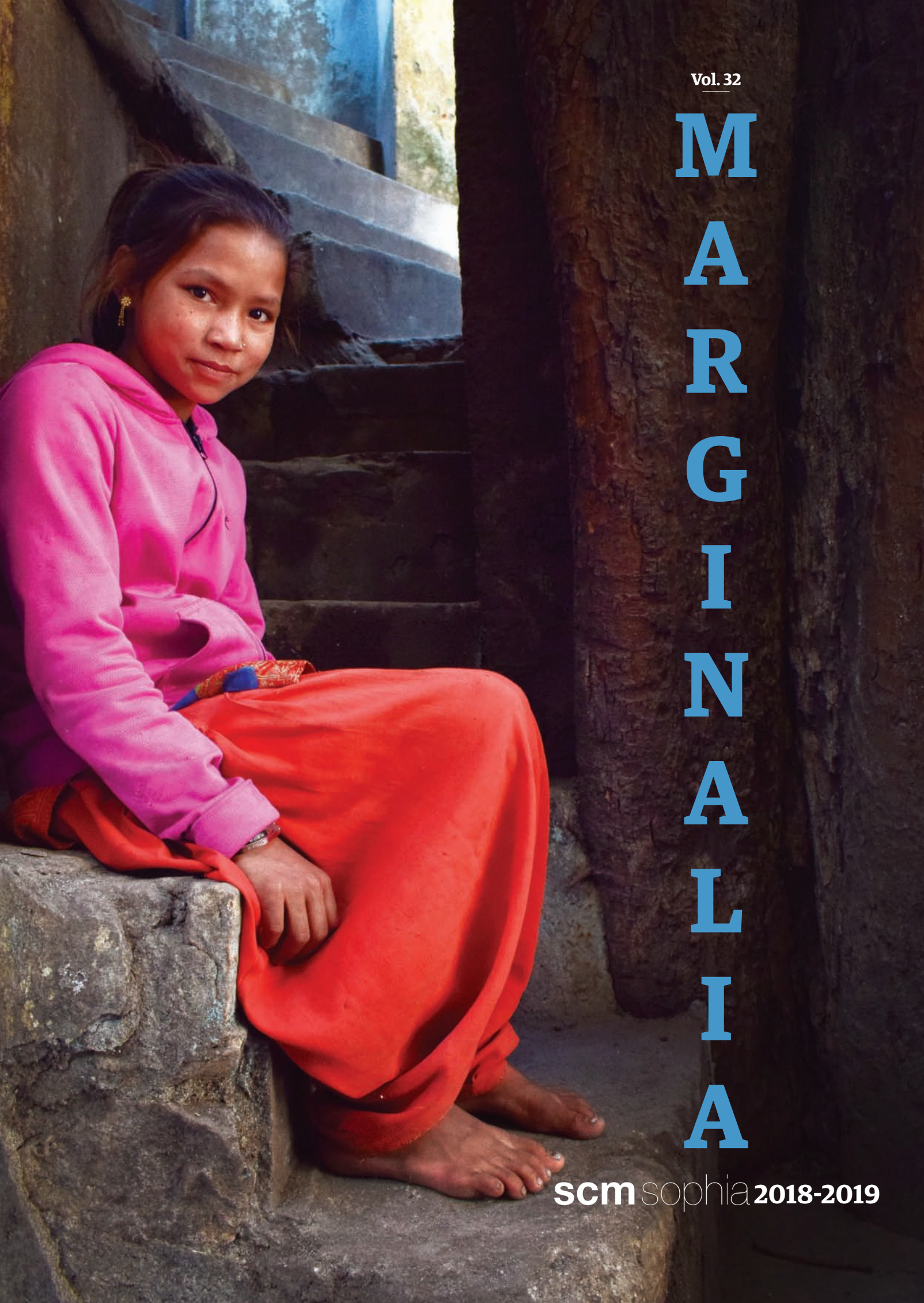


Vol. 32

M A R G I N A L I A

scm sophia 2018-2019



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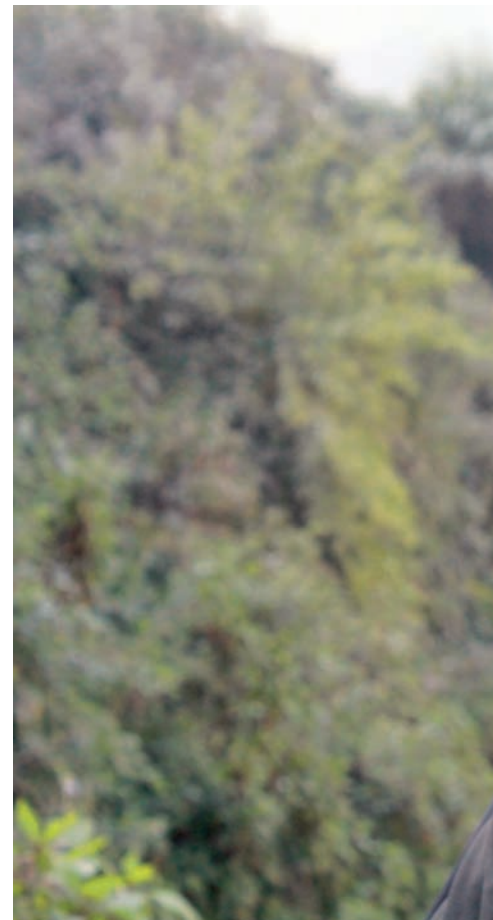
KASHISH JUNEJA

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SCM batch 2018-19 on
tour to Uttarakhand



poonam agarwal
• Fine Jewelry •

REACHING MILLENNIALS



Head of the Department Nirmita Gupta setting an example for her students on how to overcome obstacles

We begin 50 years celebrations of the Sophia Shree B K Somani Memorial Polytechnic and SCM, starting 2019, a landmark for most organisations. The brand purpose of SCM (as an ad person, I must talk the

language) is to empower women; we have done this for 50 years and we will continue to do so. As a mere department with no real resources, except goodwill, we compete with major institutions, with deep pockets and solid grants, and we come out winning, our head held high! Outlook magazine and India Today, for instance rank us among the top ten media departments of the country.

The past few years have seen major disruptions in the media industry. Most media as we know them are threatened and are fighting for survival with the new God people worship, the all-encompassing, ambiguous God of Digital Things. Giants have tumbled: The New York Times, Washington Post and the Guardian all ask their digital readers to pay "as little as a dollar to help independent journalism survive". JWT, the largest and oldest ad agency is now Wunderman Thompson, carrying its new upstart digital colleague on its weighty shoulders! Netflix, Amazon Prime and other Over The Top (OTT) platforms have made primetime television redundant. Consumers have never had it better as giants fight for survival and superiority. But commercialism is also at its peak.

So what are we doing, publishing the 32nd issue of Marginalia? We believe our core values have not changed and still have currency in this age. While we are constantly tinkering with the curriculum to keep it abreast of current developments in the media, we continue our conversations about women's empowerment in the time of #metoo, we continue to talk about the marginalised, encouraging freedom of thought and creativity. Yes, we are also learning about hashtags and OTT, SEO and UI/UX. We wish to provide context and grounding in times that are confusing and often fevered. It is indeed an exciting and challenging time and we will continue to grow with your support. So please bear with us as we approach you saying, Hi, it's that time of year, and here we are again

Here's to the 2019 issue of Marginalia. Happy reading.

NIRMITA GUPTA
HEAD, SCMSOPHIA

SCM – A Journey, My Garden Patch

It's 2019. The calendar says that the batch of students who will graduate this year, the one that put this magazine together, will be the 25th that I have taught. Twenty-fifth? That's nearly a thousand faces seen, a thousand names read, some committed to memory, a few put on speed dial as friends and 12 midnight mates across continents.

Taught, did I say? But not in the conventional sense, not to raise cohorts, not to assess and judge the retention of material printed in government-approved textbooks. My intention, every time that I walked into that classroom - same room for the last 25 years - has been to share what I knew and did as a journalist, to open windows in young minds, to mould clay.

The sharing came easier as the years rolled by for I was seeing, absorbing, doing, even resisting various aspects of journalism in various newsrooms. Drawing upon that, dipping into my own experience and that of colleagues, I spoke to young minds in that classroom. Within the ambit of the approved syllabus; often outside it too. Else how would we contemporise the study of journalism and discuss ongoing stories?

Less than one-fourth of any batch chose to be in journalism. This has been the pattern for years. With the rise of 24x7 news television, more women chose it over print. In the last few batches, the trend has been towards digital platforms. When I began my stint, the term "Breaking News" would appear on front pages of newspapers, occasionally so. Forget what it came to be, the term is itself broken now. We do journalism in an era when the world's largest news platforms are not news - even media - companies, but function as tech companies.

