 4,800 A/m and lateral impacts, including on its crowns and push-buttons.



▼ **Tissot Heritage Porto** comes in a slender and domed tonneau-shape case that takes its inspiration from Art Nouveau, with both retro and sophisticated lines.



▲ **Tissot Chrono XL NBA Collector** celebrates Tissot's partnership with NBA. It comes with an NBA logo in special box that holds interchangeable mineral crystal caseback inserts.



▼ **Tissot T-My Lady** comes in five styles, all in a 29 mm steel case with an 18K solid gold burnished bezel.

▲ **Tissot Heritage Navigator Chrono Auto 1973** celebrates Tissot's partnership with Kessel Classics vintage car racing team, and comes in a 43mm case.



▲ **Tissot T-Wave Bicolour** comes in a stainless steel case with a rose gold PVD trim, with its dial in white iridescent mother-of-pearl.



▲ **Tissot SuperSport Chrono** comes in eight references in an imposing 45.5 mm steel case, in colour options ranging from black to rose gold via PVD technology.

THE SUBTLE BRILLIANCE OF IRRFAN KHAN

*Textbook definitions of acting cannot describe his talent.
When we see him on screen, we don't realise where
acting begins and living-the-character ends*

By Maithili Rao

What a let-down that our wait for Irrfan Khan's return was limited to one day of screen time. *Angrezi Medium's* trailer left us chorusing *ye dil maange more*, especially when Khan appealed to his audience to wait for him. And we waited for him, in anticipation of his unique brand of seamless spontaneity. Like a new gourmet dish from a masterchef, a new bouquet from a designer perfumier, a new painting from a well-known atelier. Do all these expectations make Khan sound like a well-rehearsed actor performing to a preconceived notion of perfection?

Khan's impact is far from such textbook definitions of acting. When we see him on screen, we don't realise where acting begins and living-the-character ends. There is such beguiling ease in his presence, nothing contrived or worked hard at. If he follows method acting, you don't see the nuts, bolts and rivets of the craft. He is just Champak, the doting small-time *mithai wala* who will do anything for his daughter; Raj Batra, relocating from an assured status in Chandni Chowk to snooty south Delhi, again for his little daughter, in *Hindi Medium*. In the process, he redefines fatherhood that radiates undemanding, unconditional love for a daughter. Whether by design or accident, both films make the father-daughter bond central, defying patriarchy that puts a premium on the son. Khan brings such affection and humour that is often self-deprecating, and sheer likeability (even when he is conning the slum dwellers that he is one of them) that you understand and

love him because of his flaws, not in spite of them.

Khan's relationship with cousin-cum-rival Deepak Dobriyal rescues *Angrezi Medium* from some of its embarrassing glitches. Dobriyal is perfect as the comic-comrade-in-arm who is a rascal out to cheat, but has the propensity to spill the truth when drunk. Which he is, every evening, in the company of Champak and another friend. The duo's misadventures when they reach Heathrow and are separated from Champak's daughter, who alone can speak English, strain our credulity — even if they do make you laugh at the moment. It's the kind of laughter that makes you immediately question your response. There is just an element of the plausibility of such things happening to Indians whose understanding of English is imperfect, to put it mildly, but the exaggeration kills it. A good idea that doesn't have the elasticity to be stretched out so far. What saves *Angrezi Medium* is Champak's love for his daughter Tarika (Radhika Madan) even when misunderstandings and her newfound sense of independence causes a temporary breach. Khan is so reliable and relatable that he makes many implausible situations probable. It is his Midas touch that makes the film unmissable.

Yes, the plot is too busy and too many characters sap away the charm that breathes out of every scene set in Udaipur. It is a non-touristy Udaipur of winding narrow streets, lined with mithai shops, where tourists wander in to sample authentic ambience. The story moves at a steady pace, with spurts of necessary drama to thrust it forward. The Rajasthani-flavoured





Hindi is delightful and so is Champak's automatic response — yes we will do it, *beta* — to every question/wish of little Taru, or the highschooler set on studying in London. Khan's determination to overcome every obstacle and tribulation will get you cheering for his earthy, warm, self-doubting and yet resourceful Champak.

Another recent film where Khan made eccentric charm all his own is the self-obsessed (yet capable of detachment on occasion) Yogi of *Qarib Qarib Singlle*. Two older (than the usual rom com's age group) people in search of friendship that could lead to romance, partner in a quirky road movie that engages at many levels. Jaya, the sedate widow, who is everybody's standby, chooses to meet Yogi on a whim when surfing idly on a dating site. During the first meet, which is not at all cute in terms defined by the genre, Yogi comes on too strong to Jaya's discomfiture. Despite the near-disastrous first meeting, Yogi not only disarms the justifiably suspicious Jaya but us, as he unpeels layers of his personality — self-confidence, the talent to spout his own and others' shayari with aplomb, and sheer niceness to people he meets on the trip he challenges Jaya to take with him. Like Jaya, we are ready to travel with him to meet his exes. The fact that

It is a cliché to say that good actors get under the skin of the character. With Khan, it is as if we are meeting someone who we know instinctively, get a peek into his mind, and share his feelings



Sutapa Sikdar, Khan's wife, is the producer of this unusual romance, perhaps says something of her conviction in Khan's ability to charm.

Khan is not all about effervescence, though the last two films about our desire for an upper-class English education capitalise on his ability to make us root for the lovable naff and smile through misty eyes. As the third wheel in the journey from Delhi to Kolkata in *Piku*, Rana Chaudhary (non-Bengali, as Amitabh Bachchan's parochialism insists) is curious, irritated and genuinely concerned about the exasperating father-daughter duo that can drive most people up the wall. From distance to involvement is a process that Khan's rationality makes credible. We see cynicism mellowing enough under the forced intimacy of a long, exhausting road trip (dictated by the bowel movements of the constipated father) to offer home remedies for the affliction with a straight face. This ability to maintain a straight face in a comic situation is a blessing few actors are born with.

Khan, the serious actor, is equally remarkable. Soon to retire, Saajan Fernandes, congenitally churlish to his colleagues, and more particularly to his eager, rather ingratiating replacement Shaikh (Nawazuddin Siddiqui), lays bare layers of his vulnerability. The key to the mellowing is a lovingly prepared lunchbox that reaches him when the famed dabbawalas of Mumbai make a mistake. *The Lunchbox* is a gem of writing, direction and of course, impeccable acting. Some routine films get by with standard acting, but exceptional films demand equally exceptional acting to make it memorable. This is as true of *Piku* as it is of *The Lunchbox*.

When it comes to gravitas, Khan makes seeming immobility eloquent — from the trusted right-hand man of the don, whose empire holds sway over Mumbai's power structure, to the uneasy murderer urged on by his lover, and finally, the guilt-ridden anti-hero waiting for the inevitable end in a hallucinatory fog. *Maqbool*, Vishal Bhardwaj's first Shakespeare adaptation, is set in gang wars territory and weaves a textured contrast of acting styles. Tabu as

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Nimmi (Lady Macbeth) is lively, sensuous, and driven by the frustration of being a mistress of the much older Abbaji. Pankaj Kapur's Don is all kindly patriarchal authority, usually avuncular, but lethal when threatened. The familiar duo from parallel cinema, Naseeruddin Shah and Om Puri as corrupt cops, run the gamut from comic satire to sadistic satisfaction, alternating between sonorous doomsday forewarning and sotto voce pronouncements. They are brilliant recreations of Macbeth's cackling witches. Amidst all this is the still, often silent Maqbool, treading the fine line between ambition and fear. Bhardwaj finds cinematic equivalents for Shakespeare's poetry, as we see in *Omkara* and *Haider* as well.

A different quietude surrounds Khan in *The Namesake*. Ashoke Ganguly carries with him all the small and big hesitations of a first-generation immigrant. He retains Bangla cadences in his spoken English. The gentleness defines him in his relationship with wife Ashima and the eccentrically-named son Gogol who has to come to terms with his dual heritage. Verbally reticent, Ashoke conveys his emotions more through his absence and recollections by the family after his death. It is a nuanced interpretation of a man who often retreats into the shadows.

Be prepared for the shock of a diabolically-scheming husband in *Blackmail*. It is a completely noir narrative, with no compromises made to lighten the edges of adultery, carefully plotted revenge-murders passed off as accidents (some are bizarre accidents). Dev Kaushal is a salesman of toilet paper and the office scenes of newer, effective ways of selling their product are a riot. Dev is the typical bored married man, dissatisfied with his job and his marriage. The film springs

into action when Dev finds his wife is having an affair with an ex-boyfriend who is beholden to his wife — a rich, tantrum-throwing diva — indulged by her wealthy father. The bizarre circle grows surreal. Dev imagines and discards many scenarios before deciding on blackmailing the adulterous pair for paying off his EMIs first, and then for the thrill of it. In a noir thriller, we often don't identify with anyone but here, the writing and Khan's idiosyncrasies have us rooting for him, to not get caught in the web of his own making.



