

Reshma Qureshi

It's a shame that acid is as easily accessible as a tube of lipstick. Malicious people take advantage of this, not sparing a moment to think that it will irreversibly ruin someone's life

acid.

Speaking to us from her home in one of the shanties in Kurla, Mumbai, the 18-year-old says, "What happened to me shouldn't happen to anyone. Unfortunately, women aren't safe in our country — rapes and acid attacks are rampant and despite that, the perpetrators walk scot-free. There are so many acid attack cases pending in court. They keep the convicts in jail for a year or two and then leave them. Nobody takes cognizance of the fact that the victim's life is ruined forever. If they severely punish one perpetrator, it'll serve as an example for the rest and deter them. But to begin with, the rampant sale of acid should be banned."

Talking about her makeup tutorial Reshma says, "I felt very good starring in the videos. More so because I was telling people what had happened to me. The day I went on the sets, I met everybody and it felt so good. They never for once made me feel bad about my looks and they treated me like a princess. They gave me the most beautiful clothes to wear and also applied makeup."

Reshma says that joining the NGO gave her a newfound will to live and being part of the tutorials was a result of that. "I realised that there were more women like me — some having faced worse deformities than I had. I met another survivor called Lalita and her condition was way worse than mine. Her eyes, ears and nose were deformed beyond repair. I forgot my troubles when I saw her and thought to myself, 'if she can move on with her life, why can't I?' The founder of Make Love Not Scars, Rhea Sharma spoke to me for over two hours, showed me photos of others like me and showed me a ray of hope," says Reshma who has already undergone seven surgeries.

Smiling ear-to-ear for the first time since our conversation began, the young activist admits that she was ecstatic when her efforts showed results. "The first time my video went viral on YouTube and I got likes, I was thrilled," she says.

Coming back to the core belief behind her project she adds, "It's a shame that acid is as easily accessible as a tube of lipstick. Malicious people take advantage of this, not sparing a moment to think that it will irreversibly ruin someone's life. Filtering the sale of acid can stop that."

Awaiting her next surgery in a month's time, Reshma wants to dedicate her life to the cause of acid attack victims. An aspiring teacher once upon a time, she has veered her efforts since the time she began activism efforts. "I have one more surgery to undergo after which I will resume studies. I will appear for private exams and will work for an NGO. There are many acid attack victims whose parents have abandoned them and I wish to help them," she concludes.

A SURVIVOR'S MISSION

**AN ACID ATTACK
TURNED
RESHMA QURESHI
INTO AN ACTIVIST
SEEKING A STOP ON
OVER-THE-COUNTER
SALES OF THE
DEADLY SUBSTANCE
THAT COMPLETELY
CHANGED HER LIFE**

● AARTI BHANUSHALI

Like many makeup tutorials on the Web, Reshma Qureshi's also is one that tells you how to define your eyes or get fuller lips. But there's one big difference. Unlike other tutors, Reshma is a survivor of an acid attack and the canvas that she works with isn't as scar-free as one is used to. She was subject to a gruesome acid attack at the hands of her own brother-in-law. Teaming up with the NGO Make Love Not Scars, Reshma shot a video to highlight the life-altering effects of acid attacks. More specifically, she is fighting a battle against the over-the-counter sale of



PHOTO CREDIT: RAJESH JADHAV



'I WANT TO BE THE USAIN BOLT OF INDIA'

...says Budhia Singh, as he pins his hopes of finding a good coach with the release of his upcoming biopic

AARTI BHANUSHALI

✓ The name Budhia Singh conjures up an image of a little kid sprinting across the landscape of Odisha. It was back in 2006 when as a four-year-old, little Budhia earned a record in the Limca Book of Records for completing a staggering 65 kilometres (Puri to Bhubaneswar) in a little over seven hours. Parallely, his coach Biranchi Das became the centre of a raging controversy. Today, as a 14-year-old, he cuts a different picture except that the zeal to run remains the same and so does the twinkle in the eye at the mention of the sport. Basking in the glory of his years as a wonder kid, he talks to us in broken Hindi ahead of the biopic — *Budhia Singh - Born to Run* — based on his life that is set to release next month.

The Odisha boy, also touted as the country's youngest marathoners, is believed to have participated in over 40 marathons even before he turned 5, before being packed off to Kalinga Stadium hostel in Bhubaneswar in 2006 by the government authorities. Since then, Budhia's life has been shrouded in controversy. "When I finished the Puri marathon, after the prize distribution we went home happily

After a few months, rumours started doing the rounds that my coach was hitting me, and there was a warrant issued against him. Everything went downhill from there. I was sent to the sports hostel and my coach was put behind bars," he recollects.

Budhia, however, fiercely defends his former coach. "When I was with Biren sir, I used to wake up at 4 am and run till 6 am. Later I'd attend school and return to the training school and start practise again from 1 to 4 in the afternoon. I was under proper care. He even taught me swimming, exercise and used to take me for a massage later. Hostel life is way different than my childhood; here I only get to practise for two hours and then play sports. I don't have proper practice for running at all," he adds.

Having been away from controversy for a while now, Budhia found himself in the eye of a storm once again when recently rumours started doing the rounds that he had gone missing from his school. Some even speculating that the student from DAV English Medium School in Bhubaneswar may have been dead. But he laughs it off. "When I came to Mumbai, I had sought all the permissions required for my absence from school. I don't know why the school authorities did not reveal that they had received the application. Soon rumours started doing the rounds that Budhia Singh has been kidnapped, he has been murdered — but I was here (in Mumbai) with my mom!" he says with much amusement.

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Hostel
life is way
different than
my childhood;
here I only get to
practise for two
hours and then
play sports



A young Budhia with his running shoes in Odisha — APP. (Inset): Budhia Singh at the promotions of his film — MRUGESH BANDWADKAR

tipple

Raise a toast
on Father's
Day

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be sporty

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GLAM SHAM



Cindy steps into the city

Supermodel Cindy Crawford chats with us on her Mumbai visit, talks Bollywood, glam biz and marriage

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LIFESTYLE



The Ex-Factor in your life

Considering inviting an ex to your wedding? You may want to keep this etiquette advice in mind...

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A 'SIGN' OF POSITIVE CHANGE

AARTI BHANUSHALI



Top: Customer at M&M placing an order using sign language; below: a staff meeting



Mirch and Mime in Powai is a far cry from the chaotic banter that one usually encounters in a restaurant. Opened last month, it is the city's only restaurant to be supported entirely by hearing and speech-impaired wait staff. This 80-seater bar and grill claims to be the first restaurant in the city to have the entire 25 member service team comprising hearing and speech-impaired individuals only. And that's thanks to the brainwave of Prashant Issar and Anuj Shah, who wanted to start a restaurant that was like no other.

"We wanted to start something, which not only adds value to the business but also adds value to society. We formed our company and decided that we will open restaurants. Whilst we were considering that, we met our partners. They had seen a video on Facebook of a restaurant in Toronto in Canada, which employs deaf and mute candidates. We liked the idea and decided to give it a shot, as it would generate wealth for the society at large," says Prashant.

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Above: Staff member at Lemon Tree; below: staff at M&M



PHOTO COURTESY: LEMON TREE HOTELS



Above: Staff at Lemon Tree Hotels.

M&M IMAGES BY SATEJ SHINDE

Mind, body
and soul
What your
personality
says about
your health
P2



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Losing the vote of CONFIDENCE

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Money and politics go hand-in-hand. Politicians need money to run campaigns, while the rich endorse candidates who share their ideological beliefs or simply to have some clout.

But, at times, the once-staunch supporters too have a change of heart. A look at top names who regretted backing the wrong guy.

Tony Fernandes
CEO, AirAsia Group
Supported: Najib Razak

Tony Fernandes found himself in the centre of a storm when he openly endorsed the Barisan Nasional party. Leading up to the 14th General Malaysian Elections, Fernandes had painted one of his low-budget carriers the same shade of blue as the now-outdated party along with its campaign slogan. Two days before the poll, he released a video praising former prime minister Najib Razak.

With Razak's government booted out of power, Fernandes quickly back-pedalled, releasing another video expressing his regret. He claimed he buckled under "intense pressure".

George Soros
Founder, Soros Fund Management
Supported: Barack Obama

The Hungarian-American billionaire has been a large donor to the US Democratic Party. Though Soros backed Barack Obama over Hillary Clinton in the 2008 Democratic presidential primary, his relations with the president soured as he felt snubbed.

In 2012, he told a close Clinton ally,



"I am sorry for what has gone on. I buckled at the crucial moment in our history. It wasn't right and I will forever regret it"

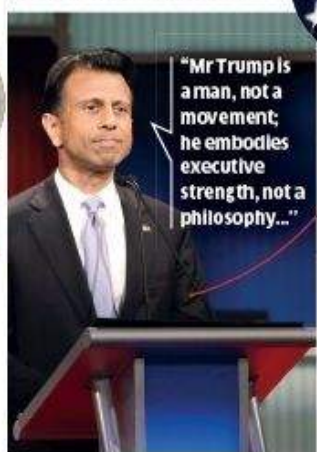


Tanden said in her email to Clinton, "He's been impressed that he can always call/meet with you on an issue of policy and said he hasn't met with the President ever (though I thought he had). He said he regretted his decision in the primary..."

Neera Tanden, that he regretted supporting Obama, according to Clinton's emails that were released in 2015.

Robert Iger
Chairman, The Walt Disney Company
Supported: Donald Trump

Though Disney head honcho Robert Iger never criticised or praised Donald Trump openly, he had defended the US President at a shareholder meeting in March 2017. Iger stuck to his decision of being a part of Trump's business advisory council, saying he wanted to be "in the room where it happens". While he was aligned with the president on some issues, they clashed on others. However, Iger resigned from the council after the US President announced that he was withdrawing from the Paris climate accord.