The brief to me then was to train young women - lately men - to be trainees in newsrooms. We explored and adapted the syllabus but my approach was to go beyond the skill sets. I wanted to leave students with ideas, concepts and questions about journalism, its place in democracies, its role in our lives, its core principles. I wanted to transfer my passion for journalism to as many as could absorb it. No matter that someone chose to make films or another decided to be in advertising. For knowing about and engaging with journalism, they would be aware and informed filmmakers

and advertising professionals and public relations people, so I thought. And I plowed on and on and on. Year after year. Batch after batch.

In return, I came away enriched with ideas that were unlike mine, world views which persuaded me to re-examine my own, approaches to life which forced me to ask questions of myself, and more. My life, my work, my network, my world view is richer for the time spent in SCM classroom - and the department.

Some of you treasured me, celebrate me. Others fell off the radar at some point in time (and re-appeared), a

few turned cold or even hostile. Thank you to all. So many of you are in positions of great authority and influence in journalism. The success is, of course, all yours. I applaud in awe and admiration.

The largest chunk of my gratitude goes to two people - Jeroo who gave me the opportunity and put her faith in me, and Sainath who encouraged me at the beginning and gamely became the sole "student" when I tried out

a potential lecture or two. How can I forget Kaumudi Marathe and for years after that Anupamaa Joshi who was my sounding board besides handling the logistical part of it all?

Thank you to Nirmita who was the quiet force behind the department for years and now heads it admirably, to Sunitha for all that she did, to Sunayana with whom I have had the pleasure of sharing so much including classes, and to Jerry for the irreverence and indefatigable energy he brings to SCM. I remember the late Balaram, stoic as stone, but ever willing to get me coffee. Thank you to Gracy and Nilesh for always being there, and to Dinkar for all that he does.

Through full-time jobs and part-time assignments, through pregnancy and child-rearing, in ill-health and Bombay monsoon, despite punishing deadlines, in spite of occasional disagreements with the department, I came to the SCM classroom. It felt right, it felt good, it felt like home. SCM is an indelible part of my life, never mind how cheesy it sounds to say so.

For those who remember my "garden patch" lecture at the end of an academic year, know that I chose SCM as one of the garden patches in my life. Come, talk to me, have a coffee, share your ideas to make it more verdant, relevant and fulfilling.

Smruti Koppikar addressing a panel at the Media Mirror event held by SCM



KNOWING THYSELF



The past year at SCM has been a process of unlearning and learning. We all had different ideas of our own which were inevitably linked with who we were at the time. Various people came into our class and our lives, and talked with us of their worldview and had their explanation for the way the world was. At the end of each day, we were left thinking about the worldview of each of these people, and knowingly or unknowingly, all of us began to borrow from each other.

The Italian political philosopher Antonio Gramsci once said, "The starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is and is 'knowing thyself' as

a product of the historical process to day..."

All of us, who had been living in our bubble until that time, had begun to peek at the outside world. We started to understand the context in which we existed, and how we were linked to the whole of humanity.

It is not easy to articulate what changes we went through, except that a shift had happened. Suddenly, the world around us made a little more sense; we began to see connections. It began to look like an interesting place. The articles in this magazine are a testament to this.

Be it the life of a sanitation worker, or the mystery of a hidden tax women pay because of their gender, or the moments of waiting in a city which never stops, all of us have tried to do something with our newfound sensibility. Some of us chronicled the life of a visually impaired cricket enthusiast, some wrote of libraries in a small town flourishing in a digital age, some interviewed an author who'd written about the Northeast, while some wrote of a saree empire created on WhatsApp.

The words of Gramsci keep coming back. The innocuous-looking phrase seems to hide a profound meaning. How do you even begin to know yourself? Our entire lives have been shaped by a countless number of people, leading us through the phases of hope and despair and the moments of epiphany and meaninglessness. In our opinion, the year broke us to build us into tougher beings. We've begun to look outside ourselves and inside ourselves to understand the context in which we've been born.

VISHNU BAGDAWALA
SHRADDHA SHARMA
ANTARA KASHYAP

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**THE
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ALEX 'BIRDMAN' DINELARIS JR AND SCM

Shraddha Sharma talks about the day the students of SCM Sophia found themselves having Breakfast with Alex Dinelaris Jr., an Oscar winning screenwriter.



SCM students
with Alex
Dinelaris Jr.
and Boman
Irani

Students of SCM Sophia were invited to a screenplay writing workshop by Boman Irani that was being held on the 24th January 2019. To our surprise, each of us personally received a call from Boman Irani himself. The workshop was called 'Spiral Bound' and was conducted by Oscar winner Alex Dinelaris Jr, one of the writers for Alejandro Inarritu's *Birdman* (2014). Alex Dinelaris Jr sat with us at the breakfast table to discuss our idea of screenwriting. It was one of the most exciting moments of the year but credit for that must go to Dinelaris who proved to be accessible, informal and capable of sharing his excitement about writing and cinema. He told us also that his new venture was to take

young screenwriters from India to New York. These students will work closely with Dinelaris for a week on their screenplays. This was also the occasion for the launch of Boman Irani's new production house, 'Irani Movietone', inaugurated by Amitabh Bachchan himself. The morning at JW Marriott in Juhu saw several renowned screenwriters, actors and director from the Bollywood fraternity. It was thrilling to view 'Birdman' through the writer's lens.

As Alex Dinelaris Jr. talked about the process of writing the screenplay for *Birdman*, we were all left awestruck by the attention to detail he had paid while writing it. He took us through the three-act structure for screenwriting, and he insisted, "You need to understand the structure and follow it

because this structure of storytelling has been followed since the time of Aristotle."

This structure is not used enough by young film-makers. He said, "You cannot blow up a structure without knowing. Once you know the rules, you can start bending them."

Since we hear opposing views about following the three-act structure and its variants of five-act or seven-act structure, it was a rest to the confusion for good. In the Q&A, we touched upon other amazing films *La La Land*, *The Shawshank Redemption*, *Still Life*, *Children of Men*, etc. Dinelaris quoted Mark Twain and said, "I didn't have time to write a short letter, so I wrote a long one instead." This was like a Zen lesson in writing.

Perhaps Boman Irani was right when he said, "Writers are the most important part of this industry." We were finally able to grasp what a screenplay writer does. She is responsible for what happens in the film. We left with several tips which were meant for screenwriters but can also be used for anyone interested in telling a story.

- Action, action, action. What's going on? Does it add to the story? Does it add to the conflict? Does it reverse it?
- The protagonist must be as strong as the antagonist. And both must be interesting.
- What goes for the scene goes for the sequence goes for the story.
- When you see a coincidence worked into the plot, you can tell that the writers were having a bad day.
- If you must have a coincidence, it must be disguised by the fabric of the film so that it does not look like a coincidence, nor smell like it, nor sound like it. It must feel inevitable.
- The ending of a movie must be surprising but also be inevitable. You should go away feeling, 'Oh, wow, it could not have ended any other way.'

PS: These were our takeaways. We apologize in advance if we have misinterpreted Mr Dinelaris Jr's words.

ON A HIGH WITH LOWE LINTAS

Radhika Makker recalls some brand gyaan

The advertising giant, Lowe Lintas, came to SCM Sophia to conduct a workshop on digital advertising and the new media wave. The two-day session was initiated by the Chief Executive Officer of the company, Raj Gupta. The session was put together and conducted by Vaseem Edroos, Executive Vice-President (EVP), Kanksha Arora, Sr. Brand Planning Manager, and Kunal Mirchandani, Brand Planning Director.

"You can only sell your product if your brand takes up a strong point of view. Creative content and ideas are critical to making your product unique.



Today, everyone uses some OTT platform. Thus, those platforms are the best way to showcase and sell your

product. The ad should be designed to attract your attention in the first five seconds of watching so that the consumers don't skip the ad," said Kanksha Arora.

They also showcased some popular Indian ads from Lifebuoy and Idea. We were able to understand how brands use social messages to establish a specific position in the market. We were given a few brands such as Times of India, Shaadi.com, Axis Bank vis-à-vis social issues like saving money, girl-child literacy, etc. We were divided into groups and asked to choose a social issue and connect it with a brand. The aim was to understand how brands decide which social issues to take up to boost their sales. They spoke about the Nike campaign starring American football star Colin Kaepernick in order to explain how brands take up challenging positions in the market to create their identity.

One of the students, Vishnu Bagdawala, says, "It was very interesting to know how giants like Nike strategize and make an ad campaign. No easy job that; it was a great experience."

THE WEEK THAT WAS

Shraddha Sharma writes about the evolution of TWTW.

