

eShe

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— the female gaze —



Bethany Hamilton

The champion American surfer on losing an arm to a shark attack, inspiring two films, and being unstoppable



EXHIBIT: INJUSTICE

Museums that redress systemic racism and hate crimes around the world

COUPLE GOALS

5 couples reveal how their relationship fared during lockdown

THE STAR FACTOR

Award-winning actor Aahana Kumra on art and bold decisions



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PHOTOGRAPHY: Mary Cernsdorf
@rockingseaphotography



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THREE YEARS DOWN

Great joys somehow always come hand-in-hand with deep sorrows for me. Perhaps it is a quirk of fate to ensure that I stay humble and grounded in jubilation, while holding the lamp of hope high even in the nights of despair. So, I am accustomed to this feeling of happiness-sadness that fills my heart at present.

Happiness that *eShe* has completed three years. That I was able to keep pushing my limits month after month with discipline, determination and an eye on my dream. That we have inspired and touched the lives of millions of women and men around the world. That media platforms like *Money Control* syndicate our stories. That we rose slowly to rank 25 in content aggregator Feedspot's list of the top women's magazines in the world. That we have now expanded operations to Canada as well, and there are exciting times ahead.

But then, sadness at the ravages of the coronavirus pandemic. At the surge of social injustices playing out around the world. At the discrimination and suppression of liberties. At how millions of people have lost lives and livelihoods overnight, with not even the luxury of mourning allowed to them.

Their grief subdues my exhilaration. I take heart in our inspirational cover personality Bethany Hamilton's words of faith: "Beauty can come from hard times." I hold the lamp of hope high. ■



Aekta Kapoor
Editor and Publisher
aekta@coralcontent.com

Editor and Publisher: Aekta Kapoor

Business Director: Kaveri Jain

Social Media: Manasvi Jerath

Contributors: Anita Panda, Kaveri Jain, Kay Newton, Manvi Pant, Maya Lalchandani, Neha Kirpal, Prerna Kohli, Shweta Bhandral

Mentor: Kul Bhushan

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Published by Aekta Kapoor from Coral Content, C3/1 GF, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi 110057, India.

Phone: +91 9971116621. For queries, write to mail@coralcontent.com, or visit eShe.in



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AAHANA'S MOMENT

A wide oeuvre of bold, memorable roles and a clutch of awards – actor Aahana Kumra is certainly having her moment in the sun

Text by Neha Kirpal. Photography by Ruskin Felix

An award-winning actress who has experimented with theatre, television, ads, films and web series, Aahana Kumra has received rave reviews for the strong characters she portrays and the power-packed performances she delivers. From a detective in the TV series *Agent Raghav – Crime Branch* to a lusty beautician in Alankrita Shrivastava's *Lipstick Under My Burkha* to Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi in *The Accidental Prime Minister*, Aahana has played a versatile repertoire of roles.

In this candid chat, she talks about her daring role in the new Netflix show *Betaal*, the web as a democratic medium, and the female voice and perspective in the film industry.

What was your experience of playing the fearless Deputy Commander Ahluwalia of the Baaz Squad for Betaal?

DC Ahluwalia is very special and really close to my heart. Playing a soldier required a lot of physical training because we were shooting on ground for about 40 – 45 days, and it required a lot of physical strength too due to the inhospitable locations. Throughout the show, we literally became a squad.

Also, for the first time in my life, I was experimenting with prosthetics,

and it was fantastic.

Tell us more about that. What was the experience and response?

I found out about the prosthetics after I was signed on the show, and



Aahana with her Dadasaheb Phalke Award 2020 for the film *Yours Truly*; she also won in 2019 and 2018

was very kicked to know that part of my face would be scarred. It's very rare for actors, and especially women, to get these kinds of parts



L-R: Aahana plays a scarred soldier in *Betaal*; with her *Marzi* co-actor Shivani Tanksale during the shoot

and looks. The response has been overwhelming. Fans and friends tell me that it was very brave of me to look like this, because everyone is so obsessed with looking nice. It takes a while for one to even get used to looking at oneself in the mirror.

The first day when I walked out of the vanity van with the scar on my face, everyone stopped and stared at me. It made me a little uncomfortable, but it just looked so real. I had to get into makeup two hours before everyone else, staying back after the shoot wrap to remove the prosthetics, and of course, I had to get used to the smell of glue, silicon, colours and paint. The makeup team had to always make sure I had a fan with me, that I didn't perspire, that I didn't get wet in the rain. So, it took a lot of

precision, detailing and patience. Also, the terrain where we shot was not easy – sometimes it was 45°C temperature, sometimes there was rain. It really makes you look beyond looking pretty.

From theatre to television, ads, films and web series, which has been most inspiring and interesting to you personally?

I find all mediums interesting. For me, the work is the same. I need to put in the same amount of research into the character I'm playing and give it my all. In a play, there are no retakes or cuts – the show goes on. When you're doing a film, television or web series, you can't fall ill – you are indispensable to your shoot, because nobody else can do that part for you.

Theatre has really led me to where I am today. And anybody who has



Dress: Samant Chauhan
Jewellery: Zema
Hair and makeup: Shreya
Styling: Devki B



Jumpsuit: Hrdoyh
Earrings: Eurumme
Bracelet: Radhika Agrawal
Hair and makeup: Shreya
Styling: Devki B

ever wanted to become an actor has always romanticised the big screen.

On the other hand, the web for me has been completely democratic and something that I really owe my career to. It really has given me so much strength, recognition and love. For the web, I have played roles and collaborated with people that I had never imagined doing.

Tell us about your role in the upcoming film Khuda Hafiz.

I wear a hijab in the film, speak Arabic and there's a lot of action. The shooting was in terrains such as Uzbekistan, which was challenging, cold and pretty ruthless. I shared screen space with Vidyut Jammwal, who is a great human being. There's a lot of hand-to-hand combat in the film, and we had to go through training.

As someone who has been vocal about your #MeToo experiences in Bollywood, do you think the movement has helped the industry become more transparent?

The industry has become more transparent, but it's also to do with the mediums that we are now working in. The web is a very democratic medium – everyone comes and auditions, and that's how you get your parts. I've got all my roles through tests, not because people know me or have seen my work.

I'm so glad that people now look at you as an artist, they treat you with respect and love. Many of my colleagues are now my friends too. I'm glad to be living in these times when women can be fearless, choose our parts and dictate monies, which is such an important part of our being.

Having worked in a film like Lipstick Under My Burkha, do you think the film industry is waking up to the increasing need for the female voice and perspective?

Yes. I think it a lot also has to do with the fact that web is such an integral part of our lives, and we don't have to worry about box-office figures on the medium. In film, there's a different structure that return-on-investment works on. You have to bring

a big star into a film, because that's how you get people into the theatres to pay for the tickets.

Whereas, in web, things are there forever – you can watch a show or film anytime; it's always going to be there in the luxury of your home, at your fingertips, whenever you want to. This has given a lot of voices to women's stories, and I'm glad to see women in roles I would otherwise not have imagined them in. ■

Read the full interview on eShe.in

**"I'M GLAD TO BE
LIVING IN THESE
TIMES WHEN
WOMEN CAN BE
FEARLESS, CHOOSE
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DICTATE MONIES"**

COMING OF AGE



L-R: Megha with her film's young actors, Yashaswini Dayama and Ananya Melkote

Megha Ramaswamy on her directorial debut, and letting kids be kids

By Neha Kirpal

After making a documentary on the lives of acid-attack survivors and co-hosting Cause Effect, a platform that produces cause-related content and outreach programs, Megha Ramaswamy has stepped into a brand new genre of filmmaking. The Mumbai-based screenwriter has made her directorial debut with the Netflix film *What Are the Odds*, a whimsical story about teenagers in Mumbai starring Abhay Deol, Karanvir Malhotra, Monica Dogra and Yashas-

wini Dayama. She talks to us about magical realism and the experience of being an independent filmmaker.

What was the idea behind the film?

The idea was to introduce young viewers to a genre that's not defined or limited to reality alone. To present them with a world of hope, magic and colour in all its delicate and nuanced compositions. To make them feel a sense of free spiritedness through its protagonist, Vivek, and remind them that their lives have so many possibilities and

to honour those moments in time.

Despite being a children's film, it has been trending at No. 2 on Netflix. What do you think worked?

That is a huge achievement and I feel happy. At the end of the day, people watching our films are the hopeful, the clunky, the shy, the introverted and the confused 11-to-18-year-olds who have found such wonderful ways to get back to us through their art, music and poetry.



company where we hold space for women – straight, queer, young, old – who are getting into films. Connecting ‘Miss’ to ‘fit’ is the positive state of mind we represent as we go about making films.

As a female independent filmmaker, what are your challenges and advantages?

My biggest challenge has been to maintain a voice that's neither independent nor mainstream nor arthouse, and finding people who



L-R: Abhay Deol in a scene from the film; lead actors Karanvir Malhotra and Yashaswini Dayama

This is exactly the kind of response Abhay and I had anticipated.

The film was voiced by 17-year-old Shreya Vaidya, and she speaks to her generation directly. There's nothing lost in translation. I have fathers and mothers writing in, thanking us for making a film about kids who want to be kids.

What is the story behind the name of your banner Missfit Films?

It represents our ideals as a film

respect that intention. People find this befuddling. I don't. We've only just begun! Advantages include the incredible response from young people the world over. What's also exciting is the kind of people who chose to work with us. Who knew Abhay Deol would back a rock 'n' roll children's film and it would release on Netflix with such a fun reception? We weren't expecting it! It was nuts. ■

WOMEN *for* WOMEN

These three women-run social enterprises offer a support structure and platform for women to express themselves, network, and launch their careers



WOMAN TV & W.E.H.

Shweta Saxena • Pune

Though Shweta Saxena is a certified clinical psychologist, she was always drawn to the cause of women empowerment more than clinical psychology. While running the Notts Mums non-profit sup-

port group for lonely multicultural mums in UK till 2017, she realised that there were many women burdened by suppression, carrying their stories silently inside them. “I decided to initiate a platform where women could share their powerful stories fearlessly and with pride,” says Shweta, who launched Woman TV in 2018 after moving to Pune.