"Mr Trump is a man, not a movement; he embodies executive strength, not a philosophy..."



"Protecting our planet and driving economic growth are critical to our future, and they aren't mutually exclusive. I deeply disagree with the decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement and, as a matter of principle, I've resigned from the President's advisory council"

Bobby Jindal
Former Governor of Louisiana
Supported: Donald Trump
Bobby Jindal and Donald Trump share a love-hate relationship. And though he had spent the majority of his campaign for the Republican nomination railing against Trump, Jindal had said in 2016 that he would vote for the real estate mogul, because Clinton would be a more dangerous option. But in his latest piece for *The Wall Street Journal*, Jindal called out Trump once again, criticising his policies.

'The worst time for a sector is the best for investors'

Kedia Securities' Vijay Kedia has a BCom degree, but he shared a wealth of life lessons with students at the London Business School recently

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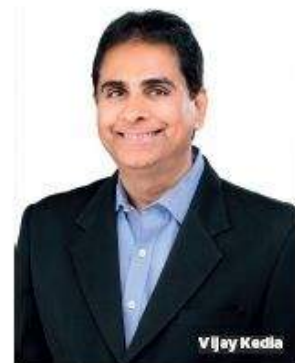
Vijay Kedia is commonly referred to as an ace investor. And when the MD of Kedia Securities Pvt Ltd shares his knowledge, people listen.

Speaking at the London Business School (LBS) last month, one of the many insights he shared was: "The worst time for any sector is often the best time for investors."

Kedia was talking about India's economic performance in the past 20 years and its outlook for another 20 years. He has earlier been a keynote speaker in top-most business universities of India, including IIMA and IIMB.

Kedia, who did his BCom from Kolkata, told the students that he regretted not opting for higher studies. "But, at the same time, I am happy that I have never stopped learning," he said. "I am trying to learn something new from every situation and every person I meet. I respect and admire educated and learned people. The first question that comes to my mind before meeting anyone is what can I learn from him?"

Recounting a childhood memory, Kedia shared how his mother worried about his lack of interest in studies. "My mom asked an astrologer that the [Kedia] is very naughty and doesn't study. The astrologer saw my palm and told her not to worry as I would



go to the biggest university. What he must have forgotten to mention was that I would be going not to learn, but to teach," he said with a laugh.

When asked about his experience of interacting with the LBS students, Kedia said, "I enjoyed every moment and every question. Giving all these speeches, I have realised that preparation is the key. I usually study for a month or more before each speech. And I really believe that the best way to learn is to teach. I feel I represented India at the London Business School."

Kedia also cautioned the students: "When investing, remember that Rome was not built in a day. And in trading, remember Hiroshima and Nagasaki were destroyed in a day."



AND THE AWARD GOES TO...

US President Donald Trump recently unveiled the winners of his much-touted Fake News Awards. He is not the only one to make such a bizarre announcement. Here's a look at some of the strangest awards

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May it please the court The Stella Awards

These awards are given to those who file outrageous lawsuits to make quick money. The awards are named after 81-year-old Stella Liebeck, who split hot coffee on herself and successfully sued McDonald's in New Mexico, where she purchased the drink. Interestingly, she took the lid off the coffee and put it between her knees while she was driving. The award has also attracted attention for revealing some of the most absurd examples of people abusing the legal system.

Tongue-in-cheek The Pigasus Award

James Randi, the noted sceptic and subject of the documentary *An Honest Liar*, founded the Pigasus Award in 1982. Every year, he presents the trophy on April 1 (April Fool's Day) to the worst of those who claim to have special psychic, magic, and paranormal abilities. The categories include awards to scientists, funding organisations, media outlets and psychic performers who claim to have reported, supported or performed the most outrageous parapsychological acts or studies in the year.

Ill-fitted

The Foot in Mouth Award

The Foot in Mouth Award is presented for a baffling public comment. Founded by a UK-based group in 1979, some of the famous recipients of the coveted trophy are — Russell Brand, George W Bush and Naomi Campbell. Not surprisingly, Donald Trump too made the honour roll in 2015. The founders said that Trump was "unrivalled". His award-winning statement was on John McCain: "He's



not a war hero. He was a war hero because he was captured. I like people who weren't captured."

Lethal stupidity Darwin Awards

Named in honour of Charles Darwin, the father of evolution, the Darwin Awards commemorate those who die in the most bizarre ways. Started by a group of people in 1980s, it has recorded many a strange demise. Take for instance a

47-year-old man from France who attempted to leave his room on the ninth floor by climbing down the 'ethernet cable'. He decided to climb down because his mother had locked him in the room to prevent him from drinking any further. His weight was too much for the cable and he crashed into the street. The doctors could not resuscitate him.

Counterattack The IG Nobel Prize

A spoof of the Nobel Prizes, the

IG Nobel Prizes are awarded each year in mid-September (around the same time when genuine Nobel laureates are announced) for 10 achievements that "first make people laugh, and then make them think". In 2017, Australia-based Matthew Rockloff and Nancy Groer were awarded for their research on examining the effects of holding a live crocodile on a slot-machine gambling. The awards are presented at Sanders Theatre in Harvard University.

job talk



Talent for hire

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They are IT and software company's blue-eyed-boys, and the public sector wants them too — engineers from IIT. At least that's what Arundhati Bhattacharya, the former chairman of the State Bank of India, told students at a recent event at IIT-Bombay. "What happens with IITs and IIMs is that they get employed by the McKinseys and the BCGs of the world. And then, we employ these companies for three times the amount they are giving you, but we are not allowed to directly recruit you. That's very sad. But that's the way the public sector is," she said. Bhattacharya, though, also sounded warning bells, given the ever-evolving job market. "The quality and nature of jobs will change and what you do will be widely different than what you expected," she said.

Of deals and wheels

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Karun Nair, India's only Test triple-centurion apart from Virender Sehwag, has added another feather to his helmet — he's earned ₹5.06 crore for an IPL spot with the Kings XI Punjab team.

Famous for his super-fast tons, Nair carries his passion for all things fast out of the pitch and onto the road. "I have three cars and my favourite is the red Mustang I bought last year. I drive it around Bengaluru and go on longer drives during the off-season," he says.

While his love for fast cars is apparent, Nair confesses that he doesn't know to ride a bike. His parents didn't allow him to, he says. "I do plan on learning to ride though and buy a sports bike. It's something for the future."





Letters across the divide

Defying the vitriol following Uri and the surgical strikes, young brigades of pen pals across the border are playing peacemakers

AARTI BHANUSHALI

I "I think that not all Pakistanis are terrorists", "I would love to visit Pakistan if it were safe", "We should forget the past and try and be friends". Scribbled across ruled sheets of paper by school children, these are some of the thoughts that are going to make their way to their friends in Pakistan. Turning hostility into hope against the backdrop of the Uri attacks and surgical strikes are two city-based educators — Chintan Girish Modi and Tulika Bhatija. Chintan and Tulika promote cross-border friendship by means long forgotten by our generation — hand written letters. They are helping children forge bonds with the neighbour by creating pen pals in the two countries. Chintan is the

Founder of Friendships Across Borders: Aao Dosti Karein — an initiative that uses the power of storytelling and social media to foster cross-border friendships. As part of his efforts, Chintan conducts 'peace workshops' in schools and colleges across India as well as in Lahore and Islamabad.

"At these peace education workshops, we intend to include young people in a dialogue that steers their thoughts away from political propaganda and initiates a rational thinking process. We conduct quizzes,

It is only a few projected voices in the media who are up in arms against Pakistan — CHINTAN GIRISH MODI



show them videos and get to know their opinions about issues," Chintan says. "People are not naturally up in arms against Pakistan — it is only a few projected voices in the media who are up in arms. We are trying to spread critical media literacy through our workshops and trying to explain how both the countries have different tunes at different times," he adds.

12-year-old Gurmye Shah, who has been a part of Chintan's initiative sounds wiser than her years when she shares her experience. "Everywhere across the media, it was shown that terrorists traumatised our jawans. The truth is that even the Pakistani citizens are living in the fear of terrorism, just like us. We share the same history and there is so much similarity between us. They love our Bollywood stars like Salman Khan and Shah Rukh Khan.

It's very unfortunate that their terrorist troops are more powerful than their government. I wrote a letter to them in the workshop and made a suggestion. Like the BRICS meet, even we should try initiating a peaceful dialogue once a year at least."

Working on similar lines as Chintan is Tulika, an educator at Juhu's Ecole Mondiale World School. In collaboration with Aaghaz-e-dosti, she urges her students to make pen pals with their peers in Pakistan. Earlier this year, the children sent solidarity cards to Ghauri Wisdom High School, Lahore, after the blasts at Gulshan-e-Iqbal Park in Lahore. "Our cards were given to the parents of one of the martyrs of the blast. Since then, we have been in constant touch and also sent some cards during the Peshawar blast. Some of our students have forged beautiful friendships with students in Pakistan and exchange letters on a regular basis. With the ongoing unrest, we plan to continue these initiatives," she says.

Another 12-year-old who echoes the sentiment of her mentor is Shreya Sethi. Shreya admits that she has a lot more clarity about the neighbour after her workshops. "To be very frank, there were many bitter thoughts in my mind about Pakistan and its people. After the workshop, I understood that they have faced more terrorist attacks in their country; their citizens are as troubled as we are. People who want war now will not be alive when we grow up and the consequences will affect the whole world; we shouldn't be fighting and war is not the solution," says the seventh grader.