The Week That Was' has been a team activity in SCM since 2014. It involves students analysing the major happenings in the news of the past week. The class was divided into three teams, each expected to analyse news coverage across media platforms. Senior journalist, Smruti Koppikar mentored the class for each round of TWTW.

She said, "Earlier each student used to maintain news clippings along with their analysis in a scrapbook that they found interesting from the day. But as reading habits changed, we found that students were reading less and less of news. This was dangerous because if

you are not engaging with news, how will you report it?" Antara Kashyap, from the current batch of SCM, recalls her analysis of the coverage of the farmers' march and her comparison of it to the Ayodhya issue, "These little differences in placement of news in print and airing time in broadcast is what we started noticing after TWTW."

Has it helped? "The students' level of engagement has increased. Since they have to present observations, analysis and comparisons, they have to read. It is also a lot more fun in a group because something might strike you that doesn't strike your teammates. We brought back the scrapbook era in this form given the media evolution."

Presentations of TWTW



THROUGH THE GENDER LENS:

ANUBHA BHONSLE

Palak Bector writes about one of the very important sessions of the year on 'Gender'

Anubha Bhonsle, the executive editor of CNN-News 18, is an alumnus who attended SCM in the year 1998-99. She is also the recipient of the Jefferson Fellowship where she researched America's political history. A print and TV journalist in addition to being an author of *Mother, Where's My Country?: Looking for Light in the Darkness of Manipur* (Speaking Tiger, 2016) was at SCM to conduct a session called Gender Up Close. Throughout the course, she concentrated explicitly on the gender in reportage in media.

The media is only reflections of society, she pointed out. Men and



Anubha Bhonsle takes the session through the complexities of the term Gender

women are treated in a certain way in society because of their gender. To understand the roles given to them based on their gender and the inequality inherent in society which gives them those roles becomes

important so that we can see the operations of the patriarchy not just in others but in our own activities as well. Because of it would lead us to have better reportage and that is precisely what putting up a Gender Lens means.

She stressed how, along with gender, caste also plays a significant role in a woman's life and is used to discriminate against her. Women are not preferred as a source of knowledge. To have such regressive attitudes, she said, makes an enormous difference in reportage in media organizations. She also told us how the presentation of women in advertisements is more of a satire on the female section of the society.

Gynaecologist Dr. Suchitra Dalvie spoke about SRHR Act focusing on the sex ratio and the reasons that impact the accessibility of safe abortions for women. She talked about how the Medical Termination Of Pregnancy Act (MTP) was in loggerheads with the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act (PCPNDT), which gives doctors the right to deny safe abortion to women. Therefore, making abortions legal but not a right to women in India.

VICE MEDIA VISITS SCM

Aakansha Malia writes about the interesting session with Vice Media

Vice Media has been known for putting out quirky content on digital platforms, making it attractive to the millennial audience.

Video content head of Vice Media India, Sameera Kanwar visited SCM in Sophia Polytechnic with her team and introduced us to the video series they had made on gender and sexuality on their website. The videos celebrated conversation, dialogue, and myths associated with sex. The series is called 'Sex Rated - The Vice Guide to Sex in India, the show where we ask

questions about sex that you were too shy to ask.' The video series showed us and took us around India's sex-positive revolution through its most intimate obsessions and explicit moments.

The very first video in the series is called 'Asking for a friend.' It brings to light how sex education is actually about knowing one's own body and

one's rights. As Rytasha says in it, "It's about empowerment and if you don't feel empowered how will you be able to smash STDs and the patriarchy'. The video takes us into the interiors of a small village, Mehdiganj, where a local NGO, Mahila Swarojgar Samiti, in an attempt to work ahead of its times, has dissed the so-called 'Sanskrit induced sex education programme' in India to teach girls about sex with a practical approach. It also looked at the largest red light area of India which is in Kolkata called Sonagachi. They spoke with women there who have not only normalized sex education, but they also speak openly about pleasure under their 'Peer Sex Education System.' It highlights the

importance of knowing one's body which can eventually help us to be confident individuals and learn to respect and appreciate the human body much more.



AMDAVAD MA FAMOUS: HARDIK MEHTA

Hitarth Desai interviews the documentary filmmaker, Hardik Mehta, after his session with the students

The documentary *Amdavad Ma Famous* (Famous in Ahmedabad) won the National Award for Best Non-feature Film in 2015. At the SCM screening, director Hardik Mehta talked about his film. He has also worked on feature films like Vikramaditya Motwane's *Udaan* (2010) and *Lootera* (2013) as a script supervisor. He was a co-writer for Motwane's *Trapped* (2017). Recently, he directed his first feature film *Kaamyab* which premiered at Busan in 2018.

He took the students through the ins and outs of documentary filmmaking. With *Amdavad Ma Famous*, he had made a film which was as entertaining as a mainstream masala movie, but when asked about it he said, "It is a positive if a documentary film entertains the audience. But a documentary must engage the audience, even if it does not entertain. You cannot not engage."

He said, "The only way to master something is to never stop exploring." As a part of his learning, he had made a film called *Meditation in Motion* made from the footage he had

collected while travelling all over India by train during his early filmmaking days. Talking about the importance of exploring and feeding one's curiosity, he had said, "It is essential to give yourself time to explore the nuances of film-making. I edited the film myself in order to learn editing."

Stressing the importance of sound in documentaries, he said, "One can afford to have a few bad shots but not a poorly recorded audio." He recommended we watch a documentary miniseries called *The Jinx* to understand how sound can be used creatively in a documentary film.



Students with the screenwriter and filmmaker, Hardik Mehta

Apart from giving his insights on the process of documentary filmmaking, giving us anecdotes about his struggles in the film-making industry and information about his upcoming projects, he recommended us to watch some films related to the documentaries that we were making as a part of our course. The recommendations included *Chronicles of a Summer* (1961), *Searching for Saraswati*, *Cinema Travellers*, *Cowspiracy*, *Black Fish*, *Patriot Act* with Hasan Minhaj and *Imposter*.

You started your career as an engineer. What made you quit that and get into filmmaking?

I think by 23-24 everybody starts realizing what they're going to do for

the rest of their lives. While working as an engineer in a dairy, I realized that I wouldn't be able to do this forever. I landed up in the advertising industry where I worked for two years as a copywriter. It is during those days that I realized that I'm interested in filmmaking.

When did your love for cinema begin?

Growing up in India, cinema is always a part of your childhood. Everybody watches films here. But I was impacted when I was introduced to world cinema by a DVD shop in Baroda. At that time there were no online streaming sites to watch movies and hence this DVD shop was my only access to watch films from around the world. Almost everything that I wanted to watch was available.

The influence of mainstream Hindi cinema is quite evident in your documentary film *Amdavad Ma Famous* as well. Why is that?

In India, one cannot avoid mainstream cinema. It is a part of your nostalgia. It will eventually become a part of your filmmaking. Here, there are only some filmmakers who have grown up with European films. They are doing an excellent job by shunning the mainstream, but I can't avoid it myself.

So do you have a basic script in the documentary as well or do you go with the flow?

During the shoot, you can only calculate what can be in the film. While shooting with the boy (Zaid, the protagonist), we didn't anticipate that it would be an illegal terrace and we will end up finding our antagonist in Mushtaq (security guard). It all happened in the spur of the moment, and we thanked God that he agreed. You always have to keep your eyes open, and thankfully digital cameras allow that.

How did you manage to get the kids so comfortable in front of the camera?

The first thing is that you should treat kids like adults. They respond if you become their friend. Don't try to talk them down, as they will lose interest in talking to you. Secondly, you have to catch the kid at their innocent best. Our protagonist didn't care whether we were shooting or not. He only cared about his kite and not the camera.

At what stage in *Amdavad Ma Famous* did you start thinking about the music?

I wanted something like an accordion or a harmonium which would also underline the humour in my story. I was sure that I will need music in this documentary to tie the images. However, I didn't know that I'll end up using so much of it.

After a national award-winning documentary, your next project is a fiction feature film. How different was the making style and how did you adapt?

There is a saying, shoot your documentary like a fiction film and shoot your fiction film like a documentary.

My next film is about a supporting actor in Bollywood, and I have cast Sanjay Mishra who plays the supporting role in all other movies as the lead role in this one. I've used some more documentary elements in the film also.

How difficult was it to sell your documentary? How do you find a producer?

My wife Aakanksha had given us the money for the shoot and getting the rough cut ready.

A lot more money is needed in the post-production for music, sound designing, poster making, and a lot more taam jaam. After our rough cut got ready, Arya Menon came on as the other producer. So yes, you need to make that great first cut to get the producers excited. This is a great time for documentary film-makers because Netflix, Amazon Prime and other platforms are encouraging so many of them.