Shweta uses the non-profit, web-based platform to interview inspiring women, and has featured over a thousand women so far. After noticing that many of these women had the potential to be entrepreneurs but lacked that little push, information, support and motivation by their tribe, she further launched Women Entrepreneurs Helpline (WEH), a Facebook group to support new entrepreneurs in various areas like market research for their branding, financial planning, awareness about government schemes for MSMEs and female entrepreneurs. Interestingly, not all the 12,000 fol-

lowers in the group are entrepreneurs – salaried workers and home-makers follow the group too for tips and as a networking platform.

“Women entrepreneurs in India face specific challenges, such as lack of financial independence despite running profitable businesses,” says Shweta. “In many cases, the finances are still controlled by the woman’s husband even if he may not be involved in her business.”

There are social obstacles too, says Shweta. “While a woman is struggling to adapt to her role of an entrepreneur, her family makes it even more difficult for her by constantly reminding her of her other roles in the family. Lack of sufficient family support before or after marriage hampers her business journey and delays her success too.”

But Shweta believes women have learnt to live with these challenges, and rebuild their lives around them. She hopes that, as more women step up to work, society will gradually give credit where it’s due, regardless of gender. “Also, we need to give the woman sufficient space and not suffocate her with over-interference or unwanted advice! No relationship gives anyone the authority to rule over a woman or monitor her every move,” she says.

Though the Indian government offers several schemes and training opportunities for women entrepreneurs, not many are aware of them.

“This is where WEH plays a business-buddy role,” says Shweta. WEH also works as a platform for women to support each other. “Women can promote other women’s businesses on their social media, buying their products without asking for any discounts or freebies, and even by mentoring new entrepreneurs through their own experiences.”

Shweta shares the story of a



home-based artist who was unsure of selling her works. “We video-interviewed her and showcased her art. Her interview became popular and people loved her work. This boosted her confidence and she created social-media pages to retail her work. She now successfully runs an art brand and has employed junior women artists too.”



GIRL POWER TALK

Rachita Sharma • India, USA, Mexico

An enterprising young woman with fire in her belly – that’s the first impression Rachita Sharma leaves on you. “My passion in life is to create a community that supports and uplifts young women,” says the 24-year-old CEO and co-founder of Girl Power Talk. “My life’s mission is to be an agent of change by providing young women more opportunities and a better path for achieving their full potential. Girl Power Talk is our vision in action.”

Raised in Mathura, Rachita completed her BSc in mathematical sciences from the University of Delhi and then did her MBA from Thapar University, Chandigarh. She

began working early on during her college years and travelled widely. She is now the chief marketing officer of New York-based Blue Ocean Global Technology, which offers online reputation management services to organisations worldwide.

Its sister concern Girl Power Talk supports its operations by leveraging digital technology to improve efficiency and profitability for clients spread across North America and Europe. In the process, they offer young women, and men, a platform to grow, develop and reach the world stage.

“We at Girl Power Talk recognise the importance of gender equality and actively seek those with extraordinary potential,” says Rachita. Through her conversations with

young professionals and students, she learned that only a minuscule proportion of college graduates receive offers from employers willing to invest in their personal development. “The reality of the demographics is that the vast majority of companies view young Indians as replaceable and expendable. Sameer Somal and I launched Girl Power Talk with a vision to hire, nurture, and help young people build confidence and interpersonal skills. The real mission is to change lives, one person at a time,” says Rachita, who was awarded the Most Promising Woman in IT Award by Aatm Nirbhar Women’s Association Trust earlier this year.

The for-profit enterprise trains its community of young people in “exceptional soft-skills, technical knowledge, and purpose in life.” The team is trained to create and promote top digital assets that accelerate the growth of a company’s brand equity. They consult clients on digital transformation and provide comprehensive reputation management services. They have recently set up base in Mexico, and are now planning to offer a fellowship programme for young leaders in Nepal, Myanmar, Thailand, and the Philippines. “I was determined to celebrate gender diversity and create an organisation that uplifts women with real opportunities,” says Rachita, who is a chairperson

for the All Ladies League, a network for women in 150 countries. “Why does one’s purpose of doing good have to be separate from building a real company? Besides, I believe that we can accomplish more in terms of a positive social impact if we are profitable. The company’s success exemplifies the benefits of investing



Giving a talk at Delhi Technological University

in malleable young leaders.”

She explains that while many companies give back and try to reverse-engineer women in leadership once they achieve success, Girl Power Talk begins with the end in mind. “Young women in positions of influence and affluence will forever be a hallmark and core feature of the organisation,” she signs off.



FUZIA

Riya Sinha, Shraddha Varma • India, US

What happens when a bright teenager full of ideas and ideals about empowering women comes together with a marketing professional with an MBA and corporate experience? You get a vibrant and quickly expanding online platform for women, with tens of thousands of users, millions of social-media followers, and uncountable employment opportunities generated.

That's the story of Fuzia, founded five years ago Riya Sinha, now an 18-year-old student of University of California at Berkeley, and run by Mumbai-based Shraddha Varma, now 31. It is a global online women's networking community and a talent showcase platform for creativity,

built through the advent of virtual hiring. "Since the past five years, this has been our core model as we truly believed that 'virtual working' will be the future of work," say the founders. In the age of lockdowns and work-from-home, their vision was indeed prescient.

Currently a team of 30 passionate women who work remotely from different parts of the world, Fuzia is essentially an online community

and user-content-driven platform that "helps young women see their strengths, develop self-confidence, learn from their peers and become independent leaders." Members can post their work samples and get opportunities to earn through suitable work assignments, internships and projects. Their clients are companies and individuals around the world who have tied up with Fuzia for its members' talent and expertise especially in social-media marketing, executive branding and campaign management.

Currently, the online networking community has over 50,000 members with over four million followers on social media. There is no age or geographical restriction to join Fuzia, however their users are typically aged 18 to 30, and hail pri-



Shraddha Varma



Riya Sinha

marily from countries like India, Pakistan, USA, Bangladesh, Morocco and Egypt. They also come from various professional backgrounds and sensibilities, and are able to generate an income sitting at home.

For instance, Sarita Das, a 33-year-old member from Jajpur, Odisha, says, “I’m a passionate art and music lover. I love making diverse videos for the company.” Ira Gore, a 23-year-old from Kanpur, UP, who has been working as a content intern for a year with Fuzia, says, “I can feel the growth in me as a writer with each passing day. It’s great how Fuzia has been able to offer such opportunities to students and individuals who can work and learn outside their classrooms and homes, by staying indoors!”

Skilling is an important part of

Fuzia’s work. Their in-house experts collaborate with social-media influencers and entrepreneurs from all fields and organise interactive live Q&A and training sessions to help women start their own ventures.

They also help them to become financially independent by providing them freelancing and internship opportunities for their skills. “Our aim is to make profit with a purpose. Five percent of the revenue that we earn from our Fuzia talent projects is dedicated towards the cause of women empowerment and skill development,” say the founders.

They add, “Our determination and belief is to celebrate women and their creative zeal so that they can live their dreams. We all deserve to shine.” ■



TRUTHSAYER

Aja Barber, an American activist and social-media influencer who focuses on race and intersectional feminism, decodes #BlackLivesMatter

The world has watched with consternation the latest protests unfolding in the US in the past few weeks following the killing of George Floyd, a 46-year-old black man, by Minneapolis policemen during an arrest. His death amplified the #BlackLivesMatter campaign into a nationwide rebellion that some now call America's 'second civil rights movement'. But black Americans say that despite legal affirmative action, they have been denied justice promised to them six decades ago. For them, this outpouring is the culmination of years of frustration and discrimination as a minority community struggling to rise above the poverty, lack of resources, and racism that is their legacy after centuries of slavery at the hands of the whites.

Aja Barber, an American social-media influencer and activist born in Reston, Virginia, who now lives in London, UK, has used her voice to raise these issues and others, from women's rights to ethical fashion. Having studied communication and journalism, she worked in television production before becoming a full-time blogger focusing on race and intersectional feminism.

Coming from a country that has

championed democracy and the idea of 'The American Dream' for centuries, Aja believes the concept doesn't apply to black and Native Americans. "No, they have never got their share of the American Dream. But I also invite most people to ask what sort of dream can be built upon slavery of one group of people and genocide of another? Both groups still suffer today from this sort of routine trauma. Can there be a dream there? And who is the dream for?" she asks pertinently.

The rising tide of social-media awareness in the past few years has brought to the fore the day-to-day struggles of black Americans as they go about making a living, raising families and

pursuing personal happiness. There have been alarming reports of killings of unarmed black people like 17-year-old Trayvon Martin who was killed by a suspicious white neighbour while out on a walk; 25-year-old athlete Ahmaud Arbery who was shot dead by two white men for running down the street; and Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old medical technician, who was shot by policemen as she lay asleep in her bed at night in a case of mistaken identity.

"WHAT SORT OF DREAM CAN BE BUILT UPON SLAVERY OF ONE GROUP OF PEOPLE AND GENOCIDE OF ANOTHER?"

One black father wrote on social media about being afraid to walk outside alone without his dog or daughter for fear of being shot or arrested. “Things have *always* been this bad for black Americans. Anyone who says otherwise is only fooling themselves. We just have camera phones and social media now,” says Aja, who says she completely identifies with the black father’s experience. “Where I was once very confident and drove at any hour of the day for any reason, when I’m home in the US, I often avoid driving at night if I can. I have been accosted before by a neighbour in the neighbourhood my parents have lived in for 37 years. It’s *not okay*,” she stresses.