>>Turn on Page 22



Students from Lahore with the solidarity cards they received from India

—AAGHAZ-E-DOSTI

...the more you...
people in power who want war should be in a safe place and the common people of both...
there should start a new wave of life again...
I feel that other countries like 'US, Russia',...
is it are responsible for increasing the enmity...
between the 2 countries they add fuel to fire...
really. If we do so, to have peace, I feel that...
the relationship between the two countries...
it again be together in a bond of friendship. I...
travelling feel that we the common people of...
don't and Pakistan want peace and state it...
I see it makes the same promise as you mentioned...
pun later and I hope that these people who...
we can really change their minds and know...
that school teacher is. Sir, thank you for clearing...
my mind. My god bless. This is the future.



...accept and what not to...
being frank, I would like to tell you...
I LOVE PAKISTAN!! Their dress...
and everything. Especially their language...
which I like to visit Pakistan if it would...
be safe...
But as I told before, my mom would...
If I would tell her about my this drive...
It was a nice experience... Attending it...
and reading your letter both. I wish I...
actually met people like you who have...
ambitions as mine...
The thing I could never speak up about...
was all that here. Hope as you said I...
find it interesting...!! I LOVE PAK

From...
Shreya Sethi, Ghauri Wisdom High School

spot
this

A VIEW FROM THE ROOFTARP

**SAMIR PARKER'S
ROOF/TARP/CITY PROJECT
IS GIVING MUMBAI'S
ROOFTOPS A FANTASTIC
MAKEOVER**

BY AARTI BHANUSHALI

Mumbai's shanties, like many other pockets of the country, have always borne a single shade of blue, thanks to tarpaulin on the roofs. Adding more than just a hint of colour to the vast canvas this year is Samir Parker with his project Roof/Tarp/City.

With help from the locals in the respective areas, he mapped out parts of different localities and gave a graphic makeover to over 10,000 square metres of rooftops across the cityscape.

"The idea was to create a series of beautiful imagery visible from the air and satellite," says Samir, who has designed installations, exhibitions and publications for Bodhi Art, the London School of Economics, Unicef and the Venice Biennale. "So, I asked local boys to imagine a game-board or puzzle of interlocking forms coming together. I had intended for the visual composition to emerge from the process. Using tarpaulin opened up a whole new approach to the act of image making," he says.

How did the colours come together? "Our palette was chosen for maximum contrast — each rooftop, a single block of colour or pixel. The abstract nature of the composition made various participants see it differently. We would discuss their views and the final graphic decisions were made on site in real time using phone cameras and WhatsApp," he adds.

Samir's efforts to find a location encountered many difficulties thanks to local authorities and thugs who wanted a piece of the pie. "For those who dwell in these irregular settlements, any outside interference is viewed with suspicion. Material assistance often opens up internal jealousies and demands; local politicians and thugs try to muscle in on the opportunity. My search for a site was defined by several requirements such as the size of the area, access, visibility and most importantly, community participation.

"I found partners in Raja and Reshma Keshavan, residents of Murugan Chawl (in Khar). Well-networked in the large area, they managed every aspect of the work efficiently. Our basic team comprised 10 boys, but almost all the teenagers of the area got involved," he says.

So far, Samir has worked on three sites — in Bandra Murugan Chawl (168 homes), Bandra Reclamation (approximately 400 homes) and Bandra Camp/ Rang Sharda (224 homes). The best part of his job he says is the smile on the faces of the community members. "The work ethic and irreverent humour of the boys who



worked in tough conditions made my task relatively easy. The pride in the communities for their location is probably the most enduring aspect of the whole project. The idea of marking their own home on the map, visible to satellites above, was a constant source of motivation for residents in the areas."

Samir now plans to explore the idea of art on wheels with his next project. "I do hope that the Roof/Tarp/City idea gains traction and extends to other areas before the next monsoon season. Meanwhile, I am taking the concept further; using the roofs of autorickshaws. Both from inside and outside, the flat surface of the roof offers an opportunity to personalise each auto. I have been speaking to a number of auto drivers towards developing a template that works for an individual auto and then when 10, 50 or 200 autos come together, it creates a larger urban artwork. The ordinary act of catching and riding an auto now has the potential to become a real human engagement or even an urban exploration. The dynamism and reach this can have is truly exciting," he says about his self-funded next project.

**BLUE TARP
CLOAKS MOST
SLUMS IN INDIA.
SAMIR WORKS
WITH LOCALS TO
INFUSE SOME
COLOUR INTO
THE CITYSCAPE**

**OVER 700 HOMES
HAVE BEEN
WORKED ON
WITH THE HELP
OF LOCALS AND
SAMIR WANTS
TO TRANSFORM
AUTOS NEXT**



The idea of marking their own home on the map, visible to satellites above, was a constant source of motivation for residents in the areas

**HARESH MEHTA
CHANGES
COMMONLY
HELD NOTIONS
ABOUT
CARDBOARD —
THAT IT IS DULL,
FLIMSY ETC — BY
USING THE
MATERIAL TO
CREATE STURDY,
FUNCTIONAL
DESIGNS**



HOUSE OF CARDS

● AARTI BHANUSHALI

Haresh Mehta would often visit his family's cardboard factory as a child. And while others his age may have found the piles of corrugated sheets and cubical boxes that the Mehtas manufactured boring, Haresh saw in them the possibility to create so much more. He looked beyond the surface of cardboard, beyond the conventional box shapes, and found that what he could do with the material was only limited by his imagination.

Today, besides creating quirky, colourful packaging for brands, Haresh also uses cardboard to design sofa sets, rocking chairs, portable loos and single beds. His latest endeavour has been to create a wheelchair access ramp and an easel made of cardboard for the cerebral palsy patients at Nanavati Super Speciality Hospital in Mumbai. Incidentally, Haresh is a cancer survivor.

On first entering Haresh's workshop in the suburb of Kurla, Mumbai, his passion for his work immediately becomes evident. All the fixtures in the room — right from his work desk to the benches for seating, as well as the pin holder on his table — are all made out of cardboard. Among his designs that are positioned all over the studio, there is a chandelier, a remote-controlled trashcan, and a rocking chair. His tiniest design is a pendant set and the largest, a huge, fully functional bar.

So, what prompts him to work with a material that is considered flimsy? "It's a path no one has tread before. I first saw something made of cardboard in Japan in the early '90s. It was on a limited scale though. I



made my own designs after a lot of trial-and-error," says Haresh, who has over 100 designs in his portfolio, some of them patented.

Having received no formal education in design, Haresh tried to understand the media all by himself. He began by sketching, cutting and understanding the tensile strength of cardboard. "I'm a college dropout. My work is purely passion-driven... Earlier, people would laugh at me, they'd ask me if I was mad! This question drove me to discover the material further. They (design schools) teach you how to shape metal, plastic but how to do that with cardboard isn't taught anywhere. Even the best design schools in California do not teach you how to use cardboard. For everyone all over the world, cardboard is what you use to make boxes and that's it," Haresh says.

Persuading people that cardboard had a utility beyond what they believed was a challenge — one Haresh says he still faces. "Convincing someone to use cardboard as furniture or even an accessory, was difficult. I

had to bring people to the workshop, show them the strength of the material and demonstrate that even cardboard can work wonders," he says.

Haresh asserts that anything that can be imagined can be crafted from cardboard. "As children we used to make a lot of origami artefacts. Think of this as larger origami. The paper is sourced by me, the cardboard is made in the workshop here. It helps me control the strength of the material. If a design is such that it has to carry a weight of 150 kilos, I need to know what kind of permutations and combinations to use, what kind of paper to use," he says.

Haresh first makes his designs in miniature before making the actual product. "Cardboard has a typical wavy structure, it has got a lot of science and architecture. It has an arch and columns. If you use it properly you can create wonders. It is the conceptualising that takes the maximum amount of time," he explains.

Haresh now plans to launch his online store called Paper Shaper next month. It will feature fun designs for children in addition to his regular work. "Children's furniture fascinates me, and Paper Shaper will have a lot of toys for kids. The idea is to make all the things one needs... People should know that there are enormous possibilities with cardboard. In general, cardboard is a lot cheaper than other conventional materials," he says.

There's also the added bonus that cardboard is a more eco-friendly material. "If we use wood, there is serious degradation of nature, cutting down of trees, etc.," says Haresh. "Whereas cardboard is made of wood fibre and has minimum wood content. Besides it degrades easily and can be recycled."



Women working at Haresh's factory

PHOTOS: RAJESH JADHAV



A rocking chair, portable loo, CD rack, and a table and chair set



Can holder in the shape of a football; it holds up to six cans

'I am living the dream'

AFTER HIS SUCCESSFUL SHIVA TRILOGY, AMISH TRIPATHI HAS ANNOUNCED HIS NEW BOOK, *SCION OF IKSHVAKU*, WHICH MARKS THE FIRST OF HIS RAM CHANDRA SERIES



● AARTI BHANUSHALI

Banker-turned-writer Amish Tripathi says he will only go back to his previous profession if his next book flops. But from what it appears, the banking industry may have to wait longer. The bestselling author has just announced his new book, *Scion of Ikshvaku*, which marks the first of his Ram Chandra series. His enormously successful debut *The Immortals of Meluha* is now being made into a big-budget film. From completing the Shiva trilogy in great style and embarking on Ram now, it has been only the rise and rise of Amish.

"I am still a Shiva devotee but," says the author with a smile, "the fallacy is to assume that there is a difference between Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu. In many *puranas*, 1,000 names of Lord Shiva have been listed and one of those names is Vishnu. So they are one and the same — different forms of the same universal force. I don't actually have to worry about stopping one trilogy and starting another."

He may be on his fourth book but Amish has plans to write even 25 years from now. "I might have to go back to being a banker if my next book flops, as I'll have to sustain myself. But I won't stop writing. The clues I have left in my books so far are all connected to books I may write 20-25 years from now. I don't know what subject I will choose to write on. But all my books tell the story of Vedic people over a 9,000-year period. Their culture was created more than 12,000 years ago and destroyed 3,500 years ago and we are their unworthy descendants. So the story in my mind is the story of these people over the entire period. And I will write it over 25-30 years," he says and adds, "So there's the story of Lord Shiva, Lord Ram, Lord Parshuram, Lord Rudra and Mohini, Lord Manu, Lord Brahma and the story of the Mahabharata. They are all linked, in continuity and I have left clues about them."