“

IN INDIA, ONE CANNOT AVOID MAINSTREAM CINEMA. IT IS A PART OF YOUR NOSTALGIA. IT WILL EVENTUALLY BECOME A PART OF YOUR FILMMAKING. HERE, THERE ARE ONLY SOME FILMMAKERS WHO HAVE GROWN UP WITH EUROPEAN FILMS.

ISLANDS IN THE SUN

Rajat Zamde and Shevaughn Pimenta write about the session with Pankaj Sekhsaria, in which SCM students learn the southernmost point of India's land mass.

Pankaj Sekhsaria, a researcher, writer, photographer, campaigner and academician, visited SCM Sophia to conduct a lecture on an area of special interest: the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. He has been conducting environmental research there for the past two decades.

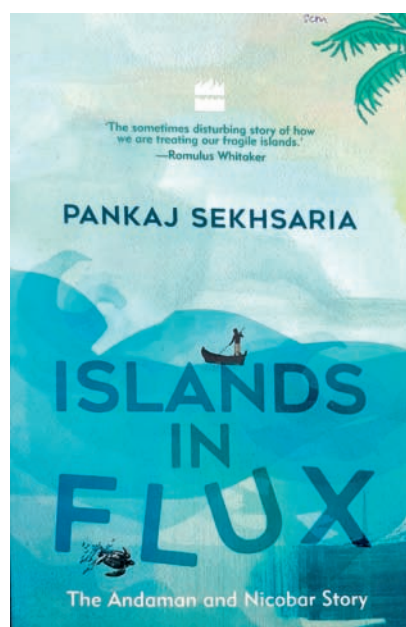
"What is the southernmost point of India?" he asked.

"Kanyakumari," the class chorused.

We should have known. We were wrong.

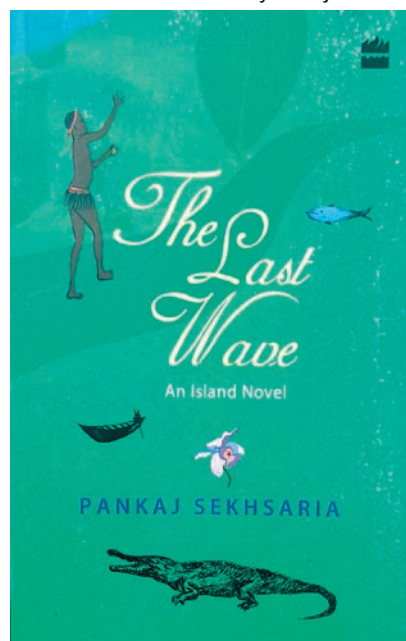
Indira Point, located in the Nicobar district of the Islands, is the southernmost part of our country. He further delved into the geography of the islands, taking us through the variety of rich fauna and flora that is spread across them.

The most admirable was his concern for the dangers that the islands are facing due to their exploitation by the government of India. He explained to us the kind of harmful effects that would come to each living organism on the Islands if mankind continued to exploit it of its resources. Sekhsaria's blunt statements about the foolish decisions made by Indian politicians in the past exposed their blunders; the most astonishing one being the decision to build nuclear power plants on the islands. The fact that the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are located in the 'Ring of Fire' which is the epicentre of devastating earthquakes makes the folly of constructing a nuclear power plant



The cover of *Islands in Flux: The Andaman and Nicobar Story* by Pankaj Sekhsaria

The cover of *The Last Wave: An Island Novel* by Pankaj Sekhsaria



clear. Imagine the level of destruction that it would cause to all life forms.

He introduced us to the culture, ecology and geology that are distinct to the islands alone. His research led him to find out more about the tribal communities that inhabit the islands such as the Great Andamanese, the Onge, the Jarawa and the Sentinelese, who have lived on the islands for thousands of years. It was heartbreaking to learn that multiple deaths take place among them due to the diseases they are exposed to and the lack of medical assistance. Sekhsaria also spoke about the tsunami of 2004 that further decimated these communities.

He also introduced us to interesting endemic animals the green sea turtle that leaves behind trails that resemble the tyres of a tractor on the beaches, thus making it easy to track. He showed us photographs of edible-nest swiftlet, the breathing roots of mangroves that grow above the earth and orchids which grow only under sunlight. Hence, as he explained, an increase in the growth of these orchids would mean that there were fewer number of trees around on the islands, indicating the reduction in green cover.

Sekhsaria's efforts to make us aware about the islands through the compilation of his research matter was put forth to us by introducing two of his famous works, *The Last Wave* and *Islands In Flux: The Andaman and Nicobar Story*. Both these books sketch out a detailed overview of the Andaman and Nicobar islands as being much more than merely a holiday destination.

TENZIN TSUNDUE : THE TIBETAN IN MUMBAI

Snigdha Agarwal recalls the day when Tenzin Tsundue visits SCM

Born in India to Tibetan refugees, Tenzin Tsundue is a poet, writer and an activist. He visited SCM on 19th December 2018 to speak about his experiences and his struggle for Tibet's independence from China. Being a poet and a writer, he said, "Writing is about what the mind and the heart want to express."

He spoke about the struggles of Tibetan refugees in getting equal rights in India. He read some of the poems from his collection *Kora* (TCV Alumni Association, 2000), which essentially

deals with his experience of being stateless. In one of his poems 'My Tibetanness,' he writes,

*Thirty-nine years in exile.
Yet no nation supports us.
Not a single bloody nation!
We are refugees here.
People of a lost country.
Citizen to no nation.*

His poems bring out his tragic situation quite beautifully. Currently living in Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh, which is where the Tibetan refugees had settled initially when they

had been ousted out of Tibet, he shared stories about his childhood, living on the road in a tent with his parents, who had then worked as construction labourers. He said, "The roads which go through Manali, toward all those places like Lahul and Spiti Valley, it was my parents who had built them."

Tsundue's session was an insight into this struggle and how the rest of the world has ignored it. He told us about the Chinese exploitation of the abundant resources in Tibet. He also talked about the threat to the identities of the Tibetans. No longer allowed to travel to Tibet, their identity has been threatened by the neo-imperialist motives of China.

Arrested and jailed numerous times, threatened with his life for the cause of his country's independence, his journey as a freedom fighter is an inspiration. Living austerely on two pairs of clothes, surviving on the income he makes by selling his books, he is striving to make a change in the world today.

Tenzin's struggles for his country's freedom is symbolized by the red bandana he wears around his head. He has said he will remove it only when his country is free.



LOITERING WITH SAMEERA KHAN

Avantika Singhania writes about Sameera Khan's session about loitering in streets and the patriarchal attitudes.

Sameera Khan, a journalist, an ex-SCMite who has been working extensively on issues related to women, took a session with the SCM batch of 2018-19. With Shilpa Phadke and Shilpa Ranade, she wrote *Why Loiter?: Women And Risk On Mumbai Streets* (Penguin India, 2011), in which the central argument made is that women in Mumbai, even though they have access to urban public spaces, do not have an equal claim to public spaces in the city. The session was, among other things, about explaining how the low visibility of women in public places is one of the manifestations of the patriarchy, and

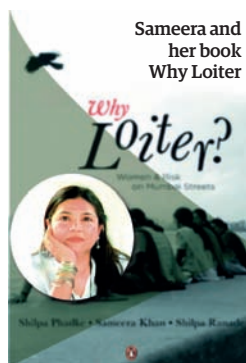
how the only way to change this is through the radical act of 'loitering'—roaming around in the city—even though there are risks. Patriarchy often manifests in stark ways but there are other not-so-easily-recognizable forms making us realize how it affects our lives. She told us how it starts even at an innocuous level of fairy tales where the girl has to be a beautiful princess in a castle, no less for the prince to come for her. We hadn't recognized the underlying

motive of these normalized modes of expression in our childhood. We also have probably internalized them to such an extent that when Khan told us how these narratives were a part of the patriarchal setup, it was difficult not to have a feeling of unease.

She also spoke about the coverage of sexual assault cases. There are specific legal guidelines for the coverage of sexual assault cases for publications. She told us how the newspapers dodge these guidelines by disclosing just the

right information which essentially discloses a survivor's identity even though they might not be violating guidelines. Besides, she explained how adjectives ossify the subordinate identity of a woman. She might have reached Mars but 'Mother of 2 touches the surface of Mars' would remain her identity. Hence, how

a woman's identity is still limited to those traditional roles normalized in a patriarchal society, negating their individual achievements in their lives.