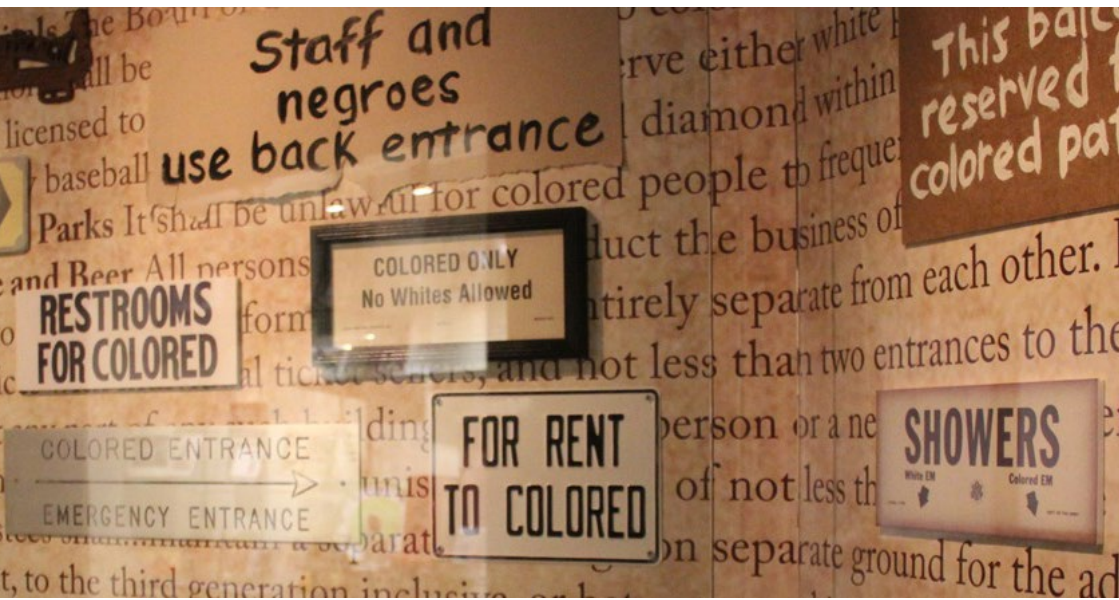
Ironically, most of what the world follows as American pop culture today has roots in black heritage and talent. From music to sport to literature to building infrastructure, the contribution of black Americans is substantial and undeniable. Then why is there still racial profiling today despite all their achievements against odds? “Because of systemic racism,” says Aja. “It’s in every American institution and folded in the fibre of our country. And until we’re ready to address it as a nation, these issues will continue to prevail.”

**“SYSTEMIC
RACISM IS IN
EVERY AMERICAN
INSTITUTION AND
FOLDED IN THE FIBRE
OF OUR COUNTRY”**

She adds, “I also believe that even if we had no contributions, we still wouldn’t deserve the poor treatment we’ve received throughout the years. No one deserves that.” Though only 12 percent of Americans identify as black, there is a disproportionately large number of blacks in American jails, a topic on which Aja recommends the documentary *Thirteenth* by Ava DuVernay to anyone “who has an interest in fighting systemic oppression.”

Like oppressed peoples anywhere in the world, women bear the brunt. Black women in the US are at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder in terms of education, income and opportunities. Inspired by black women visionaries like Audre Lorde, Josephine Baker, Janet Mock, Marsha P Johnson, Angela Davis and Kimberle Crenshaw, Aja believes that first and second wave feminism in the US has “definitely focused more on the liberation of white, able-bodied, cis-gender, upper-middle class to rich feminists above all.”

She avers: “My feminism is intersectional because without intersectional voices, everyone who doesn’t fit into that description gets left behind. Rise together or fall together. I choose the former.” ■



LEST WE FORGET

These memorial museums are an attempt by societies around the world to highlight and redress historical wrongs, genocides, racism, discrimination, and hate crimes

JIM CROW MUSEUM OF RACIST MEMORABILIA

Located inside the Ferris State University in Michigan, USA, the Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia uses “objects of intolerance” to teach tolerance and promote social justice. Jim Crow stands for a series of anti-black laws that relegated African Americans to the status of second-class citizens from 1877 until the civil rights movement in the mid-1960s. Built at a cost of USD \$1.3 million, this is

America’s largest public collection of artifacts from its segregation era to the modern day. The 9000 objects displayed here range from ashtrays and fishing lures to a full-size replica of a lynching tree. What unites them all is that they are steeped in racism, even glorifying violence against blacks. Perhaps *Vogue’s* former creative director Grace Coddington’s racist mammy jars may make it here someday.

DOCUMENTATION & CULTURAL CENTRE OF GERMAN SINTI AND ROMA

The Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma in Heidelberg, Germany, is a memorial to Sinti and Roma people killed by Nazis. It officially opened its doors in 1997 after several years of extensive work collecting stories and belongings from victims and survivors. It is the world's first permanent exhibition about the genocide perpetrated upon the Sinti and Roma people, thousands of whom lost their lives in the Holocaust. Exhibits include this photo of Elisabeth Emmmler with her three children taken a few years before they were deported to Auschwitz.



MUSEUM OF MEMORY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The Museum of Memory and Human Rights in Santiago, Chile, highlights the human rights violations committed by the Chilean state between 1973 and 1990. Inaugurated in 2010, its mission is to stimulate reflection and debate so that these events never happen again. Exhibits educate visitors about the 1973 US-supported military coup in which the *junta* came to power, the repression that took place in the following years, the resistance movement, exile and reparation policies among other issues.



APARTHEID MUSEUM

The Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg, South Africa, illustrates the rise and fall of apartheid, a system of institutionalised racial segregation that existed in South Africa from 1948 until the early 1990s. Set up in 2001, the exhibits include provocative film footage, photographs, text panels and artefacts illustrating events, facts and human stories from this horrific period in South African history marked by political, social and economic discrimination against the nonwhite majority by the white minority.



AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU MEMORIAL AND MUSEUM



One of the most significant memorial museums in the world, the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum stands on the site of the Auschwitz concentration camp in Oswiecim, Poland. The concentration camps had been developed and run by Nazi Germany during its occupation of Poland from 1939–1945. The Polish government preserved the site as a research centre and in memory of the 1.1 million people who died there, including 960,000 Jews, during World War II and the Holocaust. It became a World Heritage Site in 1979. ■



ON WAVES OF HOPE & FAITH

Bethany Hamilton not only recovered from the loss of an arm in a shark attack but went on to become one of America's top surfers and sporting icons

Text by Aekta Kapoor. Photography by Mary Cernsdorf

There were 55 unprovoked shark attacks around the world in 2003. One of them happened to a 13-year-old in Hawaii, whose left arm was bitten off by a 14-foot shark while she was surfing with her best friend. Miraculously, she survived. Even more miraculously, she went on to become one of America's top surfers, a guest on numerous TV shows, a happily married mother of two, and a role model for women the world over.

And Bethany Hamilton isn't done yet. After authoring eight books, the 30-year-old has been the inspiration behind of two movies on her life, the most recent one being the 2019 documentary *Bethany Hamilton: Unstoppable*. She also runs Friends of Bethany, a non-profit that hosts six events annually called 'Beautifully Flawed' for girls aged 14–25 who have experienced traumatic limb loss. They are given practical health tips that specifically account for limb loss, postural training, and – of course! – surf lessons.

This March, before coronavirus put a halt on sporting events worldwide, she also announced her intention to participate in the qualifying series for the World Surf League's Women's Championship next year.

Born in Hawaii, Bethany grew up in a devout Christian family and learnt early on to seek God in all the ups and downs of her life. Even as a 13-year-old, she says the foundation that her faith had established helped bring her peace and strength. "The bible verse John 16:33 says, *I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.* This verse reminds me that God knows what we may face, that this life will have hardship. But I can wake up each day, no matter what happens, knowing that God loves me and I can overcome the world and all that's in it," she tells *eShe*.

With the staunch support of her family and friends, the loss of her arm did not end up becoming a full-stop



In the 2011 biopic *Soul Surfer*, actor AnnaSophia Robb played Bethany's role while Bethany did her own stunts!

for Bethany's dreams, but merely a comma. She adopted a custom-made surfboard with a handle for her right arm, and modified her surfing style to make up for the loss of her left arm. Within 26 days of the attack, her passion for surfing and love of the ocean had her back on the surfboard, and within months she entered her first major competition. "It was probably my competitive nature too," she smiles, "that inner challenge to myself. Once I accomplished one thing, it was like, what else is possible?"

Bethany's parents and brothers helped her wholeheartedly. "They were willing to sacrifice a lot so I could possibly pursue snowboarding or whatever I wanted to do," she

says, adding that since they all loved the ocean and understood how it could help in her healing process, they were glad she wanted to continue life near the beach.

"Of course, they had their fears and worries, but they were so sensitive and encouraging that it allowed me to be confident in getting back out there," she says. Her two brothers and father helped her choose the best boards to ride and modified her surfboards so that she was able to eventually progress to a performance shortboard, which continues to be her choice of board.

Bethany admits she went through a time of being "really selfish", especially with her family. "I felt entitled to be treated a certain way

PHOTO: TREVOR MURPHY





Bethany participated and won in the NSSA National Championships three years in a row after her limb loss

and given my way. I didn't even realise I was acting like that! One day my family sat me down and pointed out that I was being really selfish, and while it hurt to hear that, it opened my eyes to the truth. I am thankful because it caused me to turn to God, seek forgiveness, and ask Him to help me change. I had to be honest with myself," she shares.

Bethany has participated in almost 20 major surfing championships around the world so far, with all the numerous qualifying rounds. She was the first woman surfer to surf in the Rip Curl Cup

in Indonesia in 2012, and her career best was finishing third at the Fiji Women's Pro 2016. "I'm a competitive person, so I thrive with the opportunity to compete and prove myself," she shares. "For me, competition brings a healthy challenge and helps me strive to be the best I can be. I find it fun!"

Along the way, in 2012, Bethany was introduced to a Christian youth minister Adam Dirks by mutual friends. "I was immediately intrigued by him. The first thing we did was jump off a cliff into the ocean together! As Adam says, 'it was love at first jump!'" she laughs.

**"ONCE I
ACCOMPLISHED
ONE THING,
IT WAS LIKE,
WHAT ELSE IS
POSSIBLE?"**

Bethany Hamilton with
husband Adam Dirks
and sons Tobias, 5, and
Wesley, 2, near their
home in Kauai, Hawaii

PHOTO: REBECCA FARMER





At one of Bethany's 'Beautifully Flawed' retreats for young girls who have experienced traumatic limb loss

The two began spending time together. “We would go hiking, to the beach, play tennis, surfing – he was still learning,” she adds with a grin. “The more time we spent together the more I liked Adam. He is genuine, kind, intentional, fun, adventurous, easy-going, friendly to all, passionate for Christ, handsome and a great guy overall!” she gushes, adding that she had no desire to “meet a ton of guys, or to ‘experience’ different people.” The two got married in 2013, and have two sons, now five and two years old.

“Adam and I love introducing them to the things we love in life.

Teaching, guiding and leading by example is both a blessing and a challenge. Motherhood has taught me to be more thankful for my own parents. I’ve also become a bit more responsible and better at my time management!” she says. Bethany often posts articles about herself and her family on her website, and a recent one shows the family exercising together during lockdown.