There is such beguiling ease in Irrfan Khan's presence, nothing contrived or worked hard at. If he follows method acting, you don't see the nuts, bolts and rivets of the craft

Looking back at his career, Khan's first major role as the soldier-turned-dacoit of *Paan Singh Tomar* signalled that we have an actor who lives the role written for him. From the pride of being a soldier who represented his country as an athlete to bitter disillusionment with the uncaring, corrupt establishment, is a harrowing journey Khan takes us through. He makes us empathetic, angry and sad, as he gives us glimpses of a ravaged soul. It won him his first National Award as Best Actor. Khan may not have reaped much in terms of awards — many are dubious made for TV spectacles — but he is recognised at home and abroad for delivering rooted authentic performances.

It is a cliché to say that good actors get under the skin of the character. Some let us into the process consciously; most conceal the process to give us the pleasure of performance. With Khan, it is neither. It is as if we are meeting an individual who we know instinctively, get a peek into his mind, and share his feelings with the sort of natural empathy that leads us to identification with him. It is as if we have come across an old friend after years of losing contact. Recognition followed by affection. That sums up our journey with Khan. ☺





WHY I CHOSE KERALA

The author, a cancer survivor, moved to the coastal state in 2016 for its clean air. But as Covid-19 rages across the country, he explains why he feels safest in Kerala

BY AMIT VAIDYA

“AMIT, ARE YOU OKAY? I HEARD IT'S BAD IN KERALA”. IF MY IPHONE HAD AN APP TO TELL ME WHAT WAS THE ONE MESSAGE THAT IT RECEIVED THE MOST, IT'S PROBABLY THIS.

My affinity for the state of Kerala began in 2016. The admiration that began then has since blossomed into a full-fledged love affair. The last five years have healed me in a way I didn't think it was possible and after many struggles, to be in a place where I feel both safe and content — I couldn't ask for more.

Let's take a step back. It has been eight

glorious years since I came to India thinking my life was going to end before even landing from the United States. I ended up getting the gift of a second life after cancer, and my time has been spent seemingly all over this great country from the largest of cities like Mumbai and Delhi to the most remote rural of areas in Gujarat and Karnataka. So how and why did I end up choosing Kerala then, a state I'd never visited till I moved there, knew very little about, I couldn't speak the language and more than anything else, had literally no ties to it at all? It's actually a very simple answer. Just like I had educated myself about my medical journey and the ins and outs of every decision regarding my cancer treatment, finding the right place for me to now “live” was paramount to my health.



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FIRST PERSON

Over the course of my healing journey, I've developed a routine, a way of life that suits me and my needs. I enforce it with discipline as I know the importance of being in control of my health. While it isn't always fail-safe and doesn't guarantee me complete smooth sailing, it has helped me achieve a level of preparedness and confidence that my body can combat any unforeseen issue, medical or otherwise, without letting the fear or frustration hinder my being. In many ways, I've created a wellness bunker for myself, and I just needed the right place to offer me the right environment to nourish that lifestyle.

For me, upon coming to Kerala, there were instantly some connect-the-dots realisations that perfectly combined the many elements I enjoyed while living in so many other locations across India, but without the other concerns that were often derailing my health. From the marked improvement in the air quality and a significant drop in the noise pollution to superior medical care and its cost/value ratio actually being affordable — I was literally able to exhale.

I'll be honest, I was never very well versed with Kerala politics. I knew there was a Marxist tint to the state, but I didn't really understand how that played into the way of life. I was shocked by the sheer number of friends and well-wishers who flat out warned me about moving to Kerala. I didn't understand why they were painting such a cynical and critical picture about this state only. On one side they agreed to the state's slogan "God's Own Country", but then they'd add "watch your back and your cows too". Sure, the state's 97 per cent non-vegetarian rate concerned me, being a lifelong vegetarian, in terms of availability of fresh fruits and vegetables, but was my life or my cow's life at risk simply by moving to Kerala?

I brushed off most of these comments and instead, focused on the right place for me in Kerala. I knew I wanted to live by the beach. The sea has always been an important part of my life but more so after the loss of both my parents. It might sound strange, but having spread both my parent's ashes in the ocean, I felt like being at the sea wasn't just calming because it's the sea but also because it connected me to them. Having amazing daily sunsets on the sea being on the western coast of the country was an addictive bonus. I now wonder how I ever lived without them in the first place.



AS A LONG-TERM MEDICAL HEALTH CONSUMER, I'VE ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT ACCESS TO RELIABLE, TRUSTWORTHY EMERGENCY CARE IS IMPORTANT.

I saw between my father's death at a specialty hospital that was so ill-prepared that they didn't even have a morgue to store his deceased body and my quick decision to take my mother to the larger, slightly farther away hospital upon her brain tumor diagnosis — it literally saved her eyesight and probably bought us one added year to her life. When I decided I needed to find a more permanent home in India, I wanted to make sure I was nearby to not just any hospital but care where I'd be comfortable no matter what complication arose in my health. Kerala, specifically Kochi, offered me that. Not only does the state have a robust primary health network, it is also dotted with world class medical facilities and hospitals, with the best of personnel manning them. I know this because I have seen the best of the US hospitals over the years.

Beyond this, I also rely heavily on access to high quality produce and given my very specific #foodismedicine diet — I needed to be able to eat what I know keeps me alive and healthy. Upon discovering how much of what I used as core ingredients were readily available to me, I was elated. Having access directly to farms and gardens where I could get fresh spices, herbs, vegetables and fruits, it gave me a sense of solace, not having to run around to countless places trying to simply source my basics.

AFTER COMPLETING MY TOUR FOR MY MEMOIR *HOLY CANCER*, THERE WAS A PERCEPTION THAT I WAS NOT ONLY CURED, BUT ALSO THAT I RETURNED “BACK TO NORMAL”.

Of course, given that the majority of my work and my loved ones were spread across the country and the world, I wanted to be within an hour's distance to an international airport that allowed me to literally pick

up and go if need be. Additionally, it would make it far easier for others to reach me too. With the reality of me being alone, I wanted to make sure if I ever did say I needed help, I would be as little an imposition and frankly, I know I could get help much faster.

With my medical, food and travel concerns sorted, I was blessed to find an island off the coast of Kochi city that has now ended up becoming my home. It's not fancy, it's not over-the-top, it's humble. It's a fisherman's village and I love the fact that every day for a few hours, the view from my house gets obstructed by hanging sarees and lungis of the locals. While my communication with the community is mostly cordial given that I don't speak Malayalam and they don't speak English or Hindi, there is mutual respect. There's no cost to smile, laugh, play with kids, barter fruits and veggies with one another. In many ways, the simple life I wanted with the luxuries I needed came together, to create the right world for me.

But then no survivor has an easy road. After completing my tour for my memoir *Holy Cancer*, there was a perception that I was not only cured, but also that I returned “back to normal”. Having

done the amount of treatments, therapies and lived past every data point that exists, I've had a complicated ride. Despite such an effort to stay healthy, if I got sick, it was worse than others and I took longer to recover. The word “immunocompromised” became my way of life. While protected in my island surroundings, I was already used to hand sanitisers and protective masks and gloves when going out. But given my issues, my essentials at home included steamers and nebulisers. In many ways, to stay safe and sane, I became obsessive about my lifestyle, and unapologetic about my quirks.

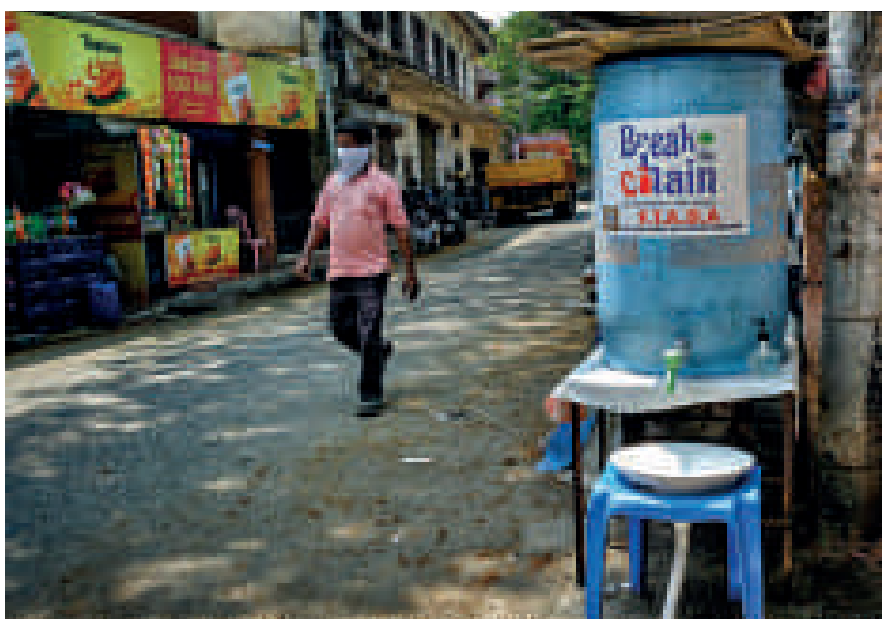
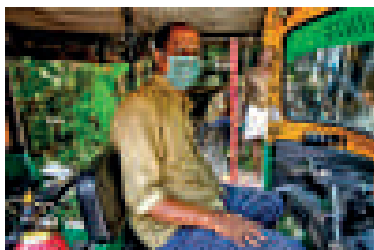
Still, no matter how prepared you are, you need a community. There were a few occasions where I suffered different health setbacks. I'd simply open the door and gesture out and within 30 seconds, I had the local fishermen helping me to get to the hospital. They treated me like their own, they had my back. While the first time it felt like good luck, over the years now it's become much more like a protective family.