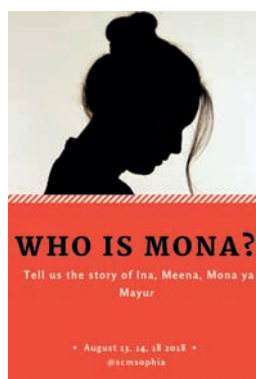
Sameera and her book *Why Loiter*

WHO IS MONA?*

Ananya Maloo and Aakanksha Chandra write about an intense week on film-making, one of the many firsts at SCM this year.

Imagine whipping up a short documentary film of your own while being mentored by some of the accomplished documentary filmmakers. We were lucky to be part of the first SCM 'Documentary Film-making Week'. In the first two days, the students had to imbibe as much

as they could from the filmmakers by watching their work and talking about them. The students had selected their topics and had formed teams. The next two days were allotted to the students to shoot their documentaries without the assistance of faculty. The last day was reserved to learn basic editing skills. We were then asked to edit our work. Pooja Gupte, a cinematographer, who has worked on films like *Rukh* and *Crossing Bridges*, took a lighting workshop. She briefed us on three-point lighting and other basics. She talked to us about her experience as a woman in a male-dominated profession. Then came a documentary series like *Abstract* which took us into the making of design.



The poster for the week *Who is Mona*

The second screening was *Bombay 70*, about a street rapper Naved Shaikh, AKA Naezy, shot by Bhanu Babbal who disclosed tricks of shooting on the streets. The last screening was Hardik Mehta's *Amdavad Ma Famous*. We saw Anushka Shivdasani Rovshen's *Breath* about two characters battling mental health issues.

A script workshop was held by Adhiraj Singh, a filmmaker and a sound engineer, who demonstrated the power of a well-written script. Then we shot in teams of three or less. The last day of the *Who is Mona* week ended with RTV faculty Parth Vyas taking us through the various editing tools we'd need.

**Mona is anybody. Mona is nobody. As human beings, we want to know Mona.*



MANY FAILURES, ONE SUCCESS STORY:

Shradha Sharma in conversation with the 'Original Slumdog Millionaire', Kalpana Saroj

She was not given a chance to study, instead, she was married off at the age of 12. Today, she has an estimated net worth of over US \$100 million. Her life story goes beyond the rags to riches narrative, because even as a kid, giving up wasn't one of her traits. She recalls, "I was the elder daughter, and while my father, who was a police constable, left for work, my mother stayed back to take care of us. By the time I turned nine or 10 years old, I started going to the market to buy everything needed in the house. I also started selling milk in the village. I think it helped me build my self-confidence." Kalpana Saroj is currently the Chief Executive Officer of the Mumbai-based company, Kamani Tubes Limited.

Kalpana Saroj is also a domestic violence survivor. Known to be both fearless and confident, she is often asked the reason behind her courage. She said, "I wanted to study. But

everything fell apart. I even tried to commit suicide, but after that I decided to live by doing something than die without doing anything." She started a beauty parlour after taking a loan. She started understanding about all government schemes and benefits that new businesses could claim. As she had seen deprivation so closely, she started an organization for unemployed people to help them raise loans under government schemes to start businesses, the way she had done. Soon after, she stepped into real estate and even faced death threats for stepping in the male-occupied territory that was highly monopolistic.

She said, "I believe in doing good work with a clear conscience. There will always be people who will try to stop you. Moving forward with confidence is the only solution, I think".

She faced double-oppression because she was a girl who belonged to the Dalit community. Talking about it, she said, "I believe there is only one caste

of 'Humanity'. I have come to realize that caste isn't the reason that stops you, it is low confidence in your own self. And everyone has equal rights under the constitution, so being afraid is unnecessary. I was scared to even step out of my house. I used to cry in the beginning as the society then thought badly of a woman who stepped out of their homes to work."

Padma Shri recipient in 2013 for Trade and Industries, Ms. Saroj's boldest bets were on distressed properties including Kamani Tubes. 'I give my hundred percent to my work, and of course, the family was a support system,' she said. Burdened with over 100 litigations, Kamani workers, who were previously helped by Kalpana Saroj, wanted her to take over the management. It was between 2000-06 that she requested Finance Ministry to waive off the penalty and interest of the sinking company. Not only did she receive the waiver, the principal amount was also reduced to an extent.

Along with Kamani tubes, she manages around ten companies. Even two roads are named after her company, 'Kamani, Kurla' and 'Ramjibhai Kamani, Fort.' Her venture, KS Film production had also produced the film called Khairlanjichya Mathyawar; She said, 'I am thankful the way world media portrayed me. They have been kind to me over the years.'

Her journey's next landmark was from being afraid on the roads of Mumbai to becoming an esteemed TEDx speaker. She said, "Not belonging from Mumbai originally was also a drawback initially. Times have improved now. I think it is a harm to the country's fabric if we restrict migration."

Starting in the slums of Mumbai and making INR 2 per day in a hosiery firm is also a part of her journey that she sometimes sits and recall. She had lost her sister to illness because there was no money. Soon after she left on the journey to pull her family out of poverty, her piece of advice is, "Forget what the world says. Always do honest hard work with self-confidence. Running away is never a solution. Suicide is never a solution. You'll justify people who have been pulling you down in a way."

PINK TAXX?

All over the world women pay more for goods and services. That's called Pink Tax. **Shraddha Sharma** investigates if women pay this tax in India as well.

The widespread agitation in India for removal of tax on sanitary napkins led to roll back of 12% Goods and Services Tax (GST) in July 2018.

On the surface, it was a win because what was patently a health necessity, a matter of hygiene would now become cheaper.

In reality, sanitary napkins remained just as expensive, and therefore out of the reach of most Indian women. This was because manufacturers could not claim input tax credit any more. Net result: sanitary napkins are now more expensive. Dr. Surbhi Singh, practicing gynaecologist and founder and president of the menstrual awareness NGO 'Sacchi Saheli' says, "In general, most of our choices in life are determined by marketing and advertising. We tend to follow trends set by brands, sometimes almost blindly. What makes it worse are the standards set by society, especially when it comes to women and girls and how they are taught in most cultures that physical beauty is supreme. With this in mind, we are drawn towards products that are marketed to make us feel prettier or fairer, etc. For this, I am certain we pay the 'extra' price that is also known as the pink tax."

The media in the west has long used the term, pink tax. Any Google

search in an Indian context will start in Quora users suggesting it doesn't apply to India. It is true. It doesn't apply to India 'on its surface'. Dr. Ritu Dewan, Vice-President at Indian society of Labour Economics, and President at Indian Association for Women's Study known for her work on gender economics says, "First of all, I object to the name pink tax. Pink for girls and blue for boys is just idiotic. So the term is something I don't like. Instead of giving it the same kind of trivialization, we can use a different phrase for it. Secondly, that hasn't been a major kind of study on this, but there is an impact of taxation on different products that men use and women use. But the issue of taxation and gender hasn't been taken seriously. So we are talking about the whole societal and not social component. If you see within that, the space allocated for women is specifically for maintenance and consumption of the household, et cetera. To which, one may not agree

with, but it is the existing reality. Within which if we speak about the GST on processed wheat (atta), it impacts women much more because they are the ones responsible for feeding the family. If the tax on wheat is different and on Atta is different, GST is higher on Atta. We are talking about a normal average poor woman of the country to whom even a difference of Rs 3 per kg on tax slab is huge. They (poorer women) tend to buy the wheat, clean it themselves, process it themselves and grind it themselves. So there is a component of what we call as unpaid labour which is built into this gender differential taxation. Say, the responsibility of women is to feed the family and also provide them with water (drinking water and for household usage). So when water is not provided, or there is no investment made, women walk three, four miles every day to collect it. Then again in that for safe drinking water, the energy goes into boiling water. This is what we call in economics, the imputed cost, which is not calculated. Under GST, this whole political discourse and ideology impact taxation. There is no GST on bindi, bangles, mangalsutra but you had GST on sanitary napkins, and then we ran that huge campaign. There is lower GST on shaving cream than there is for a women-specific product. So it has to do by the products that men use, and women use that is defined by their roles in the societal structure. So, of course, it is true for India but it is not talked about, and it is invisible. So it is invisibilized

consciously or unconsciously is a different take altogether."

Pink tax is the idea that similar and even identical consumer products are priced higher for women than that for their male counterpart. Academic studies in places including New York and Germany have proved this concept. What products are more expensive for



women?

Advertising professional and commentator Geeta Rao, said, "There are categories where men's products are more expensive and categories where products that target women are more expensive. For example, Women's grooming and beauty products are far more expensive than men's, but business suits for men tend to be more expensive than for women. Bikes and cars targeting men are far more expensive than cars and bikes targeting women.