The author believes the subject (mythology, in this case), chose him and not the other way round. The visuals just came to him, he says. "I know it sounds very strange but genuinely, it's like there is a parallel universe I enter. For me, they are as real as you are. They can't see me but I get to see them and I record what I see. That's my process," Amish

says. He continues, "My wife jokes that she has had two husbands in the same marriage. The first one was a banker, who went to work, shared things with her. And now she has a different husband who doesn't share much, cries a little more than he used to."

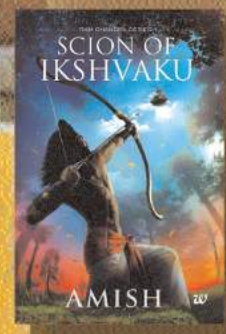
Incredulous as it may sound, Amish used to be an atheist once. "It was in the '90s. I turned atheist in my teens and it lasted for a good 10-12 years. I would stand outside the temple when my girlfriend (now wife) would go there for *pujas*. I don't know what I was trying to prove. But writing slowly brought me back to faith. So for me it was a deeply personal experience writing the book, as it changed me quite a lot. I am calmer and happier now," he says.

Coming from a highly religious family, his knowledge of mythology also influenced his writerly pursuits. "For most writers, stories tend to emerge from areas they have knowledge in. My grandfather was a pandit and also a teacher. My parents are also very religious. So I knew a lot about our ancient philosophy, scriptures and mythology from an early age. I continue to read about 4-8 books a month, on history, spirituality and science. I love pure science, besides politics and economics as well." He still has the habit of reading financial newspapers, something he has not been able to shake off since his banking days, he says.

He also says he has never had a writer's block. "There are days when words don't flow. That's perhaps when Lord Shiva is busy with someone else. So then I stop, read a book or watch a film. The next day I try again and he blesses me. Writer's block, for me, would be a long period where nothing happens. If that was the case, I would not have had three books in five years and a fourth to come," Amish says.

He is not involved in writing the film adaptation of his first book. "I am there as creative consultant. It's in the scripting stage now. I am sure a good film will emerge. But a film can never be exactly like a book. A writer has to accept that. As long as the soul of the book is captured, it's good enough," he says.

For someone who never wanted to become a writer, Amish has already written a success story. And he has us believe there are many more chapters to come. "I am living the dream. Don't wake me up," he says.



SCION OF IKSHVAKU
by
AMISH
₹262, Westland

There are days when words don't flow. That's perhaps when Lord Shiva is busy with someone else. So then I stop, read a book or watch a film. The next day I try again and he blesses me





STEVE CASINO
TRANSFORMS PEANUTS
INTO MINIATURE POP
CULTURE FIGURINES

Painter of nuts

● AARTI BHANUSHALI

Steve Casino found a peanut one fine afternoon. He gently cracked it open but did not eat it. Instead, the 50-year-old toy inventor decided to paint a face on the peanut shell. That was the beginning of what would be a hobby and a lucrative second profession for this American artist. Steve makes tiny portraits of celebrities and pop-culture personalities on the outer brittle shells of peanuts. His videos of the making of these little pieces of art are popular on social media. Each peanut is transformed into a meticulous portrait of James Bond, *Game of Thrones* characters, Frankenstein and even musicians such as Trent Reznor and Elvis Presley.

Steve's introduction to the world of art was as a kid. "My uncle was an illustrator. I was totally fascinated by the fact that he could draw anything ranging from caricatures to product renderings.

From the earliest age, I was aware that art was a career option and that somehow I would be doing it," he shares.

The journey since then has been a very bumpy ride, Steve reveals. "I've had many different jobs ranging from making fake food for TV commercials to designing toys. The jobs would become boring, and then I would quit or get fired and try something else till peanuts happened! But all the cumulative experience gave me a crazy variety of skills that I now apply to my sculptures," he says with a smile.

The painter of nuts however did not see a potential business opportunity and used to paint nuts just for fun. "I never really intended this to have value as art until Trent Reznor hired me to make them for his whole family. He actually helped me see the business potential, because at that point I was just making them for fun," he says. Painting a peanut isn't as simple as it sounds. To begin with, Steve studies images of the person he will paint. The next step is finding the right peanut.

"I may have to sift through hundreds of nuts before I find the perfect one. The process has changed over time, but the basic research remains the same. I choose a person to make a portrait of, then find a peanut that I feel embodies that person the best," he



shares.

Once the perfectly shaped peanut is found, the nut inside is extracted, and the shell is glued back together to prep it as a canvas. "Limbs and various amounts of clay are added to accentuate the portraits. Then I paint it with acrylics." The whole process for one miniature size portrait can range from 10-20 hours depending on how detailed the piece is.

From musicians such as the Beatles and astronauts to cricketers, Steve has done it all. How does he decide on a particular theme? "I experiment a lot and change my mind every hour about almost everything. Initially, I was just making peanut art of celebrities that I liked. But as the art got popular, people hired me to make their favourite

celebrities.

"For example, I was never a big fan of Jimi Hendrix before being hired to make a peanut of him. But as I worked on it, I listened to his albums and I'm now a complete lover of his music," says Steve who sells each of these portraits at 275 dollars.

The widely popular and loved comic strip by Charles Schulz's *Peanuts* is a perfect expression of self, ever made through art, Steve believes. "I've loved it from as early as I can remember. He told this profound story of his own life with art and words. Both of them combined to create this language that deeply affected me more than either could do separately. My peanuts are pale in comparison to his *Peanuts*," he adds.



LOVE AND THE THEORY OF INFIDELITY

Albert Einstein may have been achieved laurels for his scientific accomplishments, but when it came to love, he still had a long way to go

aarti.bhanushali@timesgroup.com

Albert Einstein is regarded one of history's greatest geniuses for his contribution to physics, but a glimpse into his social life will tell you he was somewhat clueless in human interactions.

Recently, a series from the scientist's personal diary made its way into the public domain and the revelations brought to light his racist views on other cultures. Interestingly, excerpts from his biography also reveal the bizarre way in which he treated his wife.

According to Walter Isaacson's book *Einstein: His Life and Universe*, the physicist has some very odd requests for his wife Mileva Maric, whom he was married for 11 years.

Outrageous demands

When Einstein found that his marriage was falling apart, he drafted a list as conditions for his return to the relationship. He believed that this would allow the two of them to remain together for the sake of their children.

The good wife

The rules included many responsibilities for Maric, but none for the man of the house himself. He wanted Maric to be his maidservant, the one who keeps mum and does what is expected out of her, silently. Maric was supposed to make sure that his bedroom and

study are kept neat, and that he receives three meals regularly in his room and that his clothes and laundry should be kept in good order.

Bitter half

His marriage-maintaining contract had clauses, which stated that Maric should let go off all personal relations, while she has with him – she shouldn't expect him to talk to her or travel with her anywhere. In addition, Einstein declared that his wife should not expect any sexual intimacy from him, should not "reproach" him in any way; should stop talking to him if he requested it; should leave his bedroom or study immediately without protest if requested.

Bidding adieu

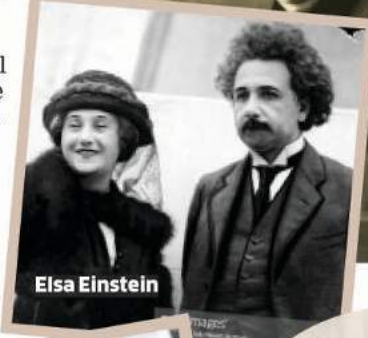
While she agreed to pay heed to his demands initially, she moved to Berlin a few months later. The couple divorced in 1919. Many historians believe that Einstein didn't give his ex-wife the due credit she deserved for collaborating with him in some of his discoveries.

The other women

Einstein's marriages were marred with affairs. He was



Einstein with wife Mileva Mic



Elsa Einstein



Estella Katzenellenbogen

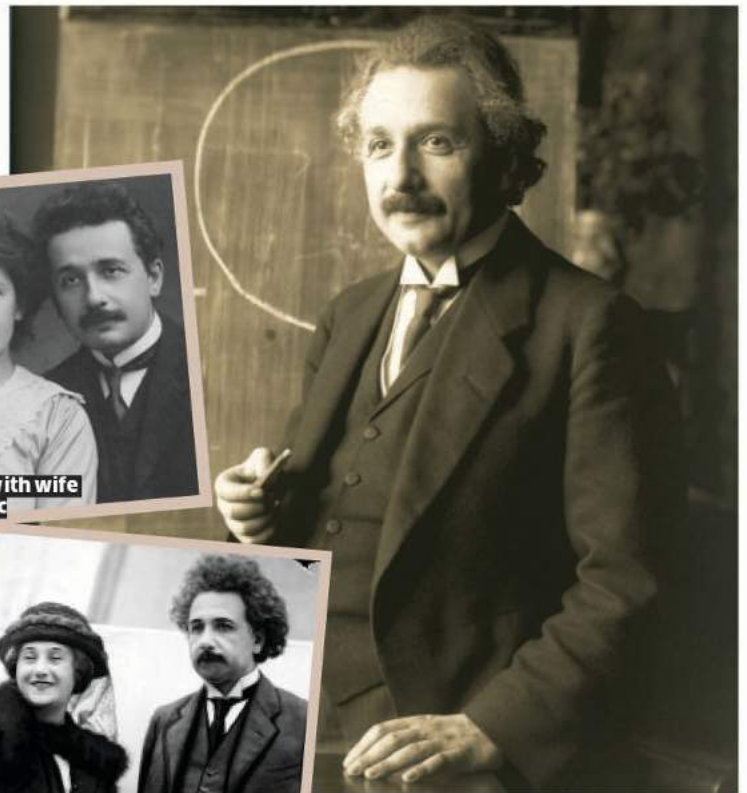
involved with Elsa Löwenthal, a first cousin who would become his second wife, in 1912, when he was still with Maric. Although Einstein married Elsa in 1919, within four years he was already involved with Bette Neumann,



Margarete Lebach

his secretary and the niece of one of his friends.