AND BOY, WE'VE SEEN THINGS TOGETHER. IN THE PAST THREE MONSOONS, TWO OF THEM HAVE LED TO HORRID FLOODS. WHILE THANKFULLY ON THE BEACHSIDE WE WERE MOSTLY SAFE, WE WERE STRANDED, AND CUT OFF FROM THE REST OF THE CITY.

We had to care for one another. We had to come together for tsunami warnings as well as power cuts where we'd lose electricity for days as a result. Be it demonetisation or a domestic dispute, people got involved and even I started to contribute however I could, even managing to convince a fisherman from not killing himself because of financial troubles.

Having said that, I was fortunate to experience this way of life before in Karnataka. But while the village there felt safe, it was quite remote. I didn't feel any connection to any city, to any part of my first life and yes, to any social responsibility beyond that community.

What has amazed me in all this time now that I've lived in Kerala is that despite the fact that I'm in far more remote area of the city, or even





the state, you are always connected. We have access to everything the city man would have be, it sanitation, electricity and high speed Wi-Fi connectivity. There is easy access to and from the city and people in general do value their surroundings a little more, it's not just trash piling up everywhere.

In most cases, I hear and can now see this is the work of the state government. Certain measures have been put in place to ensure that Keralites have an elevated basic quality of life that often is lacking in other parts of India. To their credit, Kerala does have the highest literacy rate in India. It feels like almost every Keralite has at least one family member working overseas. As a result of this, there feels like an increased exposure to different ways of life. The multitude of religions also feels far more "American" as despite differences and clashes in the past, people do sit harmoniously with one another (for the most part) and do not let it define them politically.

WHICH GETS ME TO THAT
EVER-CONSTANT MESSAGE.
"AMIT, ARE YOU OKAY? I
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One of the most comforting things about living here has been the transparency with which things are done. Keralites know what is there, what is not there, and they will strike (albeit way too much) until justice is not served, but at least discussed. It always surprises me when I have educated friends across the country ask me this question after they read something in a newspaper or see something on the television — as though having access to what's going in Kerala is a bad thing.

Yes, there were devastating floods, virus attacks and religious unrest, but wasn't that also happening elsewhere? And why aren't any stories about the unity of the people, their compliance of the government, their trust in the authorities? Why is none of this also on your news?

I probably wouldn't have been this passionate about this had I not just been here over the last 30 days, witnessing what I believe to be the

first and the best response the country and an individual state has had to the pandemic affecting the entire world right now — the coronavirus.

Each day, I get messages asking how I'm doing. Part of it is because friends are concerned about my health. But the other part is this unending, non-stop, miscalculated judgment that exists about Kerala and the fact that because the state and its government have opted to share all of their data both to the central government as well as to international organisations leading the charge on the efforts, the assumption is that the state is the most affected, most vulnerable and worst place to live.

The truth couldn't be farther from this. I had gone to Hyderabad for a few days in February and already upon landing at the Kochi domestic airport, they were checking my temperature before coming home. The next day, I visited my local grocery store, where already the supermarket had taken the precautions and one employee wearing a mask was personally sanitising each cart before letting us go in. Hand sanitiser, soap, toilet paper, all were available. There was no chaos, no fear, people were using their own judgment and practicing social distancing before it really became a verb.

Medics would come by to check our temperature. Foreigners that remained were escorted with their own police escort to the next place they were visiting. In a fortnight, the state had managed to keep over a lakh and half people under observation, in their own homes, their movements and interactions traced, food available if they couldn't prepare for themselves. Observing the actions of the state, my community got involved too, setting up "Break The Chain" sanitiser stations every 200 meters along the beach to keep everyone safe and feeling secure. Today, if I need to get groceries or medicine, I go online, submit an application and the police get back to me if my trip is approved. I still have access to fresh fruits, vegetables (though a little compromised because Kerala relies a bit too heavily on this from neighbouring states) and

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whatever else I might need.

If the single-digit numbers of new infections over the last fortnight or so does hold for more time, then Kerala has a high chance of becoming the first state in the country to flatten the infection curve. And there is a reason for this beyond the ones I have talked about above. More than the state's efficient healthcare system, it is about the pace at which the government has

responded over the last three months. Having successfully beaten the Nipah virus threat three years ago by timely action, the government this time activated its COVID control centre very early, when the news of the mass pandemic first started coming out of China in late January.

Since the first infected patient was identified on January 30, it has been putting out a transparent daily news bulletin listing the number of tests done, number of people infected, number of tests done, and number of people under observation. It also mastered the art of contact tracing much like no other state did. If you go back and read the first daily bulletin the state put out on January 31, the day after the discovery of the first infection, you will see that they had nearly 1,500 people under observation even on that day. That number now runs into lakhs, as everyone that an infected person had been in physical touch with or was near, is systematically identified and brought under the active surveillance radar.

THE STATE'S FORWARD PLANNING IN CASE OF COMMUNITY TRANSMISSION HAS BEEN OF THE KIND THAT GIVES PEOPLE LIKE ME THE CONFIDENCE OF BEING SAFE

And it is not just that, the state's forward planning in case of community transmission has been of the kind that gives people like me the confidence of being safe. I just read an interview with the state's health minister where she talked about the government having 1.2 lakh hospital beds ready along with more than 5,000 ICU beds in preparation of the looming threat. Besides, hundreds of hostels and hotels across the state

have also been requisitioned for emergency.

It is also about the attitude. There is going to be some inherent fear (it's a global pandemic) but there is also an eyes-wide-open trust. It's not blind trust, relying on the rhetoric of the leaders, it's based on data, reporting, and the visual cues every person can see. And while the disease still hasn't manifested its most ugly self yet, I'm comfortable knowing that the state openly shares what are the next 10 steps planned by them. There is a creativity, an ingenuity and a willingness to take proactive steps to keep me safe, keep me fed, keep me economically okay and most importantly, keep me alive...no matter what.

I often talk about the 'what if's' in life and for me, I think the greatest gift Kerala has given me is the way it's stepped up for its residents the same way I did for my own health and wellness. Saying that you are setting up makeshift kitchens to feed everyone or that the numbers may reach lakhs and lakhs are not as hard to digest when you know contingency plans are in place.

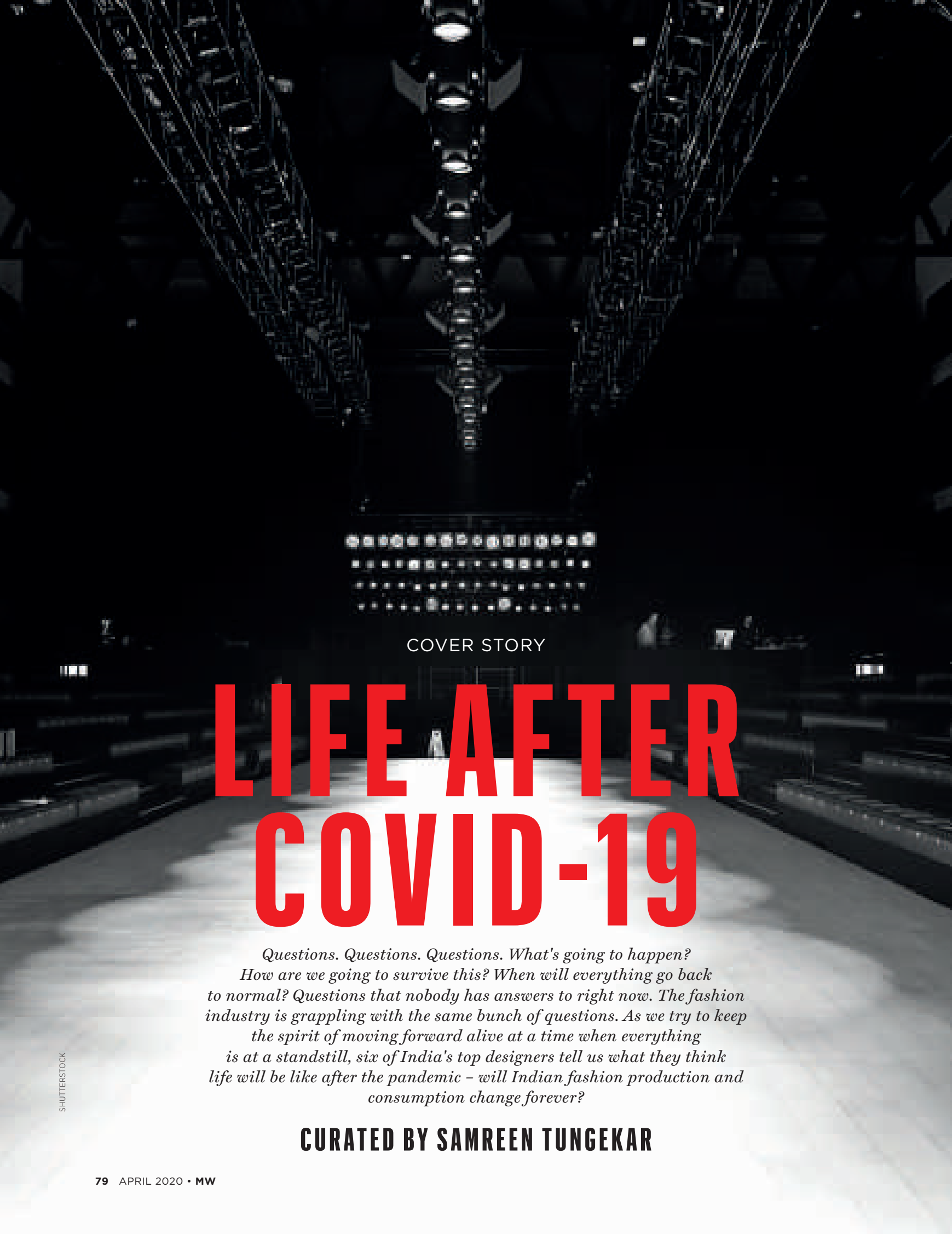
I've worked with thousands of patients over the years, and when I talking to many recently diagnosed cancer patients, I ask them a question — "are you okay to accept that this path may not work?" Many would balk upon hearing, thinking that I'm being negative or believe that they would not recover. I would then go on to explain that you need to believe that you'll be better, but never exchange hope for delusion. The reality must always match up to the situation in front. As a result, do whatever you opt to do with faith, passion and determination, but don't let that stop you from having other plans in place in case it doesn't work. Wouldn't it be far more peaceful and calming to know that no matter what, you are in control of what happens?