When it comes to fragrances and shoes, you will find they can be equally expensive for men and women. In the fashion category, a good template to look into is the bridal segment. If you look at the emphasis on the bridal trousseau or jewellery or all those accessories that go into making a bride versus all those that go into making a groom, you'll see there is a vast disparity. Some of it could be because there is more workmanship and embellishment that goes into bridal wear. Some of it is definitely created by branding, marketing and a push from the marketers. Some of it is gender stereotyping. There is a study that was done which says that women consumers are more susceptible to marketing because it appeals to our 'lower' self-esteem, but I am not sure I agree with that entirely."

Being an Indian and a woman, I was more than intrigued to find the traces of hidden patriarchy in my country. In a survey conducted with a sample size of 30 consisting of 15 male and 15 female respondents in the age group of 18-25, 67% of the respondents have never heard the term Pink tax. What was interesting to see was 93% of the respondents feel that similar consumer products for women might be charged at a higher price than for their counterparts.

Unlike the west, there will hardly be any examples where an identical product is priced higher for females. But one of such cases would be Basic Black Jockey T-shirts in size small on the Jockey India website. While it would cost Rs.399 for men, women will pay Rs.419. Even though a small

size in the women section is smaller than that of men. Similar V-neck t-shirt is also priced discriminately. Although, garments will still be debated for being fancier for women thus, earning the privilege to be over-priced, just like salon services. According to the survey, people think that women are ready to spend more when it comes to their looks, therefore, making it a marketing strategy. This enables Gillette Razors to price their product at a higher price for women. Some of the respondents said that the reason for this discrepancy could be because of 'economies of scale.' Since men need more razor, increased demand also reduces the price. Which would have held true if we were restricting ourselves to the previous decade with only one product? I wonder what justification would marketers of Nivea duo have. Nivea duo for men in India costs Rs. 250 for the 100ml product, it costs Rs.185 for 50 ml product for females. It looks all okay on the surface until we dig deeper with the quantity which happens to be 48% lower in the latter case

This pricing system might also be called to arise from gendered marketing of products. Tolson spoke about mythologies in his early work of signs and meanings in advertising. Indra Nooyi might make 'lady-chips'

a thing in India maybe. Is sprinkling femininity, nature, and romance on products reason enough to make cereals for women cost more than 'gender neutral' cereals? Or are the reasons different? Harish Bijoor, Brand Guru & Founder of Harish Bijoor Consults Inc.illustrated, "Category of products which are sold to women more, there is undoubtedly a premium which is put on these products and services. The same thing happens to items related to kid garments.It is indeed a question of what goes into it. It's not really a Pink Tax or let's say a Pink discount. It is really telling the quality of the garment, round neck or maybe type of cotton. You can't measure it yard to yard as there is colour as well. A particular colour might cost different than the other. It'll be wrong to say that it's a pink tax. If at all there will be a pink Bolero launched by Mahindra, it is quite likely that it would go at a discount over the regular version. Because the idea will be to give it at a discount to women rather than ask for a premium."

As per reports, women in India earn around 20 percent less than men due to multiple reasons. This gender pay gap increases the daunting effect of any pricing differences. Maybe other industries just need a crash course in equality from the aviation industry in India which has no gender pay gap. Talking about transportation, writer Aarian Marshall speaks about 'The Pink-Transit-Tax' in New York. It won't be hard to draw parallels to conclude that women in India might make a different set of transportation choices for safety reasons. Women do choose radio cabs over public transport in late evenings. "Everyone will say that roads are roads but of course, roads and gender are related, and the point is who uses them, where do they go and how frequently it is used," says Dr Dewan.

Is it a covert form of patriarchy? Or a marketing premium that may or may not apply homogeneously around the globe? Perhaps we would know where to look if we know that it exists and once again we are paying the price for being born women.



"THERE ARE CATEGORIES WHERE MEN'S PRODUCTS ARE MORE EXPENSIVE AND CATEGORIES WHERE PRODUCTS THAT TARGET WOMEN ARE MORE EXPENSIVE."

THE LIBRARY OF INFINITE POSSIBILITIES

Vishnu Bagdawala visits a library in Surat and finds a programme to encourage the reading habit.

The concept of the universe as an infinite library, containing all the possible combinations alphabets in all the languages in the world is one way of understanding the universe and therefore God. The concept was conceived by Jorge Luis Borges in his story 'The Library of Babel' where he talks about a library made of the combination of twenty-two alphabets, a comma, a full stop and space between two successive words.

It wasn't difficult to extrapolate that concept of 'The Library' with the Biblical notion of the 'Word' that was with God and which was God. Many human beings in their heart of hearts aspire to become God, and for me, that had taken the form of finding a library as close to the one conceptualized by Borges as possible and gulp it down. However, it turned out that I was in Surat and the closest I could get to it was the Kavi Narmad Central library, named so after the nineteenth century Gujarati poet born in the city, run by Surat Municipal Corporation.

Bharat Khunt said, "We get the books we think our readers read and which our readers tell us to get. We get all the Gujarati books though, published by the major publishers like Navbharat and others so that at least we can make Gujarati Literature available to our readers. But there is no compulsion for the publishers to give the books to us. As for the English language books, we make decisions as to which book will make it to the library and which won't. We have a budget, and we get as many

books as we can within that budget."

Khunt seemed to have meticulously organized the knowledge about how the library worked in his head. He said,

"Out of the total budget of seven crores for the library and its auxiliary 106 reading rooms spread across the city set aside by the Corporation, we get a budget of one crore every year for purchasing books. Of this, about sixty to seventy lakh goes into purchasing magazines and newspapers. The rest we use to buy books."

When asked about how they purchased the books, he said, "We get them through different channels. The vendors, from whom we buy, which the Corporation has approved of, send us books to select from. They know the kind of books we like. We choose and pay and we send those which are not selected back to the vendors. We call

this kind of purchasing 'on approval basis,' and since we've been buying from the same vendors for a long time, they trust us with the books they send.

"Another way is when people recommend certain books to us. But we must be sure they are right for the library. Some of them ask us to get finance books, which are costly so that they wouldn't have to buy them themselves. So we have to look at the larger picture."

But what kind of books do people recommend? "All kinds of books. In Gujarati, there are some famous authors like Kajal Oza Vaidya, Pannalal Patel, and others. In English, they mostly suggest American authors. Some people donate books. We have a system to commemorate those who donate books."

When asked if they select those books based on their content, he said, "Yes. The library assistants read those books, especially those in the English language. Our idea is to get the books we think will be useful to our readers. So, we decide after the assistants have read them."

"Also, we have this 'Vancha ane Vanchavo' - Read and Make Others Read - a scheme where we donate books which we are looking to discard from the library to those who want them. They just have to fill a form, and they can get any book they want for free."



The building where Borges might have loved working

UNDERSTANDING INDIA'S NORTHEAST : A REPORTER'S JOURNAL BY RUPA CHINAI

Antara Kashyap in conversation with journalist and author Rupa Chinai

The elevator opens on the eleventh floor of Vaibhav Apartments in Breach Candy, where senior journalist and author Rupa Chinai lives.

I pause for a moment before ringing the doorbell because my anxiety is already uncontrollable and I get the urge to run away. I imagine a thousand scenarios in my head of what I could possibly say to someone of her stature when she opens the door and greets me with a smile, calming me instantly. Rupa Chinai's beautiful house overlooks the sea, and she offers me coffee in this beautiful little steel glass with a curved top. Before I begin interviewing her, she asks me what I think of the 'Assam problem,' and I ask her which one because there are so many. We talk a little about how once when she was in a little town in Assam taking pictures, an army officer threatened to take away her camera and yelled at, she not only feared for her life but felt humiliated. I talked about how I remembered an Assam where bombs would go off every three months randomly, especially around festivals and how people would die, and how tragic it was when people eventually got used to this. She then did something that overwhelmed me; she gifted me her newly released book, *Understanding India's Northeast: A Reporter's Journal*.

'Understanding India's Northeast' is Rupa Chinai's collection of reportage worth of over 30 years in the Northeast. Her journey in the region started

during the Assam Movement (1979-1985), a popular yet violent movement against illegal immigrants in Assam when the Himmat magazine had sent her as a reporter. Himmat magazine was one of the first "Mainland" media organizations to have reported the movement - at a time when Northeastern representation in the

and went on to become ministers). What lacked was the perspective of those who bore the brunt of the violence the movement involved. This set in motion the wheels of her determination to come to Northeast and report about it in the most free and fair sense, as she set on the journey towards lands far away to give voice to a region, that rarely got these privileges, at times even emptying her entire savings.