Watching Bethany work out is an awe-inspiring glimpse into her physical and mental strength. “Pretty early on, I accepted the fact that I had one arm and rather than focusing on my loss, and dreading tasks that seemed

**“I APPROACH
UNKNOWN
TASKS WITH A
MINDSET OF ‘I’LL
TRY’, AND THEN I
GET CREATIVE!”**



L-R: During the shoot of the 2019 documentary on her life *Bethany Hamilton: Unstoppable*; the film poster

hard or impossible, I focused on what I could do. Instead of assuming ‘I can’t,’ I approach unknown tasks with a mindset of ‘I’ll try’, then I get creative and adaptive!”

Gratitude has also been a major factor in Bethany’s recovery and success. “Choosing to find the good in my situation set me on the path of positive, healthy thoughts,” she explains. Being a well-known face on television and in the surfing world is something that is still a “major adjustment” for her. “It was not easy for me, honestly. I’m more of an introvert and homebody. The shark attack is one part of my story. While I’ve learned to embrace the beauty of what I’ve overcome, part of the purpose of my new film is to help tell a new story of

who I have become! I’ve not just continued to surf, I’ve done so at a level comparable to the top women surfers in the world,” she smiles.

Bethany hasn’t been to India but has a message for girls around the world who may face systemic obstacles in achieving their full potential: “Beauty can come from hard times and God’s love is more than enough to fulfill the deepest needs of our inner beings. While life can be rough and even painful, there is hope to overcome the difficulties we face through passion, faith and the right perspective. As my friend Amy Purdy said, let’s not limit our thinking to OVER-coming the struggles we face; let’s think about BE-coming a better human because of them. You too can overcome!” ■



Lockdown #CoupleGoals

What's the biggest test of any marriage than to be stuck together for months during a pandemic, re-negotiating relationship rules and personal boundaries? Five couples tell us how they fared

By Shweta Bhandral

While HR managers focused on team-building exercises to keep the work wheel moving from home during lockdown, most did not incorporate 'home' into their new system. The pandemic has not only triggered anxiety about disease, death and job

loss, it has also had the side effect of disrupted family systems. Lawyers in China and India have already reported a rise in divorce cases and queries. Marriages the world over are being put to the test. We spoke to five couples on how COVID has affected their relationship.

AASHKA & BRENT

Goa

TV celebrity and entrepreneur Aashka Goradia married Brent Globe in 2017, after which Brent moved from the US to India. Along with her TV work, Aashka, 34, began working on a makeup line called Renee Cosmetics, while Brent, 33, pursued yoga. In 2019, he launched his *yogashala* Peace of Blue in Goa, while Aashka shuttled between Mumbai and Goa promoting both their brands. The year 2020 began on a high note as Aashka shot an ad campaign for her brand and Peace of Blue grew stronger. Then, COVID derailed plans. Luckily, Aashka and Brent were together in Goa when lockdown began in March.

As Brent puts it, “Our relationship

has had to adapt, period. Our attention that had been focused on outward success turned inwards during lockdown. We would talk things out, sometimes take time to be in separate parts of the house if needed.” Aashka adds, “We have no rules in our relationship. There is complete freedom because that is essential for growth. But yes, there is discipline.” To keep restlessness away, they do yoga, solo and together. “We practise close to two hours in the morning. We are also doing online sessions with students,” says Brent. Developing content for their brands also keeps them busy. Aashka adds, “I think we have nearly exhausted everything on the streaming TV channels. We also read a lot, and I particularly found a new passion for the writings of J. Krishnamurti.”





RADHIKA & RAVI

Mumbai

Radhika, 40, and Ravi Kaushik, 45, look after a radio station and a TV station, respectively. With the entire media industry going into digital management of production and on-air processes during lockdown, the couple has had a hectic work-from-home life. Eventually, however, it improved their personal relationship. Ravi says, “We have become more appreciative of each other’s work. The fact that both of us are tackling major issues and doing heavy lifting for our organisations led to both of us respecting each other even more.”

Radhika adds, “After 15 years of marriage, we had begun taking

each other for granted. But now we have discovered things about each other that we were too busy to pay attention to during pre-COVID life. We are best of friends.”

Life at home is even more demanding when you have an eight-year-old to entertain through the day, without stepping out. The family has set some basic lockdown rules. Radhika tells us, “It’s a rule to not fight at all. We create funny family videos, cook food, watch TV, and even exercise together. All this keeps Arav also occupied.”

The couple believes that giving space to each other during this tough phase is also very important. “Let the other person be and do what makes them happy – that is our mantra,” says Radhika.



SANGYA & BHUVAN

New York City

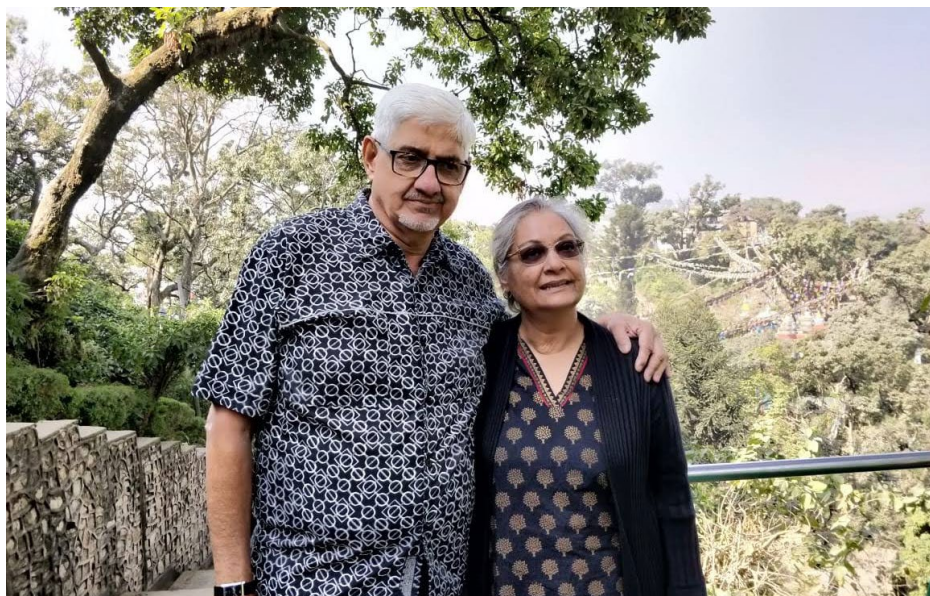
Married four years, Sangya Sharma, 33, and Bhuvan Khanna, 34, both work in IT companies in Manhattan where the lockdown began in March. Bhuvan narrates, “For the first few days, there was a lot of panic buying and getting enough supplies of essential items. Getting good masks was a challenge. Once we had enough stashed away to last us a couple of months, it was just about hunkering down and waiting for the curve to flatten. One solace was that we were in a city that has enough resources.”

Being used to doing their house chores themselves, they did not face any domestic difficulties. Sangya

says, “The bottom line is that you do whatever it takes to support your partner, and it’s always both ways. We play on each other’s strengths: I do what I’m good at, and he does what he’s good at.”

Lockdown gave this ambitious couple more time to talk about their future. “We had interesting conversations that brought us even closer. It got us going on things we had been putting off due to everyday work pressure,” says Bhuvan.

Sangya adds, “We never hang up on each other, we don’t walk away from each other, and we don’t sleep with an unresolved argument.” If anything, the lockdown has made them feel stronger and more confident about dealing with tough times together.



CAROL & LIONEL

Mumbai

Lockdown did not change things much for Lionel Andrade, 65, who is retired. But it took away a part of his wife Carol's life. At 70, Carol is dean at SPICE Institute, Bandra. The initial days were tough for the senior couple, who have been married 38 years. As Lionel puts it, "Carol was behaving as if the world would end if anyone sneezed. It was the uncertainty we were fighting. There were no parameters within which to define our experiences, hence the fear."

As the days passed, Lionel continued to manage household tasks, finance, attending to grocery requirements with the added responsibility

of sweeping and cleaning, while Carol took to cooking and dusting. She says, "Our understanding of boundaries and a new view of each other appeared." Not being able to meet their son weighs on them, but they talk to him and his wife every day. They miss church but do pray together for 45 minutes daily.

As a couple, they believe that talking and sharing is essential. "Once your fears are laid on the table, they are easier to handle," says Lionel. Carol adds, "Lionel is much more matter-of-fact about this whole experience. He grounds us both in common sense and refuses to get over-excited about anything." These soon-to-be grandparents affirm that lockdown has made them appreciate relationships much more.



PRIYANKA & KRANTI

Delhi

Lockdown has been a time of discovery for Delhi-based journalist couple Priyanka and Kranti Sambhav. Kranti, 42, admits that it has helped him shift his mindset: “By doing the housework or daily chores, I am not *helping* my wife. I am not doing her a favour.” On her part, Priyanka, 40, is now focusing on the family. She says, “In all these years of shoots, studios and anchoring, this is the first break where I am running the biggest show of life: my household. I am spending time with my son and husband with no hurry to reach anywhere. We are working out together, planning meals. I also found out that my husband makes

better *paranths* than me.”

Priyanka quit her job in 2019 to launch her own venture. She was busy establishing her brand *Kaam Ki Baat* when COVID struck. It worries her that Kranti is now the sole earning member in the family but the couple believes that they must face the situation and improvise. Kranti says, “It has given us more clarity in terms of priorities. We have started asking, what is more important and why?”

Their 11-year-old son Kabir is finally getting all their attention. “In 16 years of marriage, this is the first time that the family is together 24/7. Every household chore has become a family task. Whether setting up the camera or cutting vegetables, we function as a unit.” ■



LAYER OF LOVE

New York entrepreneur and Airbnb superhost Claire Alba needed a solution for post-sex bedroom messes – so she made it herself!

Have you and your partner ever checked into a hotel room looking forward to a passionate rendezvous, but then later you ended up scrubbing the sheets because of the post-sex mess? New York City-based Claire Alba had firsthand experience of both sides of the problem.

As an Airbnb superhost who often rents out a floor of her tastefully decorated Brooklyn home to couples and is responsible for its maintenance, the 48-year-old mother of two certainly didn't want stained sheets. And as a single woman who had hot dates of her own from time to time, she frequently faced the same issue herself.