For me, Kerala has done this. From floods to viruses, the state has had my back. By doing their duty, I don't have to think about the many additional 'what ifs' my mind immediately goes to as someone who's been through his own share of drama.

So the next time anyone wishes to ask me how I am and that they saw it's bad here in Kerala, do know and understand that even when I'm bad here, I'm still good, and even when the state's condition is bad, it's still good. If I ever had a doubt, this virus has shown me why indeed I was meant to move to Kerala and make this my home, no matter what. ☺

IF THE SINGLE-DIGIT NUMBERS OF NEW INFECTIONS OVER THE LAST FORTNIGHT DOES HOLD FOR MORE TIME, THEN KERALA HAS A HIGH CHANCE OF BECOMING THE FIRST STATE IN THE COUNTRY TO FLATTEN THE INFECTION CURVE





COVER STORY

LIFE AFTER COVID-19

Questions. Questions. Questions. What's going to happen? How are we going to survive this? When will everything go back to normal? Questions that nobody has answers to right now. The fashion industry is grappling with the same bunch of questions. As we try to keep the spirit of moving forward alive at a time when everything is at a standstill, six of India's top designers tell us what they think life will be like after the pandemic – will Indian fashion production and consumption change forever?

CURATED BY SAMREEN TUNGEKAR

DEVELOPING THE NEW NORMAL

This is the time to think about storytelling and reimagining garments, keeping your eye on the ball, and coming out in solidarity, feels fashion designer Kunal Rawal

I think Indian fashion has made so much progress in the last few years, especially with menswear. The way menswear has been evolving in India is amazing. Buying trends were changing, the way people shopped was changing. However, like every other aspect in the world at present, this evolution is also on pause.

Right now, we're all shooting blind and waiting to see how long this continues. I want to keep a positive outlook for the future and believe that there will be a silver lining. The progress we've made with buying choices for Indian men will stay, but we cannot deny that buying trends affect everything. That being said, this time could actually bring out a lot more storytelling in designs and through collections because when we look at the bigger picture, we have the time to look inwards right now. That applies to fashion too.

Consumption is going to change, but it's difficult to say how. This season is over, and by the time we're able to get to the next season, everyone will



put out their idea of the new normal. Strategies, when it comes to placing your brand or reaching out to the consumers of your brand, are going to be rethought. There will be more reason to cut through the fluff, and bring out the meat in your work. Every designer's biggest strength is the product and what they can put out there. That's what we're all going to be focusing on.

There will be new plans of actions that will be created in the fashion world. If anything, this just shows us that the balance was tilted, you know? I believe creative fields are going to come together and help each other get out of this, including fashion designers. And for all you know, the ideation time that everyone has during this period will give birth to a lot of beautiful stories going ahead – garment wise.

Talking about long term changes, this is going to be the new normal, in India as well as internationally. Going forward, every designer will

be catering to the new normal, which will be heading into a new direction, considering travel taking a hit will change a lot of things and so will distribution. Hygiene and sanitisation will become a part of every thought process, and in fashion too, these aspects will play an important part in storytelling.

I think we're a part of the global picture and have clients everywhere. I strongly believe that other countries still have clothes that are regionally relevant only, but Indian clothes are relevant everywhere. On a micro level, we will have our plans to strengthen our presence in our own country, but even on a macro level, there will be synergy with global trends.

When it comes to looking at sustainability from a futuristic point of view, I think India will be standing in the sustainable wagon higher than where we were. The sustainable story is going to be about putting your money where your mouth is. I'm spending this time to see the big picture and thinking about whether I'm on the right track, and a lot of people in the industry are doing the same.

I think this period of gestation is important when you make decisions about who you are as a brand. It's exciting to see who bounces back and how. This crisis, right here, and coming out of it, is a process that will ensure that a lot more thought is given to what goes into a garment.

Marketing will go through major changes, especially when it comes to influencer marketing. Influencers are a great way to reach people, but I also think influencer marketing is all over the place, and the market is just extremely crowded. I think here too, there will be a cut through fluff, and the serious influencers will be the ones that will be sticking around.

All in all, I think, as of now, the best way to boost the fashion industry is to go inwards. Go into thought processes with your teams, discuss with them, and then prepare for when you start, whenever we are able to. Solidarity is what we'll all get out of this. ☺

“I think this period of gestation is important when you make decisions about who you are as a brand. It's exciting to see who bounces back and how. This crisis, right here, and coming out of it, is a process that will ensure that a lot more thought is given to what goes into a garment”

IT'S TIME FOR REINVENTION

The Indian fashion industry is going to be about going back to learning how to walk, rethinking how to connect, and flourishing in manufacturing, believes Bhaane's Nimish Shah

We are in a limbo. For an industry that heavily relies on advertisers, everything has a domino effect. But when you face an impact like the current crisis, it's almost like a write off. It's a chance to redo, and restructure. You rank the formula and see if it was a success, and even if it was, you want to shake things up and reinvent. What we saw in the last five to eight years was the flourishing of the couture and the handcraft industries, both in the bridal markets and in the artisanal markets globally.

In India, manufacturing is a big part of the industry, and that will continue to flourish, because that's our expertise when it comes to making clothes and we still have labour at hand. But of course, the cost of manufacturing will go up. I can't say the same about the design base, as that hasn't actually come out so much in tonality, especially when it comes to ready-to-wear.

Industries have been taking advantage of the fact that there was labour. We will still have labour, but the question will be at what cost, and if minimum wages will be revised, as we're seeing that daily wages are substantially low. Unfortunately, the designer space will have to sit back and see how everything unfolds, while large retailers obviously have a better penetration in the market.

For our fashion industry, which was always quite dependent, it's going to be about learning how to walk again. It's going to be about building individual muscle, figuring how to talk to customers, whether retail is an approach or wholesale is the approach. The world is so scarred by the current situation and the thought of the future, that this will become a reason why fast fashion will slow down. Fast fashion also comes

at a cost of killing yourself. It's not just a revenue opportunity, it's also about designers not being able to process any creativity and just yanking off collections without having to incubate it. People will take a step back and think if this is what they want to put out.

Hygiene is the need of the hour, in all possible ways, and there will be a lot of sterilisation and hygiene within independent thought processes. The season's gone. So even if markets open now, commerce won't happen. When the new season starts, everyone will re-evaluate what they were doing because a lot of issues were known, but there was no time to address them, because everything was fast paced, and you couldn't step back. Now, there's also a severe sense of patriotism and quality, so high street might struggle as a more evolved consumer would try to buy more localised brands than a high-street international brand. The customer is very aware, and more people are already jumping on to buying homegrown labels.

From a publicity point of view, it will take the industry some time to know how to strategise, how to educate consumers. PR will be very handy in terms of educating customers. For us at Bhaane, our aesthetic has always been of a brand that was never built to sell clothes. They just became a medium of engagement. It was always about community building and creating a platform. Like always, we will see, adapt and change.

There's no doubt that there will be long-term changes to the way fashion will be told or consumed in our country. There will be radical movements not just in India, but internationally as well, where we will be self-questioning. Do we need fashion weeks? Do we want

to actually make these many clothes or do we need to make more clothes than what we have because people are tired and bored? And it would be really stupid if we didn't change. Because we were all whining about wanting a change for a long time now.

Here's the time for course correction.

Keeping commerce aside, compassion is on the forefront. Compassion about both nature and humanitarian issues. Impacts are being addressed on various levels, like sustainability. From the consumption side of things, most of us aren't in the buying state of mind. I've been thinking about what I want to do when the lockdown is over, and I'm definitely looking to socialise rather than buying a new dress. But at the same time, once there's mobility, everything circles back.