Between the mid-1920s and his emigration to the United States in 1933, he flirted with various women, including Margarete Lebach, a blonde Austrian, Estella Katzenellenbogen, the rich owner of a florist business, and Toni Mendel, a wealthy Jewish widow. Ethel Michanowski, a Berlin socialite, was also involved with Einstein in the late 1920s and early 1930s.



THESE TWIN SISTERS HAVE TAKEN THEIR PASSION FOR MOUNTAINEERING AND TURNED IT INTO A PROFESSION

TWIN-kling on a mountain top

● AARTI BHANUSHALI

In May 2013, at the age of 21, twin sisters Nungshi and Tashi Malik became the world's first twins to successfully climb Mount Everest. In less than two years from that day, the 'Everest Twins' as they are popularly known, have achieved several global milestones. They are the world's first twins and siblings to climb the famed 'Seven Summits' (highest peaks in all continents, including Mt Everest, which has been featured in 60th edition of Guinness World Records). In an interview with us, they talk about how they stay strong in the face of almost insurmountable obstacles, the call of the mountains and more.

With their roots in the conservative rural Haryana, that is still battling an alarming rate of female infanticide, Nungshi-Tashi's quest for the Seven Summits was inspired by the cause of the Indian girl child. Nungshi says, "It's an incredible turn of events. Without our knowledge or concurrence, our father applied on our behalf for the basic mountaineering course at the NIM, Uttarkashi. He only told us once confirmation for participation was received. Initially, we felt 'awe' and a bit of 'fear' but dad's logic was strong: Through exposure to physical danger and challenges, we would get to know much more of the unknown parts of our selves. This too, dad said, was essential education. He is a great motivator and is more like our 'buddy' than a typical father. We communicate exceptionally well. Also, luckily being twins, it has always been much easier to accept such new challenges and opportunities to 'tread less frequented trails' in life. From then on, things have happened almost by default or call it 'by destiny'. Neither our father nor we had the slightest idea that very soon we would set our sights on Everest."

Recently, they also became the youngest

Indians to reach North Pole and South Pole on skis and the first Indian and South Asian women to complete 'Adventurers Grand Slam' and Three Pole Challenge. An exposure to the outdoors was something that was always there in the family. Tashi says, "We have been exposed to outdoors from a very young age due to our father's military profession and his passion for the outdoors. We did parasailing at the age of seven, tied with a shawl to our father's back. We also did river rafting and skiing. Our serious engagement with mountaineering started soon after our Class XII exams got over, when our father applied on our behalf for the basic mountaineering course at the NIM, Uttarkashi. We haven't looked back since. I decided to

climb Everest because it was the highest peak, and conquering it symbolised my ability to dream big by combining passion with commitment. Sir Edmund Hillary described it aptly: 'We do not conquer the mountain, but ourselves.'"

Being the first mountaineers in the family, it's natural that their parents were concerned about their safety. Nungshi says, "Dad had always said 'follow your passion' and when we expressed our desire to climb Everest, he had to uphold his own value! So he just advised us to ensure we were technically and physically prepared for this huge undertaking. Mom was shocked. She had tears in eyes and only said 'you climb Everest over my dead body!' So convincing mom to allow our Everest dream was in fact our first Everest to climb!"

Tashi adds, "Our mother had traditional careers in mind and mountaineering and adventure sports were an absolute 'No'. Her permission (when it came)

after two years

of persuasion,

also meant that it was our 'first and last attempt' at any peak." Their father is their "manager, secretary, PR man, fund raiser and handles pretty much anything that is required for their mission," thus enabling them to focus on their pursuits.

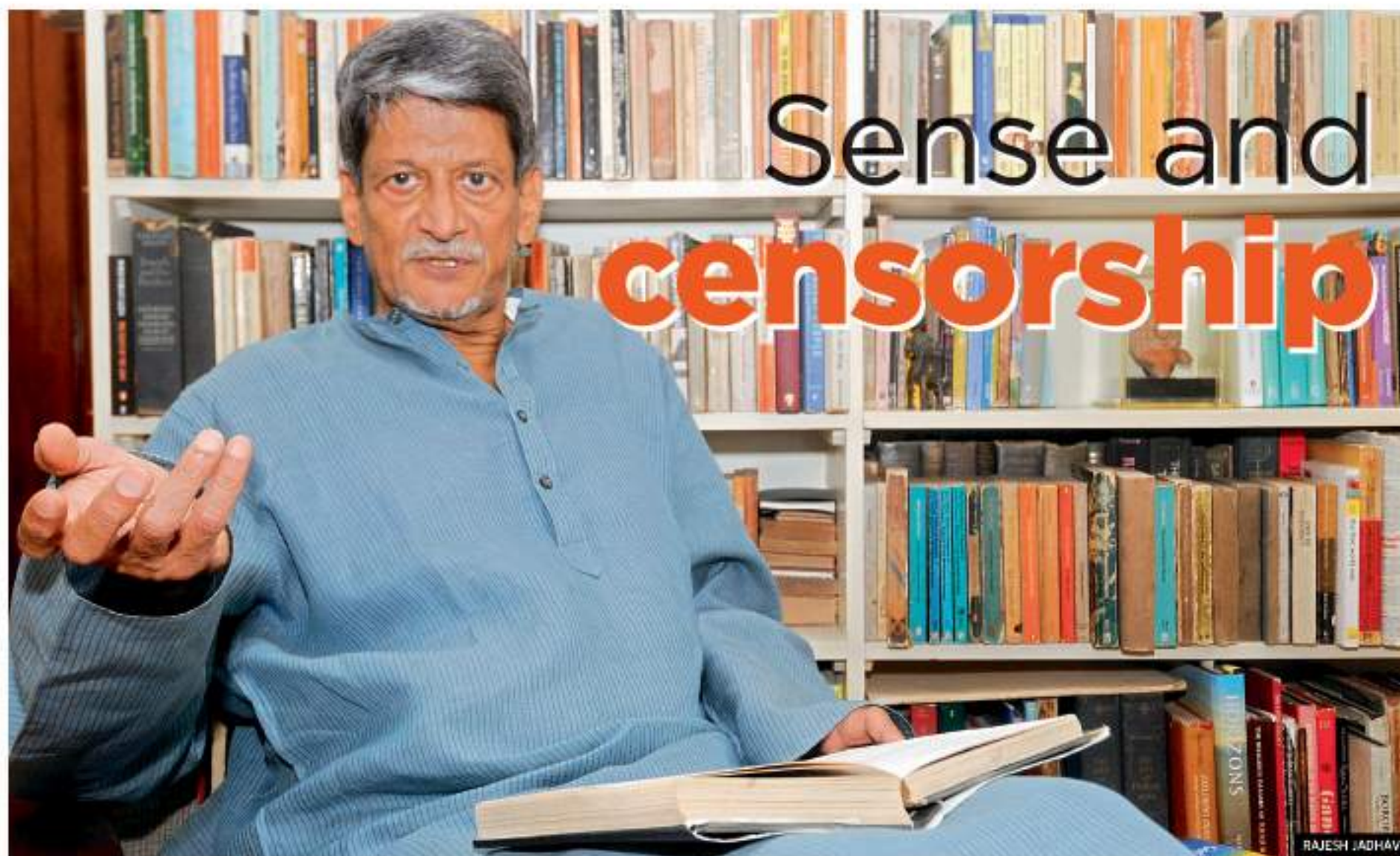
Tashi adds, "Even if we rate climbing Everest as our biggest feat, I would admit that it was successfully climbing Mt McKinley, through a week-long extreme weather condition that prevailed over the entire Alaskan range during our climb in May-June 2014, that was very tough. A big part of mountaineering is about managing risk and making the right decision at the right time."

Ask them about the essential qualities of a mountaineer, and Nungshi says, "Several traits lead to success in any field — focus, perseverance, meticulous planning, calculated risk etc. apply equally to mountaineering. But one also needs to be mentally and physically robust. There is no way one can conquer extreme altitudes without the ability to look danger in the eye, and move towards a summit. Pushing the body and mind, despite unbearable pain and exhaustion is what separates great mountaineers from ordinary ones."

Mountain climbing is also a lesson in humility, even though in the literal sense, it is conquering summits. "Mountain climbing has helped us see the bigger picture in life because we realise how fragile and precious life can be," Nungshi says.

Nungshi and Tashi Malik





RAJESH JADHAV

KIRAN NAGARKAR OFFERS A DOUBLE TREAT AT ONE GO — BEDTIME STORY AND BLACK TULIP. WHILE THE FORMER IS A REVIVAL OF ONE OF HIS PREVIOUS WORKS HEAVILY CENSORED IN THE 1970s, THE LATTER IS A SCREENPLAY WITH TWO ENDINGS

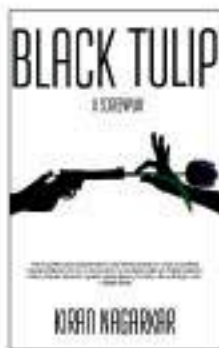
• AARTI BHANUSHALI

After leaving his readers hungry for two years, Kiran Nagarkar has surprised them with a double treat of two books at one go. *Bedtime Story* and *Black Tulip* is one of the landmark releases of the year and packs in it a play and a screenplay, in that order. *Bedtime Story* is a revival of one of his previous works that was heavily censored in the 1970s. "This was the happiest hour of my life. Publishers, authors and chief editors are not supposed to get along well, but I have to say this and I can't tell you how grateful I'm to Karthika (of Harper Collins). Even though *Bedtime Story* was given to her at the last minute, she read it and instantly said, 'I will do this,'" says Nagarkar.