"I found myself single again in my early 40s and had a spell during which I was getting lucky during my most unlucky time of the month. I was scrubbing my sheets, his sheets, hotel sheets, Airbnb linens. It was ridiculous. I tried menstrual cups (they did not work – imagine tipping a dam – it was bad). I brought along my own blanket, stuffed in a large purse. It was cumbersome and didn't do the job anyway. I needed a product that would save me the embarrassment of finding a mess on the sheets and the time of cleaning it up – not an afterglow activity in anyone's

book!" she says.

So Claire, who did her Bachelor's in philosophy at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, sought out a solution. "I found a material that is luxuriously soft, works impeccably well, and is thin and small enough to bring with me wherever I'm headed. I also made a small clutch for discretion and ease



Entrepreneur and product designer Claire Alba

in bringing it home when the fun is done," she says, adding, "It feels and works better than a towel – stays put and is amazingly absorbent. Plus, it's black, so you don't have to be confronted with the aftermath or be concerned about stains." She called it The Layer.

Soon, it became obvious to Claire that other people would also find The Layer very practical.



The Layer can be used for all kinds of bedroom messes, from sex to menstruation, and is light and durable

“It’s perfect for all sex messes, all the time, for everyone and all persuasions. Indeed, no one wants to sleep in the wet spot. And many, many things may contribute to the wet spot. It makes no difference. The Layer can handle it all!” laughs Claire.

Besides sex, it can also be used as an extra bed-shield during menstruation, and can be a boon for teenagers or women with disabilities who are not able to manage menstrual accidents during the night. The Layer is durable too – it has been tested to withstand 300-plus washes, and just needs a regular wash and tumble dry in the washing machine.

Claire began offering The Layer

to her own Airbnb guests, and now retails it at a very reasonable price from getthelayer.com, Etsy and Amazon with worldwide delivery. Entrepreneurship and e-commerce are, in fact, areas she is well familiar with. As a potter who makes jewellery and home goods, she runs corico.com to retail her ware, and has patented an item called Olive Boat & Pit Port, which can be used to display olives while hiding the unsightly pits.

Born in the Midwest, Claire’s microbiologist father and multi-talented mother moved to Chapel Hill when she was 12. Claire inherited her wit and youthful attitude from her mother, who was of Belgian origin. “My mother

said her impulse, when asked her age, was to answer ‘17’ even as she approached 80. I’m stuck somewhere in my 20s. My sisters are 11 and 12 years older than I am and I skipped a grade in school so I have been very accustomed to being the youngest in the room. Now I’m the mom (divorced) and my boyfriend is 10 years younger than I am, so I have to get used to being the oldest one in the room,” she jokes, adding, “It’s not so bad.”

Having tried out various professions, from being an assistant teacher to producing her own feature-length documentary on the history of salsa music, Claire has developed an eclectic, open-minded approach to life. Music and dance are an integral part of her existence, as they are for her two daughters who both play the guitar. They are also as immensely gifted as their mom and grandmother: her older daughter, Coco, 19, is an illustrator, fashionista and a spirited “hippie” who has already been cover model for *New York* magazine. Her younger one, Cori, 15, is a budding photographer who also enjoys skiing, biking, hiking, camping, rock-climbing and kayaking.

It can’t be easy to be single and dating again while living full-time with one’s daughters and adapting to the new world of internet relationships. “Well, that was challenging – still is. It took me some time

to get used to online dating – but I find it fascinating. Observing how people write about themselves is really telling. But it doesn’t account at all for chemistry. The tricky part is in deciding when to be flexible and when to recognise a red flag for what it is. That line can be a thin



This clutch is perfect for carrying The Layer to a date

one. But overall, I’ve experienced more love and excitement and support than I had previously imagined for myself. It’s fun!”

As a parting thought, Claire shares something she wrote on a dating website, appropriately enough: “I am striving to create the life I want – not just live it by default.” ■



INSTA INTERIORS

Lockdown has kept us all home, so why not use the space to express one's creativity? These four Instagram influencers have some brilliant ideas!

By Shweta Bhandral



KRUTI BADIANI, NOIDA

Based in Noida, NCR, home-decor stylist Kruti Badiani launched her Instagram page three years ago as a collection of memories of her creative work. Slowly, as the page gained followers (1.2 lakh so far), the 33-year-old began to showcase her love for plants, gardening, and home décor

regularly. On @MyHomeVibes, she now also shares content to inspire followers and runs contests. Kruti feels that interior design reflects one's inner self, and is an extension of one's personality. She wants to help people turn houses into homes with her ideas. The mix of trendy colours and earthy details in her apartment is fascinating.



PREETHI PRABHU, BENGALURU

Preethi Prabhu started blogging about interior decor in 2009. Her Insta page @preethiprabhudotcom, launched in 2017, was an extension of her Facebook community of decor enthusiasts. “It became a platform for me to put out my decor content, share my experiences, teach others what’s worked for me

and do things that I am passionate about,” she says. For instance, a special series on Indian art or a DIY activity of block-printing walls inspired many children and mothers stuck at home. Preethi regularly shares ideas with her 1 lakh-plus followers on how to brighten up little corners of their homes with earthy Indian settings and colours.



KAJAL YADVENDRA TYAGI, MUMBAI

Mumbai-based interior designer Kajal Yadvendra Tyagi started showcasing her work on Instagram in early 2019, and that too only after her friends encouraged her to do so. Her page @Kajal8212 is for people who want to design their own space and are seeking new ideas. Kajal shares product reviews

and recommendations of different brands so that her followers can make more informed choices for their own homes.

The 37-year-old designer and digital content creator believes that designing one's house is a therapeutic and fulfilling experience. Her page focuses on design with utility, a popular concept in big cities.



VAISHALI A GANI, BELGAUM

Over a year ago, Vaishali A Gani tweaked her personal Instagram page to share her passion for interior design instead. The followers on @homevisiontoreality grew as the 38-year-old offered general ideas for turning any space into a beautiful, warm and happy home. She says, “I spend my time doing what I

truly love. And interacting with followers on the platform encourages me.” The Belgaum-based designer has been doing collaborations and Q&A sessions as well. Her page has plenty of ideas about colours and combinations, be it with plants and planters or decor and lighting. She also shares DIY activities like *warli* painting on pots and lamps. ■

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CUSTODIAN OF HISTORY

From a refugee who found love after Partition to an 88-year-old who continues to go to work, Bhag Bahri Malhotra has had quite a journey

By Maya Lalchandani

The time-etched lines on Bhag Bahri Malhotra's face are well earned. A little frail at 88, the matriarch of Delhi's iconic bookstore, Bahrison's, looks nevertheless hale and hearty as she shares her life's journey and the enormous influence she has had on the Khan Market bookstore that generations

of book lovers are intimate with.

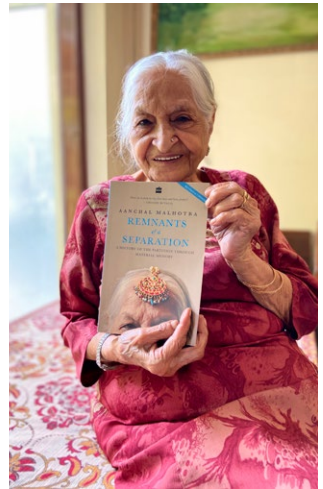
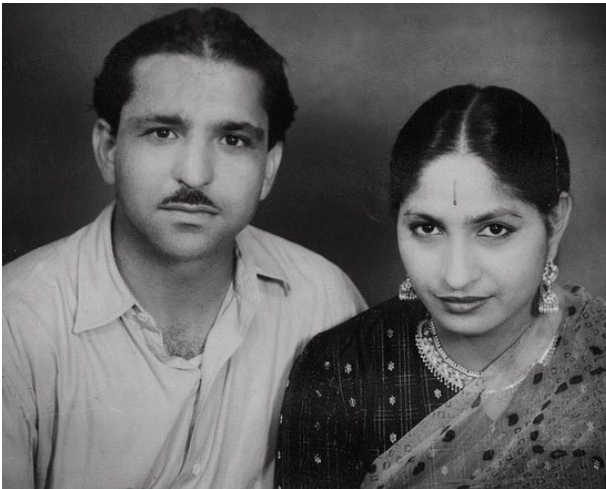
Both Punjabi immigrants of the Partition, Bhag and her husband Balraj Bahri Malhotra met at Delhi's Kingsway Camp, where they worked as refugee volunteers. "We would look at each other, but we never spoke," Bhag smiles in reminiscence of the early days of

their courtship. After Khan Market came up in 1951, Balraj was lucky enough to set up his bookstore there two years later. The couple lived in a Netaji Nagar accommodation that came with Bhag's government job.

Educated like her mother, Bhag worked as a junior clerk for the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation. She not only shared

would wear the flowers all night – my hair always smelled of flowers and his love,” she says poignantly.

In 1968, Bhag gave up her government job and quarters, and the couple and their three children moved to Safdarjung Enclave. Though she belonged to a generation that did not empower its women with a voice or freedom



L-R: Bhag and Balraj in 1948; Bhag's photo on the cover of her granddaughter Aanchal Malhotra's book

her salary of ₹120 per month but also her time to finance her husband's enterprise. Her time was spent between office, home and the bookstore, and the couple's relationship was rich in love, trust and respect – so much so that Balraj addressed Bhag as '*madamji*'. "Every day, after work at 10 pm, he would cycle all the way to India Gate and buy a string of jasmine flowers for my hair before coming home. I

of choice, her own mother – who worked as a teacher to support the family after the early death of her husband – was a strong role model. "Women were kept in control earlier," says Bhag. "They could not voice their opinions at all, they had to keep their heads covered with a dupatta, they were not allowed an education, and hence they lived in fear. Post-Partition, they were educated enough to



L-R: A vociferous reader even at 88; with her husband, son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren

be independent; they continued wearing a dupatta but it was no longer on their heads. They also realised that they could contribute financially to their families, and that a happy man is easier to live with.”

The Malhotra family now runs three bookstores successfully. “Women most definitely have to work, whether it is in the house or otherwise. If working outside, one can get rid of fatigue by complementing it with housework intermittently. I still do all my chores myself,” Bhag says with spirit.

Often to be seen browsing through books in the family stores, she began working at their Saket store full-time in 2016 after Balraj’s death. “I work only to suit myself. I don’t really need to report to anybody; it’s just so that my mind is kept busy and, besides, I do not

want to just sit at home. I feel special as customers come and greet me; there is a coffee shop, it feels like home.” What is old age in the face of such resolution?