When it comes to how we're going to be marketing in the future, I think sensitive marketing will drive. Whether through publishing, influencers, or whether it's through making personal phone calls. Influence is just a tool and influencers themselves will be questioning their value, what they are doing, and the ethics of how they associate with brands.

From stakeholders to improve the situation, I think we need absolute transparency to boost the industry further. Brands and fashion designers need to be more vocal about what they're making and why they're making it. The defense of price

defining quality is going to be irrelevant. It is going to come back to being labour of love and honesty. I think that brands would address it themselves. Fashion brands will introspect on how they want to make things, how they want to tell stories, and how they wish to question things. ☹

“Industries have been taking advantage of the fact that there was labour. We will still have labour, but the question will be at what cost, and if minimum wages will be revised. The designer space will have to sit back and see how everything unfolds, while large retailers obviously have a better penetration in the market”



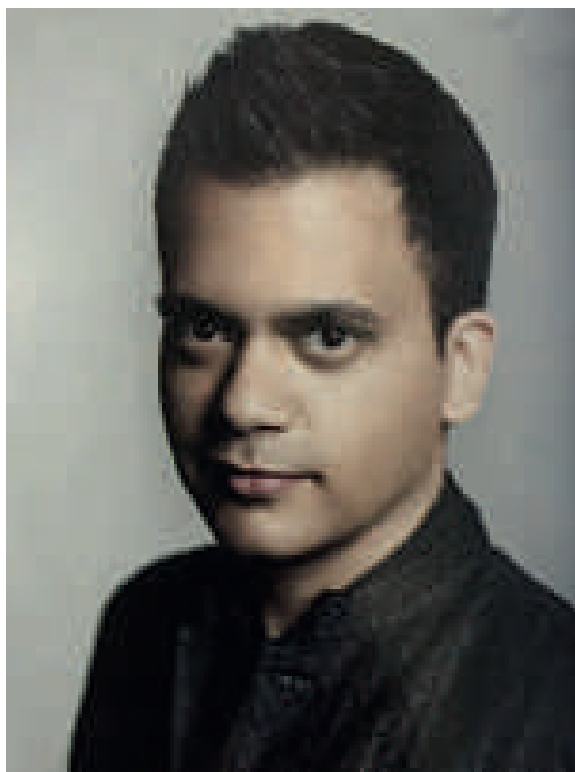
THE NEW AGE OF FASHION CONSUMPTION

While it's too premature to even think about the repercussions of the greater change, mindful consumption and originality will be leading the way, explains Nachiket Barve

I'll start with the present. It's a standstill, a paralysis of sorts, that hasn't ever happened before in the history of fashion. An unseen situation has stopped everything. If I have to reflect back to the last year, we weren't at our brightest. But that's not the concern. Presently, how we were doing as industry is irrelevant, because that's not our updated reality.

When you say Indian fashion, it's more about fashion in India. I don't think Indian fashion made much of a mark internationally in terms of the number of people consuming branded products. I'm not talking about stuff made in India or supplies of India, those are different aspects. I'm talking about what is designed in India. The global market is also paralysed right now, and it could be a while before the borders open up. A while before we get in the thick of things. A lot of independent weavers and embroiders will suffer tremendously. The demand will reduce. A lot of orders have been cancelled. The need right now is your health, and not the next handbag or scarf.

In terms of strategy, when it comes to placing the brand, the rethinking is entirely going to depend on when things normalise. We are in a state of limbo between how things are now



and what happens a month later. It's impossible to predict. In India especially, we're right in the middle of the crisis, so prediction is a tad hasty.

How I think Indian fashion is going to be affected going forward, you ask? Well, everything about consumption and storytelling through fashion will change. And you know what, it should change. For too long, there's been too much stuff being made. And then there are copies

of original design, which lead to over consumption. This is a global problem, not just in our industry. Hopefully, the silver lining on this dark cloud is realising the actual value of fashion instead of mindlessly consuming and buying products that are going to be awfully harmful to the environment. Fair payment is going to come up, and be discussed profusely.

When it comes to a product, even a handbag becomes the holy grail of fashion. But this month, you've nowhere to carry the handbag. Even that is a basic shift in consumption. From how weddings are performed (we can't even think of destination weddings or ones with five functions), a lot of those movements are going to define consumption in various ways.

Globalisation will not die, but it will definitely be rethought. Not just for fashion, but for all industries. Will we still be flying in ingredients from across the world and products made in different countries? Not really, for a while. That, in turn, will create more support for local industries, brands and talents. We will spend that same money on Indian designs, and vendors, and support our country.

Crisis or no crisis, innovation and authenticity is at the core of my aesthetic. It's extremely important to be socially fair, and as a brand, I am supportive of that ideology, and plan to continue to embody it.

So is this going to make our digital footprint stronger, you ask? I don't think that's the case with fashion. Yes, maybe in terms of media consumption, but it still doesn't change the importance of

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feeling clothes and buying them, which is of utmost importance to customers. That will never go out of sync. Online sales have grown, but even then, people will be mindful of consumption without thought. And by the time this ends, consumption will hopefully go in the right direction. It can become extreme or willful and conscious, more clarifying consumption, I hope.

I know sustainability is highly encouraged, but we know that some of it is for the optics, or for the selling point. But when you talk about sustainability, it is also buying something and getting use out of it for a good two to three years. That's something that will factor in now. It's too soon to predict if the crisis will make sustainability a bigger factor, but depending on where we are, we will see if sustainability becomes a larger movement.

Call me old-fashioned, but I think when people's priorities are shifting in large spaces currently, everybody has to rethink how they really wish to communicate. Same goes for brands. I've never believed in the kind of marketing where you just get someone to peg your product to the masses. For me, looking at a product with great value and keeping the transparency is where it is at. Yes, transparency. About how a product is made, and if it is made correctly. I have always encouraged questions and communicated enough behind the scenes with the stuff we put up. It is just a fair way of working.

I expect that this crisis will teach everybody to be realistic about the pricing structure. The important thing right now is to generate work for artisans who need it, rather than trying to maximise profit. Whether it is a retailer or designer, let's make things more accessible to more people by pricing them correctly, rather than selling to a thin slice of the society. If we make fashion accessible, the system to reach out, to recuperate, could be faster. Here's hoping it is. ☺



HIGHLIGHTING THE HERITAGE OF CRAFTSMANSHIP

*Fashion designer and co-founder of HUEMN, **Pranav Misra**, sees the future bringing back focus on textile and the beauty of our craft*

India, essentially, is a sustainable landscape, also an outcast when it comes to the global fashion environment. There are very few designers who actually have to depend on an import and export model to keep their businesses alive. This, of course, has exceptions, as there are brands that cater to a wider audience and want to be a part of the global scenario.

When you think of India internationally, the word that comes to mind isn't essentially fashion, it's textile. It's the source of craftsmanship. You think of production. You think of supply chain. But, you don't think of fashion. Since the inception of our brand, I've always had an issue with the fact that globally, we're not opinion makers, be it in fashion or even the media. We're more about our

entertainment, we as a society have failed to leave a strong impression that we are a collective of our art and culture and history and literature (which we are so rich of). I always feel like we are some sort of a mixed media landscape where we have not found enough balance and rich base and end up making everything look and sound loud. Fortunately, there are many young players among my peers who are helping change the landscape of Indian design, which makes me hopeful of the future.

I feel like in the new world that we are entering, collaborating within industries will become a bigger part of our lives. Marketing or reaching out to the consumers is going to go through some tumultuous changes, in my opinion. I can already see those changes when it comes to even being part of interviews or publications. The models of communication are changing. The market will boom, but in a very different manner and that will take time. I strongly believe we have already entered a new world. And right now, we are practicing the lifestyle of a new world. Fashion is not just clothes. Fashion is about making a lifestyle.

HUEMN's DNA comes out of stories. The need of the hour for any brand is to understand the people and their circumstances. The sentiment is not going to be about consumption, so you have to keep your brands alive accordingly and at the same time you have to see the number of families that are dependent on your company.

As an industry, we have to focus on taking the society forward. We have to think of those who we call the working class. Your tailors, dyers, embroiders. There will be a sense of fear in the labourers in the near future, and we have to address it. It's not going to be

like opening our factories and going back to being productive.

From a global perspective, the countries demanding and almost celebrating reduction (due to the after effects of this pandemic) in consumption and manufacturing of goods, function differently from ours. We largely are an industry of slow fashion already. Each and every product is hand made and hand tailored. We have to be sensitive when we have the conversation about consumption. The US and Europe are known for fashion, for brands. We are production houses. When you talk about the fashion industry, we as a country make things happen for brands, which are outside. Imagine the supply chain when it gets cut. The privileged are not going to get affected. It's the tailor who's going to get affected. We have to come up with a sustainable approach for them first, because they are our countrymen, they are our people, and they will not have jobs.

We need to market the Indian product more aggressively and need to guide the world on a more sustainable, handmade and slow fashion path.

The future is storytelling. We need to back entrepreneurs who provide jobs. We need to make sure that in the coming years, our farmers and our tailors and our embroiders, don't suffer from hunger and unemployment, which can be avoided if entrepreneurs are backed and don't have to shut their doors. Also, in the new market, designers need to make products that resonate with the consumer.