The book starts with an extensive introduction about the seven states. Rupa Chinai briefly introduces us to the state; it's geography, the eco-politics, and the pressing problems it faces or has faced at some point in history. The chapters start with that of Mizoram, 'the land of liquid gold,' then go on to talk about Manipur, Tripura, Nagaland, Assam and a collective chapter analyzing the future of the seven states, respectively. Rupa Chinai warns us at the beginning itself that she's made a conscious decision not to include Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh in the book because she did not get the chance to explore these states properly - which I think defines her determination to get every detail of the book on the surface might

look intimidating, but once one starts reading it, they realize how simple and easy the read is. The book pulls you into a world which is so full of rich detail that it is encyclopedic. While reading the book, I realized about the number of things I didn't know about my own state because I've never been trained to look at Assam that way. I've



Journalist and Author, Rupa Chinai in Assam

media was negligible. Rupa Chinai recalls reporting the movement along with her team with a lot of hard work and enthusiasm, but then receiving criticism from her colleagues back at Himmat, who told her that the story was one-sided and contained the perspective of only the protesters (who later formed their own government

been living inside the privileged caste-Hindu bubble, and hence I'm ignorant about the tribal people struggling to be recognized and to get equal rights and opportunities. I got to see the other states in a light that is more aware, and it helped me understand why people struggle so much for their identity. This book enables you to see Northeast as something more than a conglomeration of troublesome, secessionist states. If the book talks about the problems of the region, it celebrates it too.

Chinai also has a fantastic storytelling tool where she uses personal stories of her friends, people she met during her visits to talk about issues deeply rooted in the community. For example, her account of Hnema from Mizoram is one such example, where she speaks about the struggles of a father, who has been estranged from his children, to provide food for his children amidst abject poverty, insurgency, and alcoholism.

Before reading the book, I had a little apprehension about this phenomenon called appropriation. But Rupa Chinai doesn't appropriate. She writes with experience and professionally but also perfectly balances it with analysis of sustainable development and a better future of the Northeast. She is a reporter from her heart, and the book does justice to it.

Below, is an interview with an author.

As a person coming from Assam, it was very interesting to read about the launch of your book, "Understanding India's Northeast, A Reporter's Journal." Can you tell us a little bit about the experience while writing the book?

My book *Understanding India's Northeast A Reporters Journal*, is based on 30 years of my travels in this region. It recounts personal interactions with indigenous communities. Looking beyond issues of politics and conflicts, I have written about the colour of their daily lives, their cultures, and traditions that have long sustained the last vestiges of the forests and biodiversity that are still left intact in

our country. Amidst the stories of what India has done wrong here, there is also one story about what we did right. The Constitution of India ensured that the tribal people of the Northeast have special protection of their land, forests and natural resources. These communities have long protected this, while we in the rest of the country finished what we had. This Constitutional protection has been honoured by the tribal people of the Northeast, and we must ensure that this right vested to them continues. It shows us the pathway to sustainable development and health, both for the people and the land and in the interest of survival for all of us and our future generations.

What is your opinion regarding the National Register of Citizens (NRC) draft which excluded 40 lakh people and deemed them as illegal. Do you think the process of "Assimilation", plays a role in shaping public opinion on this?

The indigenous communities in the Northeast have long been agitated over the significant presence of 'illegal migrants' from East Pakistan/Bangladesh. It has led to decades of ferment, agitation, and violence across the region. The presence of large numbers of Bengali Hindu or Muslim, particularly in Tripura and Assam, has hugely impacted the lives of local, indigenous groups, making them a minority in their own land. They have lost their lands, cultural identity and political rights and they are now in a last-ditch struggle for basic survival. This inflow into the Northeast is the legacy of Partition, and successive governments have played 'vote bank politics' without bothering to ensure that all illegal migration is obstructed and that indigenous communities are assured adequate protection for their land, culture, economic and political rights.

The critical issue for me is that the Constitution of India made a commitment to the tribal people of the Northeast ensuring that land and forests are protected against encroachment and take over by

non-tribal; that their political and cultural rights and identity are assured. Enactment of the 6th Schedule of the Constitution enabled the NE hill tribal groups to be masters of their own destiny and have the right to run their own affairs. This has not always worked to their satisfaction. The hill tribes, most of whom have achieved statehood, are however far better off than the plains tribal groups of Assam or the tribes of Tripura whose existence is at a brink.

However, where support for the NRC is concerned, you may find that not just the Assamese, but every indigenous group in the Northeast feel the need for clear documentation on who is a citizen living in the Northeast today. Everyone recognizes that nobody can be expelled out of the region. But such a register could facilitate a benchmark against future influx. Meanwhile, a simultaneous attempt to creatively ensure the protection of tribal land, forests, political and cultural identity, would go a long way in meeting the broader issues that currently need to address.

What are your thoughts on Irom Sharmila Chanu's defeat in Manipur elections in 2017? Is it a form of discontent among people because of her political inclination, or was it a failure of her legacy?

In my view, from a distance, Sharmila's intentions were simple and straight forward - to continue the fight against AFSPA on a political platform. She was a powerful voice of the Northeast, known nationally and internationally. If she had won in that election, she would have stood out as a rare Manipur politician, a person of integrity, courage and deep love of her motherland. I hope she will still work towards creating a political constituency that has faith in Indian democracy and our election system. Imperfect though it is I do not see any other way. It can only improve with the evolution of the political culture; the kind of people who join politics; a heightened involvement of civil society and the support of a free and independent media and judiciary. I

think the discontent of the Meitei the valley people of Manipur, stems from their loss of faith in the Indian political system and they have good reason to feel that way. The Meitei story is complex and needs a more profound understanding.

As a reader, what I noticed about your style of writing is how you used personal stories to talk about broader social issues of the regions--be it Hnema from Mizoram or Bikramjoy Rupini from Tripura. How as an author do you make this creative decision in a Reporter's Journal?

It was not a conscious decision. To me, it was the most natural way of understanding things. It's the kind of journalism I have always tried to practice. It is people and their stories that tell you so much about their history, culture, social experience and political issues. The reader relates to and remembers such stories and associates places and problems with them. We begin to look at the human face of the Northeast and recognize that there are people of highly sophisticated cultural ethos and intellectual attainment. To be a part of their world has been a gift of enrichment for me. This was what I experienced, and my book tells it how it happened.

When talking about Manipur, you quote "Corruption is a way of life." Do you think it's true for the other states as well?

Yes, of course, it's bad enough all over India. But somehow during my travels in the Northeast, it struck me that corruption in Manipur society scraped the bottom of the barrel and its impact was causing enormous conflict in the minds of people. Everyone spoke of corruption and the tremendous stress it created in their society. They blamed the ruling party for abysmal corruption but talked little about how it appeared in their day to day lives and interactions and what could be done about it. While conducting a political movement and fighting for the rights of your people, there has to be a simultaneous effort at

social reform and leadership, ensuring that society moves forward with cohesion, inclusiveness for the most marginalized and a sense of values. In Nagaland for instance, corruption is also rampant, but at the same time, I saw a powerful civil society led a movement that was challenging Naga society and even its insurgent factions to look inwards too. It has made an enormous difference to the Naga spirit, and I saw the transition where people instead of cowering in fear and helplessness, began to speak up and offer creative responses. It started to subsequently happen in Manipur too, in the courageous responses of the Manipur media as I saw it.

Do you think your decision to exclude Arunachal Pradesh entirely and a particular chapter on Meghalaya, was a tough one? Did it impact the writing of the book?

The book is already 350 pages, so individual chapters on Arunachal and Meghalaya would not have done justice as it would have meant significant cuts to the manuscript. The region is huge, and each state has a diversity of people, cultures, issues that are of a very high order. There is little point in doing a magnum opus. Travels in the Northeast do require enormous resources, time and local support. I have been to Tripura only once, but the quality of my contacts and knowledge I attained through them for several years, enabled a solid understanding of what was happening there. I would love to do a sequel to the book I have started and continue to follow stories from the region, including Arunachal and Meghalaya. The region is going through a very challenging phase of rapid transition, and it is vital that their experiences be documented.

You also conclude the book in a delightful, visually appealing manner. Do you feel positive about the future of the Northeast? Where do you think the road leads?

The roads are presently coming up in the Northeast are causing enormous disruption. These roads are lifelines for the movement of goods

and people, and if they converge with finesse and integrity, it will be worth the wait and torture. Unfortunately, the manner in which contracts are being doled out does not reassure you. The roads can also bring about the rapid destruction of the forests, the, and the environment. The advent of uncontrolled mining and forces of social disruption are already being unleashed. Northeast tribal societies are seeing rapid transition -- from headhunting barely a 100 years ago, and they are leaping straight into the modern age. They carry with them the roots of their ancient and wise cultures, and I do believe they will find ways to deal with change in confidence and with the triumph of the human spirit over avarice and destruction. A cohesive social response that includes every minority group in their fold and having their master plan for the development they want is key to meeting head on the forces of avarice and exploitation that are being unleashed on them. Without this, their divisions and fault lines will be exploited and used to undermine and render them helpless.