Before lockdown shuttered all their stores, Bhag would begin her work day with an easy morning “pottering around”, having tea, doing yoga, reading three newspapers, and having breakfast with her son. She would leave for her bookstore after lunch, and spend her afternoon watching the business, chatting with customers, and catching up on her reading (she loves biographies, and Khushwant Singh is her favourite author “as he is Punjabi and writes well”).

Raring to work again post-lockdown, hers is the story of a woman who has lived life fully, taking pride in the world that she has created. ■



RELENTLESS PUNISHMENT

Our society punishes children twice – first as parental abuse when they are little, then by incarcerating them when they become juvenile criminals

By Anita Panda

PHOTO: TRYM NILSEN / UNSPLASH

Children are the future, so what does it bode for a society if some of its youngest members are brought up on a daily diet of insult and violence? A study titled ‘Parenting Matters’ released last month by UNICEF found there are 30 different forms of physical and verbal abuse that Indian parents use on children from newborns to six years as part of disciplining efforts. Punishment is also gendered: girl children are more likely to be

burdened with household chores, day-to-day restrictions, or difference in the kind of toys they are given.

The pandemic and associated lockdowns have only added to domestic woes, with cases of violence showing an alarming increase. Experts, however, warn that most cases are not reported, so the actual numbers of such parental abuse may be unknown. Persis Sidhwa, litigation head at lawyers’ collective Majlis, says, “The

helpline approach is limited during lockdown as most kids have no access to teachers in whom they normally confide. The magnitude of abuse they suffer is only the tip of the iceberg. A lot more will be exposed post-lockdown when they go back to school. Abuse festers within homes.”

According to Persis, India has multiple and sufficient laws to protect children. “But our focus should be on implementation and how to make the system work,” she says. “It is not the severity but the certainty of this punishment that matters.” She cites the low conviction rates and lack of adequate socio-legal support to affected families as the biggest obstacle. “In 10 years of working with Majlis, I’ve noticed a rise in cases of domestic violence against women and children,” she avers, adding that Majlis offers socio-legal support to victims through their Victim Support programmes. It works with the police, protection officers, court system and child welfare committees regarding sensitisation and awareness of child abuse.

She believes that more positive stories need to be highlighted in the media so that mothers and

children are empowered to make the call to distress helplines such as 1098 (childline) or 100 (police) and going a step further to file an FIR when they face domestic violence. “Mothers are scared of filing a report against their husbands, but counselling strengthens them. Women are not aware of how to access their rights. Therapy, promise of shelter and making them aware that they and their children will

be supported helps. Where the child is abused, the mother is abused,” says Persis.

Yasmin Ali Haque, UNICEF representative in India, shares a few horrific details of the extent of abuse Indian children face routinely from the new study: “The various forms of violence

against children includes physical violence (burning; pinching; slapping; beating with implements like stick, belts, rods) verbal abuse (blaming; criticising; shouting; use of foul language); witnessing physical violence (towards one parent; towards siblings; outside the family) and emotional abuse (restricting movement; denying food; discrimination; and instilling fear).”

Being brought up in violent homes has far-reaching repercussions, including producing another

“KIDS IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW NEED ROBUST REHABILITATION PROGRAMMES SO THAT THEY CAN COME OUT OF IT”

er generation of violent abusers. But in cases where the criminals are minors – such as teenage rapists – Persis believes society must give them another chance. “Kids in conflict with the law need robust rehabilitation programmes so that they can come out of it. The answer is not in incarcerating them,” says Persis, who campaigned against modifying the law that treats those under 18 as juveniles. The call to change the law came up after the heinous gang-rapes of 2012 in Delhi and 2013 in Mumbai (in both, one of the rapists was a minor).

Her argument is that India needs to strengthen its system of social workers, trained personnel, finances and better rehabilitation opportunities for juveniles instead of branding them ‘hardened criminals’ and giving them no more chance to rehabilitate themselves.

“All children deserve a second chance! We need to understand their socio-economic backgrounds and causes – raised in violent homes, struggling to get two square meals a day, abused and maltreated. Punishing them is irretrievable. Our judicial system, and those around the world too, are not infallible,” she insists, adding, “These kids are the lowest in the social order. We have failed them as a society and as government. As citizens, it is our duty to ensure that they are rehabilitated.” ■



LEGAL RECOURSE

Dr Rubee Singh (above) is the author of *Government Schemes for Child Protection in India* and is the managing editor of *IJARSH India* journal. She lists the laws that protect children from abuse or exploitation at home or outside:

Articles 21 and 45: Free and compulsory education for all children aged 6 to 14

Article 23: Prohibition of human trafficking and forced labour

Article 24: Prohibition of employment of children under the age of 14 years in hazardous conditions

Article 39: Opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity; protection against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment

If a child faces abuse, these sections of the IPC can be invoked:

Section 83: Protection from prosecution for children under 12

Section 292: Exposure to obscenity

Section 305: Abetment to suicide

Section 317: Abandonment of child



BRUISE ME NOT

Growing up in a violent home is a traumatic experience that affects every aspect of a child's life and development

By Dr Prerna Kohli

Domestic violence can be defined as when one person uses their power to control and manage other people in a relationship – physically, socially, psychologically, or sexually. Due to the current lockdown in India, there is a sudden rise in reports of domestic violence. Not only is the abused person affected, but other family members and most importantly children in the home are severely affected too.

Abuse is not gender-specific. When a child watches her mother getting beaten by her father or a sibling being harassed by another family member, it can be very traumatic. Watching the act over and over again can be mentally damaging. Often, children end up being beaten themselves while trying to rescue their mother or siblings.

Children emulate parents. When they witness abuse, they accept it as a societal norm. Further, when

PHOTO: KATJ / UNSPLASH

children see their parents fight, abuse, or control each other, or are abused themselves, they feel helpless, hopeless, and suffer from anxiety. They may feel they are the cause of the violence. Such children often complain of stomach aches, change in sleep patterns, anger issues, and hatred toward the abuser.

Additionally, children may have nightmares of the trauma and may wet their bed. They may also develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and its physical implications. They may have poor self-esteem and confidence; mental health conditions like depression; physical conditions like diabetes, hypertension, or undiagnosed pains; behavioural issues like addiction, anger issues, eating disorders and substance addiction, or may replicate domestic violence on their partner in future.

Teens react to abuse differently. They may burst out on the abusive parent and also attack them. They may show low interest in studies. Many have a tendency to become aggressive and disobedient. A girl child who witnesses abuse of her mother or suffers it herself may become fearful of her father and may resist marriage later as she may generalise that “all men are the same”. Or she may choose an abusive partner for herself because that is “normal” for her since childhood.

In India, a young woman’s mother or mother-in-law often asks her to “adjust” and pretend as if everything is okay even if her husband is abusive, as if it’s a woman’s job to go through pain and what generations of women before them have done.

For young men who witness violence at home, the dangerous outcome could also be that they



Dr Perna Kohli

get used to this behaviour of their parent and follow the same script when they get married. They may feel it is their right to beat their spouse, and the abused must accept it silently. Parental abuse and domestic violence thus perpetuate a vicious cycle. ■

Dr Perna Kohli is a clinical psychologist, workshop facilitator and counsellor.



**CONTEST
ALERT!**

LOCKDOWN POETRY

**eShe presents 'Lockdown Poetry Contest'
for women writers**

**Jury includes globally renowned poet
Arundhathi Subramaniam**

Deadline: July 31, 2020



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FOR CAREERS OF
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LOCKDOWN POETRY CONTEST

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Theme: Lockdown

Language: English

Word limit: 400 words

Author eligibility: Women writers of all ages who are residents of India

Original and unpublished work only

Only one submission allowed per writer (please do not send pieces submitted elsewhere)

Submission format: Attach your poem as a Word document. The file must contain the title of the piece, along with the name, email, postal address and phone number of the author.

Subject line: The email title should say "Contest entry by (your name)"

Submit your entry to:
mail@coralcontent.com

Submission deadline: 11.59 pm on July 31, 2020

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10 runners-up will each receive a set of two books from Harper Collins + a merit certificate.

All winning entries will be published by eShe.



JURY

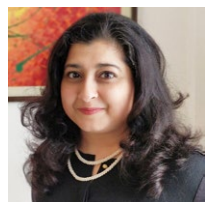


ARUNDHATHI SUBRAMANIAM

Award-winning poet, poetry editor, cultural curator and literary critic

AEKTA KAPOOR

Editor and publisher of eShe magazine





Training for the
Asian Shotgun
Championship in
Almaty, Kazakhstan

Shotgun Shagun

Shagun Chowdhary battled systemic gender biases and answered critics by becoming the first Indian woman trap shooter to reach the Olympics

By Neha Kirpal

Shagun Chowdhary was introduced to clay-pigeon shooting at the age of three while growing up in Bikaner, Rajasthan. Her father, Sushil Chowdhary, would shoot skeet with the late Maharaja Dr Karni Singh at Lalgarh Palace. Little Shagun looked forward to evenings when her father would come home from their factory to pick her up and take her along with him to the range. “I

remember carrying my black plastic toy gun with me, which used to make this terrible sound, and then mimic my dad at every station,” she reminisces.

Inspired and supported by her father, Shagun ended up becoming the first Indian woman to qualify

first competition at the same range in Bikaner. When India hosted the Asian Clay Shooting Championship in 2003, Shagun was part of the double trap team – her first international competition, where she defeated a girl from China and won the Bronze medal. Needless to



L-R: After winning Bronze at Asian Games 2014; at the opening ceremony for the Asian Games 2010

for the Olympic trap shooting event at the 2012 Summer Olympics in London. She was also a part of the national team that won the Bronze medal at the Incheon Asian Games in 2014.

At the time when Shagun started clay-pigeon shooting, nobody would have thought that the sport could be something beyond a hobby. Luckily for her, she was at the right place at the right time. In 2001, Shagun participated in her

say, this helped her confidence soar.

The young girl was overwhelmed when she went up on stage to claim the medal for India. The victory helped set the pace for her career. “I wanted to feel that emotion of winning again and again,” she narrates.

While Shagun grew up between Ganganagar, Bikaner, Delhi and Jaipur, her father left no stone unturned in her training and sourcing of the required gear.