As an industry too, we need to proceed towards a better tomorrow, and we can't leave the underprivileged behind. We have to collectively take a society forward. ☺

“The models of communication are changing. The market will boom, but in a very different manner. I strongly believe we have already entered a new world. And right now, we are practising the lifestyle of a new world. Fashion is not just clothes. Fashion is about making a lifestyle”

WE SHALL OVERCOME

When it comes to the direction of Indian fashion, expectations are limitless, and the only way is going forward, points out Antar-Agni's Ujjawal Dubey

The world of Indian fashion today, is at its finest and creative best. Our mark isn't just here, most of our designers are spread out across internationally too. They are becoming the flag bearers of Indian fashion. So it is safe to say, I think we're doing amazing and there's no doubt about it.

In the past couple of years, we got to witness the disruption of fashion, which was always required. We have started seeing the maturity in it, which was also much needed. We are not limited to a particular genre of clothing and the recent years of Indian fashion have proven that.

But we can't just brush what has been happening under the carpet. And we can't let it stop us either. Communication is a key in the same. If we're talking about a situation where we're all at home, then the focus to communicate does strongly fall on digital, since that automatically becomes our primary method of consuming everything. As soon as the world started locking down, people immediately came down to the digital side and we, as brands, companies or businesses, will definitely be harnessing that power.

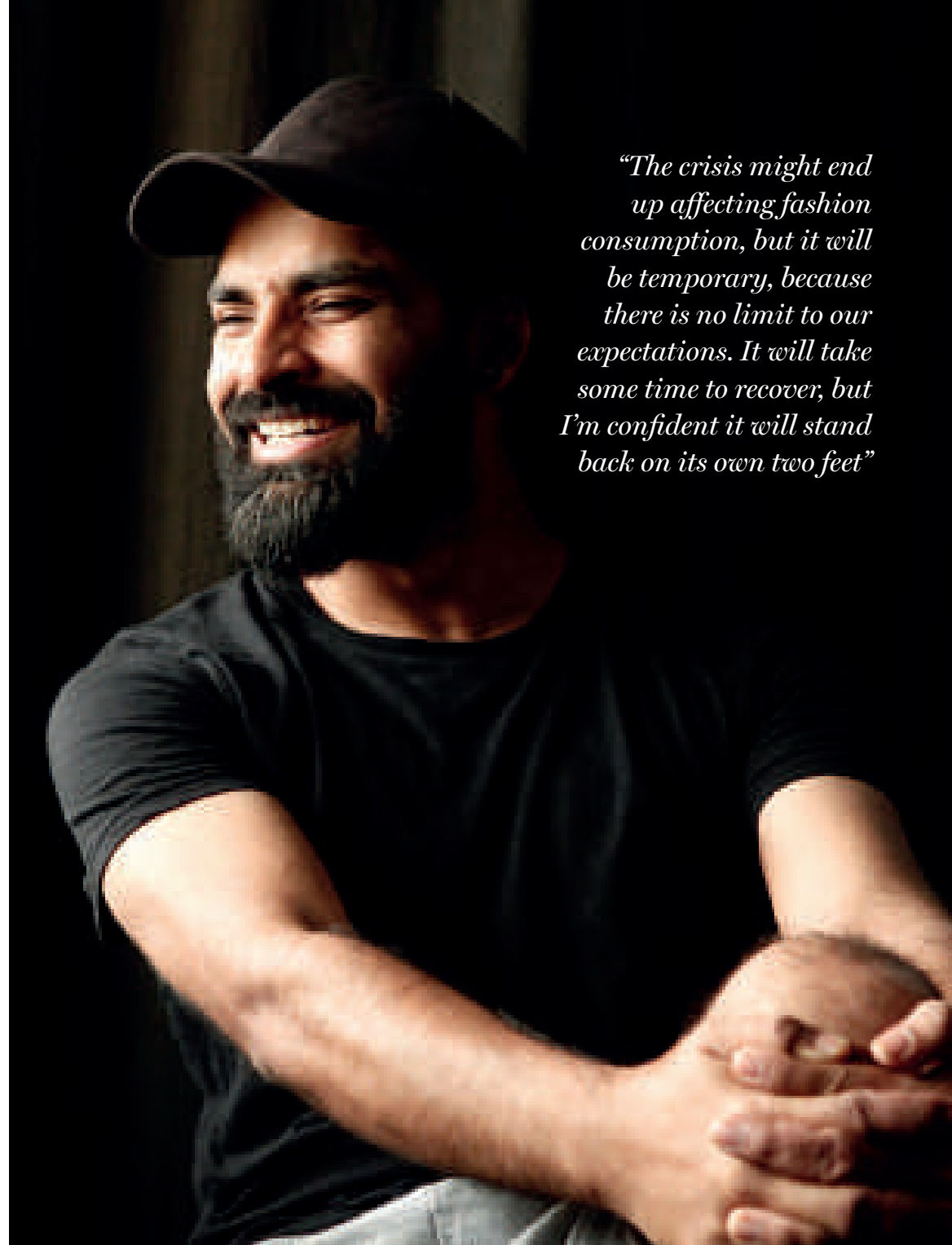
However, I believe we're humans at the end of the day, and as humans, we learn to cope and adapt. With time, we will gain economy, we will gain everything back. This fight is one that's inevitable, that we will just have

to just get through.

The direction of Indian fashion is only forward. This is a setback, but we will eventually learn to cope up and we will. We have to bounce back, there's no other option. Yes, there will be an economic decline and there may be loss of employment as well. We will definitely take some time to recover, but I think the next financial year might end up being a bit better. I don't think our ideologies will be deterred, or our way of working is going to change just because of this. There might be an extra push, digitally.

Strategies will be pushed, when it comes to connecting with consumers. But I feel marketing, even influencer marketing, has nothing to worry about. In fact, it might see a boost with this extra emphasis on digital reach. Of course, the crisis might end up affecting the way people are going to consume fashion, but it will be temporary, because there is no limit to our expectations or needs and wants. It will take some time to recover, but I'm confident it will eventually stand back on its own two feet. When it comes to consumption, this might be a bit of a jolt, but we felt that jolt before, especially when people started thinking about conscious clothing.

Indian fashion also saw another word that was being used and marketed everywhere — sustainability. But it is diminishing, since everything is going small scale and resources are getting tied up. However, as an ideology, I believe conscious fashion should be the need of the hour more than sustainable fashion, because nothing can be 100 per cent sustainable anyway, unless you grow locally or consume locally. Oddly 15 or 20 years back, the idea of handlooms picked up, and making handwoven products found its way back to India, where consumption is much better. But in reality, Indians have always tried to be sustainable. The term and concept is not foreign to us. I read a study some time back



“The crisis might end up affecting fashion consumption, but it will be temporary, because there is no limit to our expectations. It will take some time to recover, but I’m confident it will stand back on its own two feet”

which said that if everyone consumes at the rate of an average Indian, then we would require 0.75 planets, but if we consume at the rate of an average American, we would require almost five planets. So there, you have it. We have grown up seeing our parents or grandparents not just simply throwing things or reusing them. We never looked at this as a great thing. In fact, we always looked down on this habit of theirs. But eventually, the whole world started appreciating the very same thing.

The Indian fashion industry is on a rise, this is the big picture. But it is crucial for everyone in the industry to understand that this one big picture is made up of a thousand small pictures. And each picture has to be taken care of. That harmonious feeling and genuine effort has to come from everybody involved. As soon as that is fulfilled, you won't need to go out of your way or force the industry to evolve, it will automatically boost itself to new heights. ☺

A PEEK INTO THE CHANGING SCENE OF COUTURE

The unity of the fraternity, financial cooperation and a paradigm shift in putting out your brand is going to define how couture handles the future, write fashion designer duo Shantanu & Nikhil

While we were already reeling under the clutches of a slowing economy, this pandemic has in fact created a crater of sorts, where lesser wealth will have an adverse effect on wedding spends and in turn, lesser conversions and footfalls will definitely put couture in the danger zone. Ready-to-wear and bridge-to-luxury brands that are generally more brick-and-mortar in their business models would in all likelihood fall prey to lesser footfalls and slowing consumerism for at least the first two quarters of the business cycle but once the coronavirus curve starts to flatten out, these brands will also have the last laugh because of their price positioning and accessibility attributes.

It would be safe to say that in India, because of its strong domestic demand and consumption finding flavour with the young millennials, the wave is still the best bet for Indian brands and fashion designers alike and it doesn't take a rocket scientist to advocate the fact that nothing is better than just expanding your footprint nationally, now even more than ever.

As the world is pushing through these times, there will be a paradigm shift in the way brand advertisements will be positioned in order to remain in an emotionally positive light. In fact, brands will become deeply connected to their most critical resources – employees, customers and other key stakeholders. We as a brand, in the

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last four years or so, have already embarked on this emotional journey of being more patriotic-chic, sartorial & gender-fluid in our design ethos that strongly marries heritage and punk with doses of compassion.