He has no problems with *Black Tulip* being compared to a *masala* novel. "I am glad you used the word *masala*. It shows you the range. I have been writing screenplays, I don't want to go over the same furrow again and again. I love heist on the screen. I wanted to bring changes. *Black Tulip* is a screenplay with two endings. It's an armchair read — a classic cop and robber set-up." And if the screenplays were to be made into a film, he has us know that he'd like Kangana Ranaut to play the protagonist.

The first draft of his play *Bedtime Story* had 78 cuts. "Buddha could not be mentioned. Gandhiji could not be mentioned. There were

various questions like — why did I even bother when we already had the *Mahabharata*? How dare I tamper with the basic story? The problem was I really couldn't understand if there is even a single oral narrative of *Mahabharata*. I was dumbstruck," he recalls. Even though he has managed to get the book published after nearly four decades,



BEDTIME STORY/BLACK TULIP: A SCREENPLAY STORY
by
KIRAN NAGARKAR
₹650, pp 304
HarperCollins India

the author doesn't believe that the previous issues hindering the release are non-existent now. "I really don't think that the issues have been overcome. It's just that 37 years is a long time to remember one's own words, and at the very last minute I remembered that I also have a play," he says, with a chuckle.

Speaking of reinterpreting Draupadi's character, where Draupadi gives hell to everyone around her, Kiran says, "I'm not the first one to do it, and I hope to God that I'm not the last one either. But the fact is this Draupadi certainly is not going to take anything lying down. She genuinely thinks that she is a man's equal, she is absolutely hell bent on standing up for her own rights."

There are also passages in the book that have strong words against Krishna. "That of course offended censors the most," Nagarkar says. "There is a line in the passage where Draupadi is almost abusing Krishna by using some strong words against him like 'you are a shameless god', for delaying his intervention while she was being humiliated by Kauravas. At this

point in time, I was actually asked by the censors, 'Tumhi swatata kon samjhat?' (Who the hell do you think you are to use this language about God?). I have written this play because of its reverence in the society. At the same time I would like to say that I love the *Mahabharata*, theoretically so beautifully written."

When he was writing the book, Nagarkar wasn't sure of what to anticipate. He says, "When Salman Rushdie wrote *The Satanic Verses*, people told him, 'I'm sure you must have known this will create an uproar'. I'm not sure you write things because you are in the thick of it. Sometimes I read it and I'm like — oh my god I did it! I have been so often criticised for writing this — 'Who do you think you are Kiran, you are damning everybody'."

Ask him if he can write a play of this sort today and he says, "No, I don't think so." Alluding to the issue of censorship, he adds, "I feel this country is going through a terrible phase and I hope this ends soon. What is happening across the world is also so terrible that I don't think a play alone is enough."

He admits to self-censorship though. "I have been self-censoring since the times of Shiv Sena. I'm not a scholar, I know my limitation. We don't even know how lucky we were to be in practicing democracy, from the time we got our Independence. I genuinely fear we are heading into really difficult waters," he says. He continues, "I am not into testing limits. I know I can't write about Shivaji because my notion of him is intermittently different from what we talk about. With the Shiv Sena and MNS around, there is no chance. Are they even listening? I think it's a pre-condition of censorship in many ways that the book is never read. I do not want to touch Shivaji at all. I do think of him as an extremely shrewd statesman."

This Draupadi certainly is not going to take anything lying down. She genuinely thinks that she is a man's equal, she is absolutely hell bent on standing up for her own rights



Shah Rukh and Ranveer to team up for SLB's next

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TUESDAY 5 | APRIL 2016

Adlington fulfills bridesmaid duty

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When the ramp gets **real ready**

From a supermodel cradling a baby bump to backstage crew replacing ramp models and even a house-help showcasing designer clothes — the fashion industry appears to be looking beyond what's picture perfect...

AARTI BHANUSHALI

After years of striving towards creating a picture perfect show, fashion designers appear to be challenging norms now. At the just concluded Lakme Fashion Week in the city, a few designers in the country challenged the concept of a model and a showstopper by making some unconventional choices on the ramp. Hyderabad-based designer Gaurang Shah made headlines when he got supermodel Carol Gracias to walk the ramp, cradling a baby bump. He was highly applauded for the bold step but he wasn't anticipating such an overwhelming reaction. He was not the only

one. Deepa Gurnani and the label Nor Black Nor White replaced models with backstage crew that included stylists, hairdressers and even bloggers and they were of all body types. Previously Delhi-based designer Mandeep Nagi kicked a storm in the fashion corridors when she got her house-help Kamala to model for the clothes. The results were stunning, and opened a world of possibilities for the industry to explore.

For Gaurang, it was not a pre-planned move. He says that until the fittings stage, he was not aware of Carol's pregnancy. But when he did get to know, he didn't shy away from showcasing her on the ramp. The designer says that he has had a long-standing association with Carol and there's no reason big

enough for him not to choose her. "I knew Carol would be able to reflect the beauty of the collection well. Pregnant or not I'll always choose her." He adds that the reaction he got was totally unexpected. "This was not intentional and I'd never imagined that it would gain so much mileage. Carol has been with me since a long time and knows my textiles well. I'd booked her a month in advance but did not know that she was pregnant. It was only during the fittings that we came to know. We were going to give her a gown but decided against it, as a sari would make her look naturally beautiful," says Gaurang.

>>Turn to Page 22



Kamala poses for Mandeep Nagi



Non-models walk the ramp for Nor Black Nor White

"I KNEW CAROL WOULD BE ABLE TO REFLECT THE BEAUTY OF THE COLLECTION WELL. PREGNANT OR NOT I'LL ALWAYS CHOOSE HER"

— GAURANG SHAH, DESIGNER





Leo Fender, inventor of the Telecaster and Stratocaster, could not play guitar

DIVINE MUSIC



Pandit Jasraj during a performance

'I see God in audience members'

Aarti Bhanushali
focus

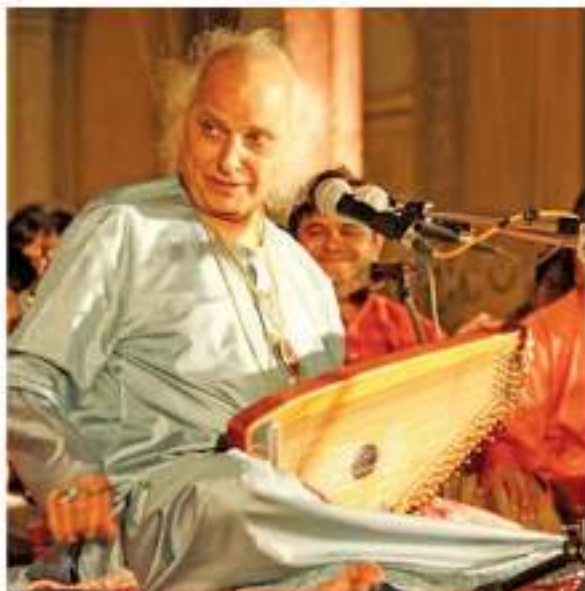
Pandit Jasraj who celebrated his 85th birthday recently, says music is his means of venerating the divine

Pandit Jasraj, the exponent of Hindustani classical music, celebrated his 85th birthday this January. What many do with their musical instruments, this virtuoso from the Mewati Gharana does just that with his mellifluous voice. The Sangeet Mariand performed at the 125th anniversary of the Ramanuj kot temple in Jodhpur on January 30. Speaking to *The Asian Age* over a telephonic interview, Pandit Jasraj shared with us how music and



spirituality go hand in glove, the qualities a good singer should possess and why he won't sing for films again. Elaborating on the differences between various gharanas, he explains, "Just like each college has different streams like commerce, science, engineering, the same is the case with classical music. But for every type of genre the basis remains the same. The fundamentals of music, the ragas evolve as the gharana progresses. It's a style that induces others to immediately recognise what gharana a singer belongs to. The same raga is sung in different gharanas but the style

of singing is slightly different from one to the other, compositions may also vary," he puts forth. At the age of 85, where many of his contemporaries may have hung up their boots what makes him physically fit and his voice sonorous is his discipline. "I must admit that traveling does get hectic but I make it a point to have my meals on time and that keeps me going," he says. His voice has the capability to bring into being an aura that is left lingering with the listeners long after they leave the place. Does the doyen practice the ragas he has to perform or does it come naturally to him we wonder. "It de-



pends on the concert or the place where I'm performing. I do prepare but most of the times it comes spontaneously to me depending upon the atmosphere and the audience," he says. For the listeners of Hindustani classical music, Pandit Jasraj is synonymous with Haveli Sangeet or temple music. Known to sing odes to the divine with his bhajans, the doyen says Lord Krishna influences his music. Many do not know the anecdote that Krishna appears in his dream and guides his compositions. There are often times when he has woken up his wife to take down the notes of a particular raga he

dreamt of. "Yes it's true, my compositions are guided by Krishna. I can feel his presence whenever I sing," he asserts. With the advent of technology, where notes and keys are just a click away, what is his opinion on the changing music scenario? "The vidya (knowledge) that comes from the mukh (mouth) of the guru (teacher) and that is received by the shishya (student) is priceless. Technology won't teach you what a teacher will," he maintains. Panditji was last seen singing *Vaada tumse hai vanda* for Vikram Bhatt's horror flick 1920 in the year 2008. So will his fans

get to hear his voice in a Bollywood movie again we ask? "Everything has a timing and calling. The Hindi film industry is completely different and I don't see myself venturing into that zone again," he declares. Shedding light on the virtue of a good singer, Panditji said, "Besides dedication and perseverance, the utmost important quality is to respect and love your parents. Very rarely do we see these days people taking care of their parents, and it's time they realise that parents are next to God." The future of Indian classical music according to him is going to grow by leaps and bounds. "Classical music has moved along with the times. The fact that it is performed all over exemplifies how classical music is alive and appreciated across horizons. Indian classical music is natural, earthy and it has a soul to it and this is the quality which makes it what it is today," he said. From the beginning till the end of our interview, his veneration for divinity by the means of music was striking. "Music for me is *atma se paramatma ka milan*. When I sing, perform or even do my *riyaz* I do it for him. More and so whenever I perform all over the globe I see God in each and every audience member. I believe there is God in each one of us," he states.