But her mother always had her apprehensions. “I don’t really blame her because there was no financial security that came along with the sport,” she says, explaining that it was not considered a viable career option in the early 2000s. A few years down the line, however, everything began falling into place.

there to have a good time, to feel ‘cool’ with a shotgun. What they don’t realise is how much it takes for a girl to step out of her comfort zone and be in an environment that is completely alien to her,” she says.

Since shooting is a mental sport, one needs to be in a good space mentally to be able to focus on the



L-R: With a teammate enroute to the World Championships in Italy; winning the trophy at Royal Cup, Jaipur

Shagun got a job with ONGC and became the first woman to take clay-pigeon shooting to the Olympics. This helped convince her mother too about her decision.

Being a woman athlete in a largely male-dominated sport has not been a smooth ride, though. There was a stark difference in the way Shagun was treated as compared with the men. “At first, nobody takes you seriously. They feel you are only

job at hand. Early on in her career, when the squads got full, Shagun would be asked to step down to accommodate another shooter and shoot in the next squad. “It was more important for the boys to get their training rounds because they had a target to achieve. I was supposedly there only for fun,” she says wryly.

Shagun, however, befriended a few shooters who helped her

with her technique and gave her the confidence to show up again and again. This enabled her to become stronger mentally and worked wonders for her sport. It took Shagun 11 years to be taken seriously. An Olympic quota and the fourth position at the World Championships in Belgrade in 2011 finally changed people's perspective of her. "From being just another girl who shoots, I became the first girl to take India to the Olympics. I finally received the validation that I was pining for all those years," she smiles.

With this year's Olympics being postponed to 2021 and all international competitions standing cancelled in the wake of the COVID pandemic, there is a lot of ambiguity related to the sport at present. "In my sport, we do not have the luxury of practising at home, so we have no choice but to wait it out and work on our physical and mental strength in the meantime," says Shagun, who recently took on an organic farming venture to help generate employment for women at her family-owned citrus orchards in Jaipur and Ganganagar.

The family primarily grows organic kinnows, which they supply to farmer markets in Jaipur and Delhi. Due to the nationwide lockdown, Shagun spent a considerable amount of time at the farm this year. "I love the farm life,

the open spaces, and interacting with the villagers. I wanted the rural women to feel financially independent and to walk tall – to be an equal in their families and put food on the table," says Shagun.

It was with this motivation that she began employing women for the orchard. Currently, there are



Shagun with her mom at a family wedding

eight women working at the farm and the numbers will grow once all the systems are in place.

Shagun's message to young women is to have courage to pursue whatever they might want to, unabashedly and unapologetically. "Don't seek validation from your peers, have the confidence to validate your actions in your mind for yourself because that is what defines growth," she believes. ■

A BRAND NEW DIRECTION

Midlife is often when we start thinking we want something different from our lives. These two mentors have ideas for you!

By Kay Newton

RACHEL LANKESTER, UK

An early menopause at 41 prompted Rachel Lankester to start questioning everything about herself and her future role in the world. She went on to launch Magnificent Midlife (MagnificentMidlife.com), a platform to celebrate and empower women in midlife and beyond.



Rachel Lankester

Rachel and I both agree there is nothing like a pandemic to make you realise exactly what does and doesn't matter, and what you actually need! It also reminds you daily of your own mortality.

"I reckon the biggest impact of COVID-19 will be that we have had the time and environment in which to contemplate a new 'normal' for both the world and ourselves," says Rachel, who is also the editor of *The Mutton Club* e-zine and the host of the Magnificent Midlife Podcast.

She adds: "I don't find this depressing, I find it really exciting. Finally, the world seems to be waking up to the possibilities of difference. I don't want to go back to 'normal'. I was already determined to make my life the best it could possibly be, but now I feel even more inspired to just get on with it!"

The 53-year-old believes the lockdowns around the world may have restricted our movements

"It's not how strong you are that determines your survival, but the extent to which you are able to adapt to change"



but that doesn't need to restrict planning the next chapter of our lives. "Darwin proved long ago that it's not how strong you are that determines your survival, but the extent to which you are able to adapt to change," she points out.

Use Rachel's tips to move towards the new chapter in your life:

Start with your values. Find a good extensive list – Brené Brown has a great one. Take time to work out your top three. There's no point in creating a sparkly next chapter that isn't aligned with your values.

Understand your strengths. We often go through life focused on improving our weaknesses. But if we can align what we do with what we're best at, we're likely to be happier. The Clifton Strengths Finder is fantastic.

How do you want to feel in various areas

of your life? Career, money, home, fitness, food, sensuality, community, faith? Danielle LaPorte's Desire Map work is great for this. Brainstorm feeling words that inspire and empower you. What feelings do you *not* want to feel? Write them down.

Create your Chuck-It List (the opposite of a Bucket List). What don't you want? What do you never want to do ever again? Just write whatever comes to mind.

Start dreaming. You're never too old and it's never too late. Make an inventory of all that you love doing and all that you're good at. Your magnificent next chapter lies in the intersection between the two – your *ikigai* as the Japanese call it. It's thought to be the secret to a long and happy life, and centres on making life meaningful.

"I realised that I had been blessed with the gift of midlife. I knew it was important for me to live it to the best I could"



DEB JOHNSTONE, AUSTRALIA

On the face of it, Deb Johnstone's life couldn't get better. She lives in a two-bedroom apartment a minute's walk from the beach in Cairns in tropical Far North Queensland. She has her life partner and two grown sons close by, one baby grandson and another due soon.

And yet, it was not very long ago that the 57-year-old underwent tremendous life changes that left her transformed. Reflecting on those experiences, she realised each twist and turn had a purpose, and decided to help others as a transformational life, business and career coach. And this month, she is all set to launch her first Women Reinventing Midlife summit online.

Born in the UK, Deb migrated to Australia at 25. "My parents

found the distance unbearable after the birth of my first child and they followed me out. It was wonderful to have my parents with me but within a matter of months, my mum discovered her breast cancer had metastasized into her bones. In less than 12 months she was gone. She was just 51," she narrates.

Two years later, Deb's husband's business went into liquidation and they lost their home. They relocated to Far North Queensland with their two sons. It wasn't long afterwards that their marriage ended in divorce. "The combination of my mum's death together with the relocation had a devastating effect on our family. I didn't see my dad for 15 years," she shares. "He passed away in 2019. It was traumatic for me. He was my hero and he

was gone. And with him went my family foundation and my identity as I knew it.”

Grief meant Deb spent a lot of time reflecting on the past. “I thought about my mother and the unfairness of her early passing. That led me to question my own life path. I lost motivation, lacked energy and no longer felt needed. My confusion turned into a lack of purpose and clarity on where to go from here,” she shares.

Deb, who had started her own coaching practice in 2012, noticed that around 40 percent of her client base were women travelling the midlife path. She felt an intuitive nudge that turned into an undeniable force she could no longer ignore.

“It seemed that each conversation I had with women of my age contained a message. Friends who were lacking purpose, articles I read about midlife and conversations with women at my yoga group. I saw evidence everywhere that I needed to take the step I had been avoiding. Through reflections of my mother, I realised that I had been blessed with the gift of midlife. I knew it was important for me to live it to the best I could – for both of us,” says Deb, who went on to build a new community, ‘The Empowered Midlife Woman’.

Midlife women are wise and thrive when supported in a likeminded

community. Deb’s summit is for midlife women who yearn to learn from successful transitional stories of others. Expert speakers will be sharing tips and resources to enable listeners to thrive in this second phase of life. The first global online summit on July 27, 2020, will talk about how to find vitality, purpose and clarity to thrive after the kids



Deb Johnstone

leave home.

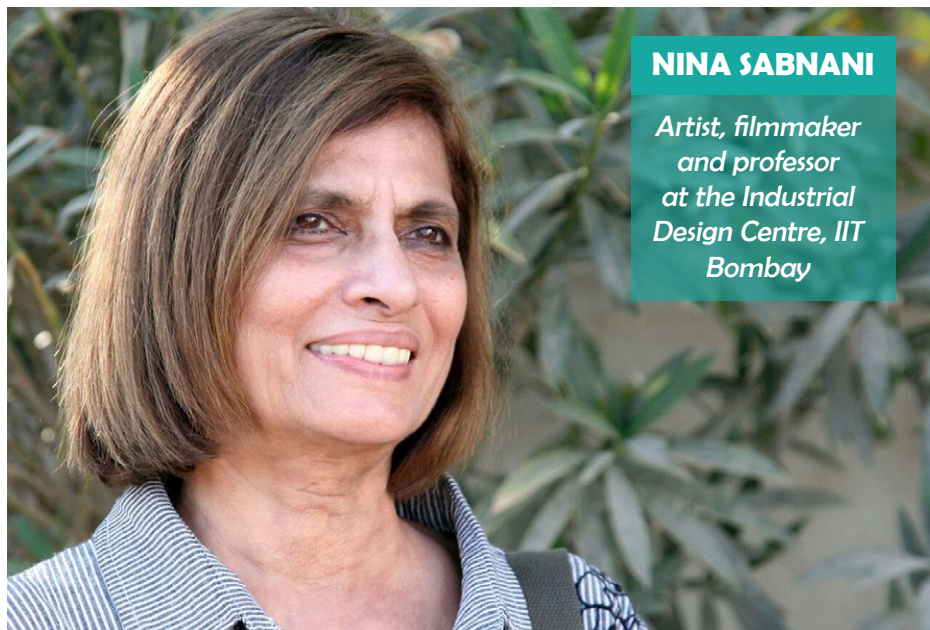
Says Deb: “Midlife transitions happen more than once. I’m embracing this new phase and I hope this summit helps you embrace yours.” ■

Sign up for Deb’s summit here: bit.ly/WRM-eShe

A SCIENTIFIC TEMPERAMENT

Two women researchers who use art with science in their work talk about life, inspiration and their love for the STEM subjects

By Manvi Pant



After extensive work in the field of animation and ethnography, Nina Sabnani has observed a bond between art and science. “There is a bit of both in each other, and both require a lot of imagination,” says the artist, filmmaker and professor at the Industrial Design Centre, IIT Bombay.

Born in Ahmedabad and raised in Baroda and Jaipur – cities with their own unique blend of art and culture – Nina’s natural curiosity, sharp intellect and profound understanding of the world helped her bring different elements together in her films, illustrations and storytelling. “I love exploring the dynamics be-

tween words and images. Ethnography frames the methodology of my working and I make films and illustrated books that deal with stories and art practices,” she explains.