Since we are in the business of brands, our immediate response would be one that strongly reflects upon certain aspects of our business, that we feel, are in some sort of danger. We feel that Indian couture catering to the once recession-proof big fat wedding market could be the biggest victim to this pandemic this financial year, as this has been a hugely aspirational segment for us couturiers for some time now. Calling a spade a spade, we feel it is this segment post the coronavirus recovery, which will decide the fate of couture in India.

There will be a definite call to action. With the economic downturn, the market trends and the consumer

behaviours are going to change drastically. There are two worlds now: pre and post COVID-19. As the impact of COVID-19 continues to unfold, brands will need to keep a close eye on the changing consumer behaviours to find new opportunities and create new strategies. We, for one, are using this crisis as an opportunity to revisit our business as a potential start-up built on new vigour and energy.

As a brand, we have always advocated the anti-trend philosophy that breaks any pre-defined barriers of art and instead, play with sartorial shapes and storytelling that puts the focus right back on the consumer, and not just the clothes. There will be more focus on digital marketing, e-commerce, gamification and live streaming. Brands can virtually engage with consumers in new ways. Instead of targeting a consumer group, marketers can now target consumers as individuals and social media platforms are the best tools for doing so. All in all, digital experiences will replace in-person experiences. With international travel curtailed for long, target groups will be more local now.

Also, the post-crisis era is going to witness even higher national sentiment, which will result in strategies encapsulating these sentiments. One cannot negate the fact that the old charm of doing runways is still the best way to communicate the brand, but this will take a backseat temporarily.

It is the right time to look inwards and be more inclusive with your own country. Western fashion markets in the wake of this crisis will be deeply affected and hence, it's a great opportunity to build a brand that has national scale written all over it.

Fashion was already going high on the sustainability attribute, and this would only get bigger from

here on. Slow fashion will become the new sustainable in time to come. The sustainability factor is a great opportunity for many young designers in India to strongly advocate sustainability on a big canvas, now more than ever.

The current situation demands introspection, slow sustainable growth, employee's safety and above all, preserving cash and reducing unnecessary costs. Once these issues are addressed, the next step would be to validate brand innovation, brand strength and brand strategy to cater to the new ways of consumerism in the future.

While influencer marketing is unlikely to disappear, influencers too will need to change their strategies and explore newer ways in their quest to stand out as brands. A campaign must include elements of surprise, humour and uniqueness in order for it to be impactful. Influencers who can pull in audiences across multiple content categories for brands will continue to thrive.

These are times which require resolve and determination to stay afloat and perhaps the best time for the entire fashion fraternity to come together as one community and fight the aftermath.

But as much as we can all come together, it is the Indian government that would perhaps be the single most important stakeholder that needs to provide an immediate economic stimulus to fashion & retail businesses like ourselves to stay afloat in the course of our survival. Relief in GST payable for the next six months, waiver of interest payments for the next six months, easy access to working capital loans, EMI's to banks and NBFCs to put on hold for six months...these are some of the top-of-the-head short-term measures we can think of, if put into place, could help the fashion industry stand on its feet again. ☺



RISING ABOVE ALL ODDS

*Singer **Harrrdy Sandhu**'s break into music was a rather unpredictable one, but with his songs and now his Bollywood debut in '83, he shows how, with perseverance, nothing is impossible to achieve*

BY JIGAR SHAH

A phoenix is a long-lived creature that cyclically regenerates or is reborn from its ashes. A phoenix falls to the bottom of the pit and rises to stake claim over what it believes belongs to it. In that sense, Harrrdy 'Hardavinder' Singh is no less than a phoenix.

Today, the world knows him as a successful singer, as the man behind songs like *Soch*, *Backbone* and *Kya Baat Hai*, but very few know that he was an accomplished cricketer before he made a career in music. He represented India at the U-19 World Cup and rubbed shoulders with the likes of Shikhar Dhawan, Ishant Sharma, Piyush Chawla, Rohit Sharma, Cheteshwar Pujara, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, and many more in his short career. His dream was to play cricket and represent India at an international level. But destiny had different plans. His cricket career began in the late 90s, and it was cut short because he suffered an elbow injury to his

bowling arm. He visited the best doctors, but things were never the same again. Apart from cricket, the only thing he was passionate about was music. So, he decided to try his hand at singing.

This phase changed Sandhu's view about life, he reveals. "When people learn about my story, they tell me it inspires them to keep trying. The one lesson I learnt was that life doesn't move forward in a straight line. It's like a roller-coaster. Life has a variety of colours and one should enjoy each one of them. Today, I'm prepared for anything that life has to throw at me. I'm sure I'll be able to survive and come out triumphant."

He continues, "It is not like I haven't seen ups and down in my music career. The struggle has been constant. In 2013-2014 after *Soch*, I did seven to eight shows. As a Punjabi, I have this fascination with luxury cars and I decided to buy

UP CLOSE



UP CLOSE

one for myself. I gave three hits songs, *Soch*, *Joker* and *Saah*, but after a point, I wasn't getting any shows. All of my songs were slow and I couldn't perform anywhere despite having a lot of fan following. I didn't have any money left with me to pay for my car installments or even my rent in Chandigarh. I have been through days when my bank balance was low. It was also at this point that I started doing movies to make money and do more commercial music."

Hardy is an unusual name and when asked how he came up with it, he reveals it was cricketer Robin Uthappa who gave him the name Hardy. "I don't think Uthappa would remember, but it was around the time when we were in Bengaluru playing for India Under 19. I was only 17 and because Uthappa hails from the south, he found it difficult to pronounce my name. So, he came up with Hardy and it has stuck with me ever since." He adds, "Just a few days back, I attended an old friend's wedding and I was addressed there as Hardavinder and it felt very nice."

Sandhu's latest single titled 'Jee Karr Daa' features Amyra Dastur. In the video, they are dancing on the streets of Istanbul. He reveals, "*Jee Karr Daa* is written by Mellow D and composed and arranged by Akull. I heard the song, I liked it and I chose to sing it. It was very simple. Music is a feeling. It has no language. Even my selection of music has evolved over the years. I had stopped listening to the latest tracks as I felt a lot of similar music was being made and I feared I might do the same. Off late, I really liked *Shayad* (*Love Aaj Kal*) and Darshan Raval's latest song *Asal Mein*."

Back in the 90s, we had a thriving independent music scene, but now we are left with very few independent artists. Even those independent artistes are being roped in either to remix their old songs or old songs of other composers. Speaking of this remix culture, Sandhu says, "Old songs are remixed today to reach a younger and wider audience. But the ratio of bad to good remix is higher. I wish composers and artists put in more hard work so that good compositions also get their due. Nowadays, it is a challenge to release a full album. We only have singles. That is because if the first song doesn't connect with the audience, the entire album is discarded. Songs don't trend if it is released without the video. People have stopped listening to music. They want to watch your song with the video."

Sandhu's biggest challenge of his career so far is his Hindi debut film, '83, with Kabir Khan. He is playing the role of Madan Lal, who was significant in helping the team win the World Cup. While promoting *Kya Baat Hai*, Sandhu met Salil Acharya, who suggested he should audition for the film as he has played cricket professionally. Sandhu says, "My friend Ammy Virk, who is also in '83, had told Kabir (Khan) Sir about my cricket background. Virk asked me to come down to a restaurant in the society where I live and I met Khan. It was a complete stroke of luck and now I truly believe in the power of the universe. So technically, I got the film right below my house," he smiles.



He adds, "Kabir Sir asked me if I can imitate Madan Lal's bowling action. I was asked to send the bowling action on video in a few days. I practised for a few days and sent the video. I didn't hear from them for 4-5 days. I thought they didn't like it. But on the fifth day, I got a call from them and the first thing they said was 'Aapne kiya kaise?'. They asked me to come on board. Not many people know that Madan Lal Sir was my bowling coach at the National Cricket academy Under 17 in Bengaluru. I was with him for a month and I knew how he spoke, how he walks and how he bowls. When I donned his look, I was unable to recognise myself. After the shooting was over, I met Madan Lal Sir, a couple of times and I realise both of us are similar individuals as well as fast bowlers."

In '83, Ranveer Singh plays Kapil Dev. Talking about his equation with Singh, Sandhu recalls working with him and says, "The training camp helped us bond and become a team. I find Singh very inspiring. The amount of hard work and energy he puts in is amazing. He is a huge star but very humble. I've learnt a lot from him. During the film, he helped me and every other co-star like he was a team captain in real life as well. As a newcomer, there was never any insecurity to share the screen with 11 other actors. Each character is well defined and the film has done justice with every character."

Sandhu now has a team following him and documenting his life, but back at Lord's while shooting of '83, he didn't click a single picture. He was simply soaking in the place with his heart. Does he have any plans to put his story on paper or the silver screen in any form? He says, "I'm hoping that some day, a biopic will be made. But I think it is too early because there are still a lot of stories to be told and events waiting to unfold." ☺

Hardy is an unusual name, and Sandhu reveals it was cricketer Robin Uthappa who gave him the name





NOTA BENE

► SALVATORE FERRAGAMO

Alberto Morillas has created a darker fragrance —Uomo Salvatore Ferragamo Signature— that leaves a rich and bold lingering sensation among leathery notes, reminiscent of the Florentine tradition and a new sexiness made of coffee's darkness and Tonka Bean.