Rare insight into life of singer Cobain

Araw documentary about Nirvana frontman Kurt Cobain wowed the audience at its international premiere in Berlin, giving rare insights into the life of a man who, despite or because of his success, felt alienated until his suicide. Eight years in the making, *Cobain: Montage of Heck* is a 135-minute multimedia roller-coaster ride of unseen home movies, audio recordings, journal entries, drawings and notebook scrawlings, blended with interview excerpts and concert clips.

The Cobain family granted access to "everything, with no restrictions", filmmaker Brett Morgen told the audience on Saturday evening, thanking Cobain's wife Courtney Love, who attended the screening, for her trust and courage. "Nobody asked for a single cut, nobody asked for a change, which is essentially unheard of in dealing with such an icon," Morgen said. Cobain's heavily distorted brand of guitar music sparked the grunge rock movement of the 1990s, earning him an unwanted label as the voice of Generation X. The title of the documentary, co-produced by Cobain's daughter Frances Bean, derives from the name of a mix tape Cobain recorded in the late 1990s. The film shows Super 8 footage of Kurt as a toddler, blowing out candles on a birthday cake and posing with a toy guitar, as a lullaby version of Nirvana's smash hit "Smells Like Teen Spirit" plays in the background. His parents describe their child as an angel, but also a whirlwind whose activity

The Cobain family granted access to everything, with no restrictions. Nobody asked for a single cut, nobody asked for a change, which is essentially unheard of in dealing with such an icon

— BRETT MORGEN, Filmmaker

they tried to control with Ritalin. They speak about their divorce and how Cobain was pushed between different homes as a teenager. Video scenes show Cobain as a sullen youth, with his own voiceover describing how discovering marijuana and punk music helped him cope with a profound feeling of isolation. The second half of the film gives an intimate peek into Cobain's life with Love. There is Cobain on a bed, singing the Beatles song "And I Love Her" which was written by Paul McCartney. "And that kind of blows the myth, I mean, you would think Cobain would have done a Lennon song," Morgen said. Later, Rolling Stone journalist David Fricke is heard asking Cobain about the outtake "I Hate Myself and Want to Die" from his latest album. "Either you're being really satirical, or you're going to a real dark place here," he says. Cobain's only response is a chilling laugh. Cobain committed suicide at age 27 in April 1994. —Reuters



Kurt Cobain

Vinyl pushes the music industry into achieving record sales



Parag Kamani
ticket to write

The Indian media appears to have gone gaga — not lady but, rather, radio — on hearing of the resurgence of analogue discs in the market. In reproducing articles published from international sources during the second half of January, they spoke of how record pressing plants located abroad are unable to cope up with the demand of the only physical format that has shown growth in a predominantly digital market place. In support of this format's popularity, there are a multitude of record players available in the Indian market — brands such as Denon, Jensen, Saurine, and Lenco, to name a few — with prices ranging from ₹10,000 to ₹24,000. Further, vinyl discs are also liberally available with prices ranging from ₹1,000+ for international content to ₹700+ for Indian. For comparison purposes, the cost of a Blu Ray disc ranges from ₹300+ for Indian repertoire to

approximately ₹600 and above for Hollywood content. However, if one considers 3D Blu Ray discs, their costs are closer to vinyl with Hollywood movies being priced at ₹1,200 or so. In addition, for the truly collector, there are also novelty records that range from the multi-coloured, scented and — wait for it — those that glow in the dark! For the trivia-minded, the best-selling vinyl of 2014 was guitarist Jack White's *Lazaretto* with 86,707 units sold in the U.S. alone since its June 10 release last year, with worldwide sales exceeding 150,000 units. The album has garnered three GRAMMY award nominations, including "Best Alternative Music Album", as well as "Best Rock Song" and "Best Rock Performance" for its title track. For those interested, the 57th Annual GRAMMY Awards aired live in India in the wee hours of this Monday, February 9.



Jack White's *Lazaretto* and The Rolling Stones

In fact, vinyl has become so popular that a concept of "Record Store Day" has become a global phenomenon, although India still needs to play catch up to it. Record Store Day is celebrated annually on the third Saturday of April and, this year, it is scheduled to occur on April 18. Its sole purpose is to celebrate the culture of the independently owned record store, and record

labels and artists have begun gearing for the 2015 version with albums specifically scheduled for release on that day! Some of the artists that released exclusive vinyl to support Record Store Day last year included (in alphabetical order): Aerosmith, Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, David Bowie, Deep Purple, Fleetwood Mac, Jethro Tull, Neil Young, Roger Waters,

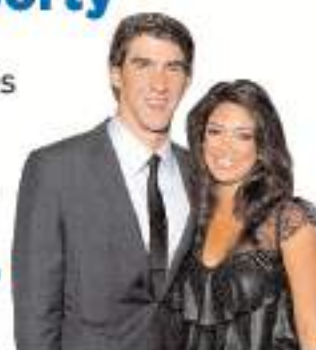
and the Rolling Stones. The advantages of listening to vinyl — for the record listener — are manifold, although they may be considered moot by digital listeners. For starters, it is quality. The popular mp3 files certainly sacrifice quality as their sound is compressed. For argument sake, a rip from a CD can create a file that utilises almost seven times the stor-



age space in comparison to saving a conventional mp3 file. Then again, in the age of iPods, skipping songs is common but, when you listen to an album on vinyl, you listen to it end-to-end. In support of the manner in which vinyl is heard, it is now common that listening sessions are being held around the world when like-minded listeners gather to listen to an album from the

beginning to its conclusion, in the sequence in which the artist wanted it to be heard in the first instance. In fact, in 2012, the surviving members of Pink Floyd took their record label then, EMI, to London High Court to enforce a clause in the band's 1999 contract that "expressly prohibits the sale of albums in any configuration other than the original configuration" for

all recordings, including those distributed online as the band had wanted to maintain artistic control over their "seamless" albums across all formats. The end result was that the Honourable Court granted Pink Floyd the declaration they sought, preventing EMI (now part of Universal Music) from allowing the band's albums — including the popular *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, that features a song called *Money* which contains the following lyrics: "Grab that cash with both hands and make a stash", and *The Wall* — from being chopped for sale as individual track downloads. It is paradoxical but old-fashioned vinyl records which were almost rendered obsolete by cassettes and, later, CDs, now find themselves not only surviving, but showing a year-on-year growth in comparison to the very formats that have since been rendered either obsolete or are on the verge of being so. —The writer has been part of the media and entertainment business for over 23 years. He still continues to pursue his hobby, and earns an income out of it!



'I AM TIRED, BUT I WILL NOT STOP'

AARTI BHANUSHALI

From organising pothole exhibitions to shaming the authorities to drawing rangolis around the scarred roads, political parties are indulging in various antics to draw attention to Mumbai's potholes. While these may be the right noises to make, one man has been working silently and getting more done than most other people, single-handedly. Deepak aka Dadarao Bilhore, who lost his only son Prakash last year due to a deadly pothole has been personally filling up the craters with a humble tool kit — paver blocks, a trowel and construction sand. He has filled up over 300 potholes across the city. A year down the line, the vegetable vendor from Marol is urging citizens to help his cause. Bilhore, along with 34-year-old Rupesh Mandal, a creative ad director is helping spread the word about an app — Spotholes — that he believes will considerably reduce accidents due to potholes.

He says, "I'm tired of filling potholes now, but I won't stop. Lives are lost because they are not filled on time. When I lost my son, it took them three days to fix that particular pothole. Does this mean that lives need to be lost and families need to be shattered for people to get up and take notice?"

Citing other examples he adds, "A daughter lost her mother in Ambarnath, a lady fell in the pothole in Thane, a child lost his life in Bandra — all because of someone's negligence."

For the past few months, Dadarao was joined by his son's friends in his mission to fill up the potholes. But now, he wants other Mumbaiers to join his crusade by simply downloading an app. Explaining the essence of Spotholes Rupesh says, "The app uses three basic features already available in a smartphone — mobile camera, GPS and internet connection and thus enables citizens accomplish half the job by distributing power and much needed responsibility to a crowd-sourced model. The first step to fix a pothole is to mark it.

Dadarao Bilhore, who took to filling potholes in the city after losing his son to one last year is urging the BMC and citizens to join his cause



Spotholes helps you point out the pothole to the BMC who can then take cognisance of it."

"All that the BMC has to do is fill in the potholes spotted by the citizens. We use paver blocks and the sand used for constructions to fill up the potholes. But it's a temporary solution because with heavy rains, there are chances of erosion," informs Dadarao.

Currently at a pilot stage, the app is available on Playstore and iOS platforms, with over 200 users in Mumbai. The BMC is yet to be part of the process. "At its current stage, users can click pictures and they are uploaded on our open server, because the BMC is not linked as yet. We can only map the spots and citizens can use it to avoid those routes," Rupesh explains.

The team's efforts to include

the BMC have not borne fruit so far. "I wrote to BMC about it and they responded that they'd like to see a demo, but I haven't been able to fix a time in spite of writing constant mails and calls. Once the BMC agrees, we will have a dashboard for them, where they'll be able to access all the information generated by the users," adds Rupesh.