Nina has collaborated with different communities, trying to make scientific principles accessible through art and animation. One of her multi-institutional projects was about rainwater harvesting and its accessibility to rural Rajasthan. They showcased it through a wall mural created in collaboration with

Sundar Chatterjee to make an animated film, *Hum Chitra Banate Hain*. “It breaks a popular myth of why the Bhils paint. Through this project, I got the opportunity to understand a proud community that has immense wisdom and generosity of spirit and an amazing understanding of nature,” she shares.

Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) are popular career choices for women. Yet, in almost every part of the world, women are underrepresented in this

field. Nina admits she feels a void and stresses that this domain, like so many others, should not be restricted to a particular gender: “Women have played important roles in STEM but they tend to be marginalised because of the notion that science is beyond their pale. Nothing could be further from the truth.”

She agrees that a lot of it has to do with social conditioning and messaging, but the pushback is more prominent within less privileged communities. “These families cannot afford to educate all their children and preference is given to the male child. These notions are changing slowly, but there is still a long way to go.” Thankful for all the support she received, Nina says her goal is to find an exquisite balance between life and work, and to “blur these boundaries.”



A scene from the film *Hum Chitra Banate Hain* on Bhil art

scientists, geographers, NGOs and local artists. In another, they created animated films about air pollution and its impact on young asthma patients in Delhi. “The exciting part was to deliver the information in an engaging way,” she says.

But the project she relishes most was one in which she had teamed up with a Bhil artist, Sher Singh from Bhopal, and her former students Piyush Verma and Shyam



One of Ipsa Jain's defining memories that propelled her to take up a career in science was a visit to the National Dairy Research Institute in her hometown Karnal, Haryana, on Science Day. "I was in class eight but very curious about the biological world already. There were so many exhibits at the institute but what really caught my eye was this electrophoresis gel experiment by a Ph.D student who also later showed us how to hand-operate a micropipette. The experience was mind-blowing. That was the day I knew my future lay in science," she recalls.

After finishing her Ph.D from Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in molecular biology and oncology, she did her post doctorate at Institute of Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine, Bengaluru. She now freelances as a science illustrator and communicator. "My work includes creative and stylised representation of biological science to generate interest in the public. Using the bookmaking process as a tool, I contemplate about representation and perception of scientific images," she shares.

Research suggests that women make up only 28 percent of the

PHOTO CREDIT: ISCIENCE MEDIA CENTRE, IISER PUNE

workforce in STEM domains, and less than 30 percent of the world's researchers are women. Ipsa shares her own observations: "In IISc, in biological sciences especially, there are a lot of students who are women and ones who don't conform to a particular gender. But just after they finish the Ph.D, something happens. The difference gets steeper in post-doc and declines even further at the

are limited fellowships," says Ipsa.

While Ipsa is a scientist by training, she calls herself an artist in spirit. "Both the fields try to inquire, question, and find solutions. Both require patience, trial and error and random accidents to happen. But the process of a scientific experiment is more stringent and scrutinised. Artistic process, on the other hand, is fluid and reserves some space for



L-R: Ipsa with participants at a science illustration workshop at IISER Pune; Ipsa's illustration *Melanocyte*

Principal Investigator level."

Bold enough to go against the grain, demand her space and pursue her passion, Ipsa feels extremely grateful to have an encouraging family and life partner. But she admits that not all women in STEM fields have that kind of support system, and those who have to balance families and professional priorities face acute internal pressures. "Also, if one takes a maternity break, then re-entry gets tough because there

personal bias and interpretation."

In 2016, she founded Ipsawonders, a beautiful platform that uses art and aesthetics as a vehicle for science storytelling. "In case of academic drawing, I am faithful to science and research, and bring in a lot of detailing into the matter. In science storytelling, I don't intend to incorporate a lot of information. I create images to engage with people in a way that they remember and build trust upon." ■

REPUBLIC OF CHUTNEYS

These yummy chutneys don't just brighten your plate but also your mood

Recipes by Kaveri Jain. Photography by Ananya Jain



Every few hundred kilometres that you travel in India, you will find a new and exciting chutney to accompany the main dish in every regional cuisine. Herbs, vege-

tables, fruits – anything can be used to make these side dishes, which are full of nutrition and rich in flavour. Here are five chutneys to add a dash of spice to your meals this summer!



RAW MANGO CHUTNEY

Ingredients (serves 4):

3 raw mangoes; 4 green chillies, chopped; 6 tbsp jaggery powder; 1 tsp red chilli powder; salt to taste; 1 tbsp oil; 3 dry red chillies; 1 tsp mustard seeds

Instructions:

Peel, slice and chop the mangoes (remove seeds). Put them into a pan and add green chillies. Pour just

enough water to cover the mangoes and chillies. Simmer and cook till it becomes a pulpy mash. Now add the chilli powder and jaggery to the pan. Cook for another 2 mins. Keep aside till cool. Next, heat oil in a pan. Toss in dry red chillies and mustard seeds. Pour over the mango chutney, and it is ready to serve. Store in the refrigerator in an air-tight container; it stays fresh for two weeks.



MINT CORIANDER CHUTNEY

Ingredients:

3 cups coriander; 1 cup fresh mint; 1" piece of ginger; 3 green chillies; 1 tbsp minced garlic; 1 chopped onion; 1 tsp fennel seeds; 40 ml lemon juice; 1 tbsp roasted cumin powder; salt to taste

Instructions:

Add all ingredients except lemon juice to a blender and grind. Then add lemon juice and mix. Taste and adjust the lime juice, salt and chilli. Refrigerate in an air-tight container.

TOMATO CHUTNEY

Ingredients:

8 tomatoes, chopped; 1 tsp mustard seeds; 2 tsp ginger, chopped; 4 garlic cloves, crushed; 1 tsp oil; 10–15 curry leaves; 1 tsp red chilli powder; 1 tsp vinegar; 2 tsp sugar; salt, pepper to taste

Instructions:

Heat oil in a pan. Add mustard seeds, curry leaves, ginger and garlic. Once cooked, add tomatoes and cook for 5–6 mins. Add the seasoning and cook 3–4 mins or until the tomatoes are squishy. Cool before serving.



SWEET AMLA CHUTNEY

Ingredients (serves 4):

300 gm amla (gooseberries); 300 gm jaggery; 1 tsp salt; ½ tsp black salt; ½ tsp cardamom powder; ½ tsp red chilli powder; 1 tsp garam masala; ½ tsp black pepper powder

Instructions:

Boil the amlas in a pot with 1 cup water. Simmer till they get soft (10–15 minutes). Once soft, turn off the

flame and strain in a bowl. Remove the seeds and grind to a fine paste. In a pan, add this amla paste and cook on low flame. Now add jaggery, salts, black pepper, cardamom powder, red chilli powder and garam masala. Mix and cook on low flame. Keep stirring at regular intervals until it gets thick in consistency. Taste and adjust the seasoning. Store in the refrigerator; it stays fresh for over three months.





GARLIC CHILLI CHUTNEY

Ingredients:

1 cup of garlic cloves, peeled; 5–6 dried Kashmiri chillies; 3 tsp lime juice; 2 tsp red chilli powder; salt to taste

Instructions:

Add garlic cloves, chillies, red chilli

powder, lime juice and salt to a food processor or a mortar (it takes longer with mortar and pestle but the result is a beautiful, thick chutney). Grind until you have a thick paste. Adjust spices to your liking. Store in the refrigerator. It stays fresh for a month. ■



Quarantine Coupling

An ordinary Indian working couple, a lockdown, and a problem

By Aekta Kapoor

She had spent a large part of the lockdown being angry. Not just at external events in the news, but by an internal matter, a private issue, which was a public one as well.

It all began in late March when domestic helpers were deemed non-essential services in India, and disallowed to go to work in the wake of coronavirus.

Suddenly, she ended up doing most of the household work in addition to her own professional work and personal commitments. And she noticed a strange thing she had never noticed before: despite being in an equal marriage with a man who called himself a feminist and a great cook (he actually was), it automatically

became her duty to take on the cooking and housework.

Was their equal marriage the result of privilege then? In the absence of helpers to do the house chores, suddenly, its basic algorithm was laid bare, and it spelt male entitlement.

In another life 20 years ago, she would have accepted the situation and given in and surrendered to the workload – just like her female cousins, friends and colleagues admitted they were doing. But – like Taapsee Pannu's character in *Thappad* who said signs of inequality she never noticed before suddenly became visible after one life-changing incident – she could not unsee the unfairness anymore.

She fought back. She ranted and threw tantrums. Every day was a battle. Sometimes she won. Mostly, she simmered in fury.

One day, while doing her husband's share of the dishes, she asked her inner Krishna: "Is this anger going to eat me up from the inside? Is this creating toxins that will one day kill me?"

The answer she got was: *The opposite is true. Giving in will kill you, for you will extinguish the essence of who you are. Follow your calling, even if it is to fight.*

She instantly remembered a 2014 meeting with the spiritual teacher Sri M, whom she'd asked: "Is it better to accept one's difficult circumstances or try to change them?" He had replied, "Whenever you have to choose between acceptance versus proactive change, choose proactive change. Keep trying and trying and trying. That situation is given to you for a reason."

So she rebelled. She nagged the husband to get off the sofa and into the kitchen. "Why are you so nasty all the time? I help you, don't I?" he complained. "No, you don't *help* me! It's your own share of the work. I help *you*

every day, in fact," she yelled.

But eventually, all the fighting wore her out. One cannot be in perennial battle mode, she told the universe while chanting one evening. Her Buddhist gurus answered: *You cannot change others, you can only change yourself.*

So she asked, "How do I change myself in a way that it brings about change in others?"

Her mentor Daisaku Ikeda's words loomed before her eyes:

With love, love and love.

The mentor was right, of course. Hate and anger only perpetuate themselves. There's no bigger weapon for change than love.

She looked at her man with new eyes that night. He wasn't

a bad guy; he just didn't notice the privileges bestowed on him due to his gender. Like white people in the West who thought they lived in a democracy suddenly waking up to the systemic racism in their midst only after #BlackLivesMatter became a mass movement, he believed marriage made them equal.

But she is not fighting anymore. She is trying love instead. Maybe this lockdown was meant to teach her that. ■

"KEEP TRYING AND TRYING AND TRYING. THAT SITUATION IS GIVEN TO YOU FOR A REASON"



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Photography by Ram Shergill for *Four More Shots Please!*