► ACQUA DI PARMA

Colonia Club by Acqua di Parma is a woody aromatic fragrance for women and men. The fragrance is elegantly dynamic, fresh and embodies the contemporary side of Italian lifestyle. The original top notes of neroli, mint and galbanol gives a new, spicy perspective to the traditional Colonia.



THE CHECKLIST

New products to check out this month



▲ HOUBIGANT

Cologne Intense by Houbigant is an elegant and refined homage to the original Eau de Cologne fragrance. The top notes form a vibrant accord with Sicilian lemon and Calabrian bergamot joined by Moroccan Neroli and Petitgrain from Paraguay. The latter half of the fragrance is just as exotic, with Indian jasmine, joined by lavender and tarragon accents and enfolded in South American mate tea.



▲ JO MALONE

Jo Malone London's Cologne Intense collection's newest addition — Vetiver & Golden Vanilla — is a combination of Madagascar's two prized ingredients entwined along the island's vanilla-swept coastline. Vetiver & Golden Vanilla has an elegant warmth when paired with other scents like Blackberry & Bay, Nectarine Blossom & Honey, Orange Blossom.

► THE DIFFERENT COMPANY

Oud For Love by The Different Company is an oriental fragrance for women and men. This perfume is one of the most beautiful tributes to love, enveloping with its deep, intense and warm silage, for those who choose to dedicate themselves to it.



▼ HUGO BOSS

Boss Parfums is inviting men to dress to celebrate with the launch of its newest limited-edition fragrance— Boss Bottled Absolute. Whether you wish to go for modern elegance or a bolder statement, the new fragrance rounds off every outfit for any occasion. It joins the portfolio of Eau de Parfums that match the quality and sophistication of the brand's tailoring.



◀ GUCCI

Gucci Guilty Love Edition Pour Homme demands the same attention as the individual who wears the fragrance. A new modern Aromatic Fougère Spicy Green scent brings in the striking spirit, which is characterised in vibrant cold spices, citrus and enigmatic masculine aromatic woods. The layered creation is enhanced by an airy Musky base, the divinely sophisticated Patchouli Prisma for its white softness, and finally, the intense wrapping sensation of a Mineral Amber.





◀ ISSEY MIYAKE

L'Eau D'Issey Pour Homme has an intense version of woody notes. The top note is composed of spicy grapefruit, lively cardamom and the sharp freshness of elemi essence. The middle note contains the vigorous power of wood interwoven with essences of Virginia cedarwood and sandalwood, alongside ambrox and the sweet flavor of apricot. The base note consists of essences of Haitian vetiver and patchouli against a musky backdrop to prolong a long-lasting and robust sillage.



◀ IRIS FRAGRANCES

Iris introduces Iris Celeste Car Mist from their most popular range of Iris Celeste fragrances. All you need to do is spray a little in your car to ensure a peaceful journey. It is specially formulated with natural aromatic oils to immerse you in an environment of relaxation. The mist is available in a range of four fragrances — Ocean Dream, Sandalwood, Lavender Mist and Citric Tango.

▶ DAVIDOFF

Thirty years ago, Pierre Bourdon created Cool Water that reshaped the world of men's fragrances. With more than 18 natural ingredients, including geranium, pink pepper and orange essential oils, the fragrance boldly embraces an overdose of freshness. To celebrate its legendary fragrance and open a new chapter of its history, Davidoff decided to launch two brand-new eaux des parfums: Cool Water Intense for Him and for Her.



▶ CALVIN KLEIN

Eternity Flame by Calvin Klein for Men is fruity, with dash of amber and leathery tones. A unique combination that is fresh yet warm, sensual and rich, but still soft. Fruit and aromatic notes are redefined with hints of amber and leathery tones. Each fragrance element comes together to create an intense fougere oriental signature scent that reinterprets masculinity.



◀ ORTO PARISI

Orto Parisi has been launched exclusively in India by Maison Des Parfums in their first retail concept store for luxury artisanal fragrances. Each scent is a personal interpretation of the smell of life or an embodiment of one of Perfumer Alessandro Gualtieri's personal experiences.

▶ FUJIFILM

Fujifilm has announced its latest Instax Mini 11 for the Indian markets. The stylish new addition comes packed with Automatic Exposure and Selfie Mode function to capture moments instantly. In addition, the company announced two new stylish mini-format instax films — "Blue Marble" and square-format instax film White Marble, both featuring marble patterns on the frames. The Fujifilm Instax Mini 11 will be available in five pale tone colors — blush pink, sky blue, charcoal gray, ice white and lilac purple from April in India.





▲ OPIUM EYEWEAR

Designed by Renesa Studios, the OPIUM store in Mumbai has been launched at Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport. The store offers the extension of the brand's identity by housing unique spatial elements set against a grid of time and space. Neon accents, interactive shelves and transcendent illumination bring out the shock and awe factor, which is followed by affordable price points of the brand's product offering.

► z3

The Z3 Seersucker collection offers a classic shirt range for the summers. Invented in India, the Seersucker fabric is easy to care for and does not need ironing as the puckered look is the special feature of the garment.

Introduced by z3, the shirts are available in pastel shades in solids and stripes with short sleeves.



◀ ZODIAC

Zodiac's Vivace collection has a stunning range of shirts bursting with colours for Summer 2020. Vivace shirts are crafted from luxurious Egyptian Giza 86 cotton, woven in to a single 60's fabric with a "Silk Touch", a result of the Zodiac trademark "Silk Protein Finish." The colour palette of the range are fiery orange, MEDITERRANEAN blue, sparkling red, muted greens and NAPLES yellow.



▲ BLACKBERRYS WEDDING COLLECTION

From Giza shirts to contemporary bandhgalas and dapper tuxedos, Blackberrys' new wedding collection has everything you need to up your wedding game. The latest offering from the house of Blackberrys is a perfect blend of versatility and style, incorporating a wide variety of options to choose from for every occasion, including bachelor's party, cocktail party, sundowner and the D-day.

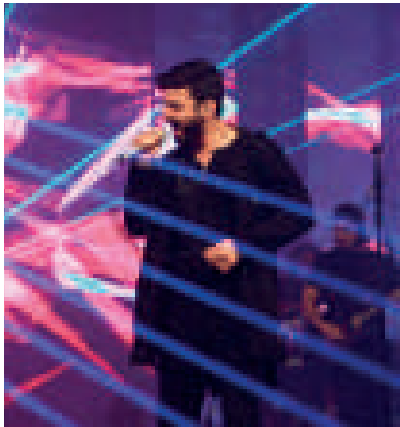
▼ NUMI PARIS EYEWEAR

With avant-garde designs, premium quality and attention to detail, NUMI eyewear promises to bring Parisian fashion with its launch in India. The language of the brand reflects art, culture, glamour and the cinematic element of France. The extensive range of sophisticated eyewear suits various moods and events.



FAWAD KHAN

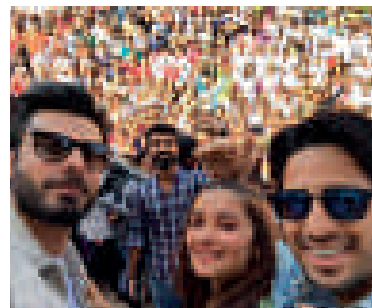
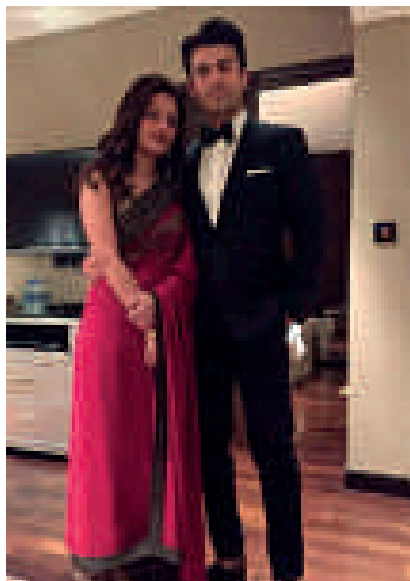
What Fawad Khan's Instagram feed says about him



He's a great singer and shares videos of his music on Instagram. Sigh. could he get any more perfect?



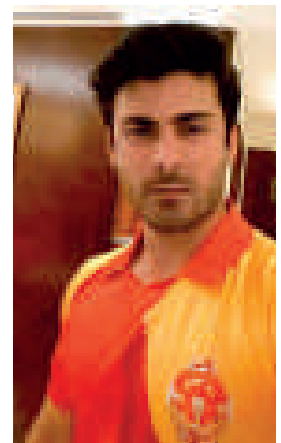
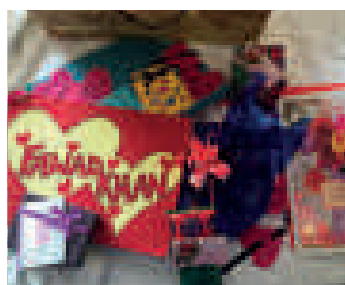
He's clearly madly in love with his family and doesn't leave any opportunity to show his wife off on social media



There are lovely BTS and candid images of him enjoying with his co-stars



He has a huge fan base (duh) and constantly posts about the gifts he gets from his fans



He's a huge cricket fan and his favourite team is Islamabad United