Dadarao has one last message for citizens before we wrap up the interview. "Neither are we asking people for money, nor do we want anything from BMC. We just want to form a chain that'll prevent lives from being lost. The potholes may appear small in size but the losses they cause are huge."

Lives are lost because potholes are not filled on time.

DADARAO BILHORE



How is Spotholes designed to work?

Click a picture and upload it on the application. The BMC will then take cognisance, refill the pothole and send the redone picture back. The app uses three basic features already available in a smartphone — mobile camera, GPS and an internet connection.

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Bollywood's
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GLAM-SHAM



I am holding up okay: Farhan

The director-turned-actor says he is doing alright after his very public split with wife of 15 years, Adhuna Akhtar

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MATINEE



KJo's biography ready to roll

Titled *An Unsuitable Boy*, Karan Johar's biography will be released on his 44th birthday this year

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Employees
at work at
Khadi Dyers
and Printers

—SHRIPAD
NAIK

MEET THE FLAG BEARERS

Working round the year to make perfectly tailored tricolours that stand the test of time, the Khadi Dyers and Printers consider it their national calling

AARTI BHANUSHALI

THE 'ASIAN' AGE

This is a busy time for Dhanesh Navichandra Bhatt. One of the two people in the country who holds a licence to make certified national flags, Bhatt is busy overseeing and packing off the tri-colour to various parts of the country. Having taken over the workings of the Khadi Dyers and Printers from his late father-in-law Shri Labhshankar Chakubhai Joshi, it is more than "business" for Bhatt and his wife who took charge of the organisation in 1995.

"I won't call it business. Making flags for us does not have any commercial utility; it's a matter of national pride," he says sitting in his Borivli workshop.

From the year 1950 to 2000, Bhatt tells us, there was nobody holding a licence to make certified flags in India.

I won't call it
business; it's a
matter of
national pride

—Dhanesh
Bhatt

"My father-in-law was a hardworking man and started KDP in 1966, but he didn't bother with the legalities or formalities of holding a licence. After he passed away, my brother and I got a licence for ISI-certified flags and have been a certified centre since 2000. We

initially started off with only making the Ashoka Chakra, but for the longest time now we have been assembling the entire flag."

KDP has tied up with Dharwad Taluka Garag Kshetriya Seva Sangha which in turn has a tie-up with Hubli-based Karnataka Khadi Gramodyog Samyukta Sangha (KKGSS), permitted by the Central government, to manufacture the cloth for tricolours and supply it to the entire nation. KKGSS is the second manufacturer of the national flag other than KDP.

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'I'm not comfortable sharing my emotions'

Tennis ace Sania Mirza, who just launched her autobiography in the city, says the book was long on the anvil, feels she owed it to her fans to tell her story

AARTI BHANUSHALI

✓ If she's aching it on the court, World No 1 tennis player (doubles) appears to be playing the right shots off it too. Sania Mirza, who has just turned writer with her autobiography *Ace Against Odds*, has been roping in the biggest names from Bollywood to launch her book. After King Khan Shah Rukh launched it in Sania's home city Hyderabad, she got Bollywood's very own "Sultan" for the Mumbai leg of the launch. Salman and Sania go back a long way, and at the launch the superstar spoke highly of her and how their camaraderie has stood the test of time. He lauded her for having written an autobiography at the very young age of 29. "People don't achieve what she has in three lifetimes," Salman said. "I think she had a lot to say. So before she forgot what she had to say, she decided to write it down," he added with a cheeky grin.

Post the launch in an interview with

The Mumbai Age, the tennis ace spoke at length about her journey this far, fighting all odds, finding support in her partner and eventually having the courage to tell her story the way it is. Excerpts from an interview:

FROM A BOOKWORM TO A TENNIS ACE

Were it not for Sania Mirza's principal in school, we wouldn't have had a sports star today. "I was a brilliant student in school and my principal had to push me to play a tournament because I did not want to miss my lectures. I was a bookworm and I have always excelled in my studies. When I won the U-14 and U-16 Nationals tournament, it was a turning point for me. I'm a very competitive person and that kind of fed my passion. I

"I don't think it's 'lucky' to be able to do continue your profession after your marriage...It's very normal. But yes, I'm lucky to have a husband who is following his profession as well and has no problems with me following my profession"

SANIA MIRZA

loved competing and going out there and performing. That's when I knew I wanted to be a tennis player, while my cousins were all doctors. They'd see my tan lines and say to me, 'you are so lucky, you get to go out and play.' For them it was 'play' but for me it was hard work."

PROVING NAYSAYERS WRONG

Sania's rise to the top hasn't been smooth, but time and again the tennis superstar has proved no hurdle is too big for a focussed mind. "The obstacles and struggles never stop, they keep coming. Some roadblocks are hard, while some are simply relatives getting worried that who will marry me if I continue to play in the sun and become dark-skinned by the day. Being fair is the biggest attribute of beauty that people in this part of the

PHOTOS: SHRIPAD NAIK



world give importance to. A girl here will be at the receiving end of a remark like 'tu sawli hai' or 'she is good looking but she is sawli'. I get to hear that a lot to this day and people who don't get to hear it are indeed very lucky." Sania continues, "Then there are obstacles like playing with no proper facilities or infrastructure because no one at that point believed that you would turn into a World No. 1 player. Forget that title even, nobody believed you would be a professional in the first place. People would tell me, 'You think you'll become Martina Hingis?' And now she (Martina) and I have got to

do so much together."

LUCKY OR NOT

When asked if she feels lucky to be able to continue her profession after marriage, Sania says, "I won't use the word 'lucky' here. I don't think it's 'lucky' to be able to do that. Why does a woman have to stop playing? It's very normal. But yes, I'm lucky to have a husband who is following his profession as well and has no problems with me following my profession, because that was never a part of the discussion."

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A paneer roll

Small wonders

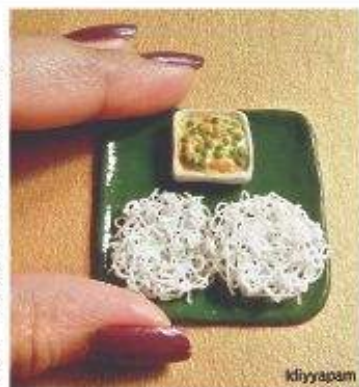
SARANYA SRIDHAR TALKS ABOUT MINIATURE FOOD SCULPTURES AND MAKING THEM LOOK NO LESS APPETISING THAN THE REAL DEAL

● AARTI BHANUSHALI

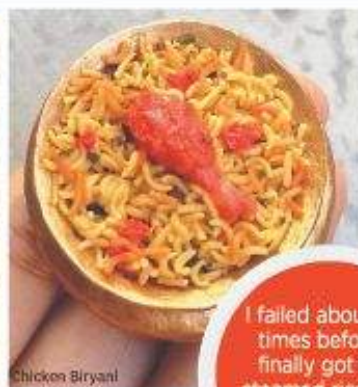
A comforting portion of lip smacking *biryani* or a plate of *idiyappam*; you would be forgiven for wanting to reach out for these delicacies when Saranya Sridhar lays them out in front of you, but you'd soon realise that they're far from palatable. Not because of her culinary skills but because they are all made of clay and can fit snugly on a two-rupee coin or even the palm of your hand. Chennai-based Sridhar specialises in making these miniature sculptures of food using clay brushes, needles and colourful pastels.

A self-taught miniature artisan, Saranya's love for everything miniature was incidental. While helping a neighbourhood kid prepare vegetables and fruits made from clay for a school project, she realised the potential of the medium. "I liked the way the fruits and vegetables turned out, they were so cute and tiny. I read up on the various types of clay and ordered some. I started off by making dolls, fruits and vegetables, but initially the results were not impressive. Over a period of time, though, I kept experimenting and the finishing improved," says the 23-year-old.

While her classmates were busy appearing for campus interviews, Saranya kept herself occupied with her palettes and blades. "After completing my MBA, I wanted to start a business of my own. I did some brainstorming, but nothing clicked. So I continued making these miniatures and would share pictures



Idiyappam



Chicken Biryani



Saranya Sridhar

I failed about 50 times before I finally got the steamed rice in a north Indian *thali* right

with my family and friends," she reveals. Making a living out of her hobby was never part of the plan, but the response her work generated online propelled her dreams. "A friend started a Facebook page and insisted I share all my pictures there. I had no intentions of selling them, but when the pictures went viral and people were ready to pay even ₹300 or more for a single piece, my passion turned into business," says Saranya who sells fridge magnets, business card holders, mobile chimes, customised dolls, and figurines via her Facebook page.

One of the major attractions of working in the field of miniature designing is tackling the challenges each dish brings. "Getting the right colour and texture is one of the biggest tasks at hand. The colours

have to be perfectly balanced for the miniatures to look real. For instance, if I add more colours to the veggies while making a miniature meal, it will appear to be raw. However, I have to make a cooked *thali* and the shades and the tints of each should be proportionate," she adds.

Saranya devotes around two hours for each dish. The numbers of hours drastically shoot up to even eight at a time if there's rice involved in the dish mix. "I failed about 50 times before I finally got the steamed rice in a north Indian *thali* right. I have designed about 90 Indian dishes so far," she informs.

After hours of hard work and some painful fingers, Saranya derives her motivation from the beauty of Indian dishes. "Miniature food sculpting is still unexplored in India and I get a lot of queries. There are many miniature artists in other countries who do fantastic miniatures, making cuisines of their respective countries. Indian fares, however, are different and unique; each dish has its own charm and to get the same feel, dish after dish keeps me motivated. The variation in colour and shades that can be found in our dishes is a never ending inspiration to me," she signs off.

A south Indian *thali*

Mini Ferrero rocher chocolates

A north Indian *thali*