Lastly, what is your favorite thing about the North East?

It's hard to pin down one thing. I feel I am amongst friends and people who are my own. I feel part of a culture that seeks to bring out all that is gentle, humane and wise in those who encounter it. I see a people (villagers of Nagaland) who are of high intellectual calibre, deeply rooted in their own culture, who hold value to their word and have a great sense of humour and creativity. I see great beauty and refinement in their art (the Meitei of Manipur) which reflects the power of graceful movement, joyous colour as also a great depth of pain and sorrow that moves me to the core. The NE tribes are a people of simplicity, and dignity that I find appealing. I respect their closeness to nature, their artisanal ability and capacity for hard work. One of the most heartwarming experiences is to sit by a kitchen fire in Nagaland sipping red tea and just sharing stories. It's a feeling of having come home.

'SO I ASKED THEM TO SMILE'

Jay Weinstein, a photographer from Australia, crossed the world asking people to do just that. **Antara Kashyap** and **Aakansha Malia** visit his photo exhibition in a school in Dharavi.



Photographer Jay Weinstein smiled at The Banyan Tree English School, Dharavi

"Ye Ladakh ke hain, aur ye Australia ke hain, phir bhi smile...?" (He's from Ladakh and He's from Australia, but the smile?...?) Jay Weinstein trails off, asking for a response.

"Same!" A bunch of children squeal in unison. Surrounded by these kids is Jay Weinstein, who surprisingly speaks Hindi better than most of us. Jay Weinstein is a photographer, who exhibited his photography project 'So I Asked Them To Smile' at Banyan Tree School in Dharavi in January.

The scenario is this. The exhibition is yet to open. They are waiting for the children's parents to come and pick them up. The exhibition opens when parents waiting outside the school are asked to come in. On a white wall opposite the school building, they can see a series of photographs in groups of two of the same person, similar in

all the other aspects except that in one of the two, the person is smiling. Jay engages his audience, surprises them with his Hindi and takes them through each of his photographs from around the world. His catchphrase: Phir Bhi smile, same! (All smiles are same).

The 'So I Asked Them To Smile' project started five years ago, when Jay started photographing strangers all over the world, taking a picture of a person and then asking them to smile. He then put these images together to show how the smile can make the difference. The project has now spread to Australia, Kenya, China, Denmark and Singapore. And India.

Jay says, "It all started when I was in Bikaner, in Rajasthan, and I was walking down a market street. I wanted to photograph someone but I was a bit intimidated. Luckily, I walked forward and photographed his friends, who were smiling. While photographing them, he said 'Mera bhi to photo lo

na!' (Take my photo too!) and I happily pointed my camera at him and said 'Smile' [smiles] and there was another person standing there. At that moment, I thought it would be cool if we had both these people standing side by side. So you make assumptions about me based on if you see this Jay [frowns] or this Jay [Smiles]."

He talks about how travelling impacts his work, how his project is about many cultures. Originally from Perth, Australia his parents moved to India when he was three years old to be a part of Indian culture. "I am an Indian and I'm not an Indian, I'm an insider and an outsider, I'm neither and I'm both. And this has given me a unique perspective where I can contrast and compare two different cultures and share it with you."

Weinstein first exhibited his project in the Jehangir Art Gallery in 2014. When we asked Parvez Damania, the owner of Banyan Tree School, Dharavi, why he brought the exhibition to his school, he said, "Because I fell in love with it. People in Dharavi are hardly exposed to anything other than Dharavi. So we decided to bring this exhibition from Jehangir Art Gallery to Dharavi. It's a non-profit project; an open exhibition."

Weinstein maintains that the credit is not his. "You won't find my name here. I'm a spokesperson for this project because I'm the photographer but it's not about me, it's the strangers I met and photographed. Does it matter that my name is in the beginning, does it change the experience at all? If it shifts the way we view people, if it makes any positive change, that's ultimately the most beautiful thing."

Jay credits the Photography Promotion Trust, headed by Sudharak Olwe, which aims to bring social change through photography, for his journey.

"When Jay showed me his pictures, I said they were brilliant, but he didn't believe it. My partner and I saw his work and edited it. We pushed him to exhibit in the [Jehangir Art] Gallery. We showed him the direction, now he's taken it to four countries. It's brilliant how a small idea can turn into something beautiful," says Olwe.

Ananya Maloo takes the six- yard challenge.

The fabrics of the early 1900s weren't artificially dyed. The use of eclectic ingredients like onion juice in the creative process lent the fabrics a unique texture. Smearing the yarns with onion juice and rice paste before

Journalist and author Vimla Patil of e-Sanskriti writes, “As if to better use these arts of dyeing and embroidery, the normal outfit of a woman progressively became a three part ensemble. The lower garment wrapped around the waist was the neevi. The kanchuki covered the breasts and a shawl-like garment, called the uttariya, completed the outfit. Many a time, these shawl-like Uttariyas were worn

The British introduced the blouse and the petticoat to this archetypal piece of clothing to prevent it from looking immodest. This has now come forward to become a staple three piece Sari set. In the early 1900s the Indian women draped short length saris pairing them with leather boots which went on to become quite a rage then. It was in the 1930s and 1940s that the



famous neevi style made its entry into the Indian Sari fashion club, a style adopted by the royal houses of India slowly engulfed the rest of the nation.

With the onset of Independence, Bollywood gained popularity. The saris underwent a lot of transformations in relation to weaves, fabrics, lengths and patterns. Some of the major influencers were Nutan, Madhubala, Nargis and Mumtaz. The Parsi/Gujarati drape gained popularity. The women weren't afraid of showing their midriffs.

The 1970s, '80s and '90s brought in vibrancy to the saris. The switch from black and white to colour movies was a turning point for the fashion industry too. Prints and vibrant colours were used in place of muted tones. The Sari also got translucent to give a peek of the fancy blouses. It is here that fabrics like georgette, chandheri, organza, and chiffon flourished. The pop culture in the west also inspired the colour and print experimentation. Icons such as Usha Uthup added the much needed zing to the Sari styles. The translucency of the saris allowed the blouses to steal the show with embroideries, marori work, gotta patti etc.

With the commencement of the 1990s, the monotone saris made a comeback owing to the sheer saris sensationalised by filmmaker Yash Chopra. Saris were linked to sensuality and were a balance between the good and the bad. Actresses Sridevi, Madhuri Dixit and Rekha epitomised the sensual monotone Sari sirens. "During this time the film industry started to pay more attention to the bodies of actresses, so through these translucent saris the figures were enhanced to bring the sexy side of Sari," says Kalpana Shah. It was the Indian way of getting the best of both worlds where you could maintain traditional dignity while also look sexy.

Throughout centuries, Indian saris have through a metamorphosis like a chrysalis. It is essential to notice how this versatile nine yards of pure beauty can be adapted and adopted by anyone and everyone delivering a fresh new style with every experimentation.

The Sari has now suddenly become an urban fetish and finds its way out of the closet a little more than just festivals or for office wear.

A sari has always been a piece of clothing that has expressed more than words, be it an expression of maturity, an expression of power or even an expression of a new-found identity. Wearing a Sari is an emotion most Indian girls experience ever since their early childhood. The dreams of wearing just the right kind of Sari are fostered right here and are nurtured with always changing Bollywood and fashion standards.

The jitters of wearing just the right kind of Sari excites many Indian girls as they take a leap towards maturity. The excitement

knows no bounds and the preparations begin over a month before for some. Anindya Nagori, a 16-year-old student of the humanities, says, "The first time I wore a Sari was on November 14th to celebrate Children's Day at school. I had imagined myself wearing a blue and black Sari and had thought of myself to look like an Indian princess of some sort. However, I ended up wearing a pink chiffon Sari with a

golden tissue blouse alongside a pair of golden heels and a beige purse." The first Sari is always a special one because it shatters some expectations but also creates memories that would last you a lifetime. It instils a feeling of being mature but also beautiful thus evoking an emotion that only a Sari so culturally adaptable can induce.

The Sari has also evoked a sense of pride amongst those who wear it. It exudes confidence and garners respect for many who wear it. The Transgender community in India find that respect which they deserve with the Sari. Kama La Mackerel is a poet, a multi-faceted artist, a performer and a community organiser based out of Montreal. She took to Facebook when her mother accepted her new found identity and gifted her a Sari to revel in the beauties that accompanied being a woman. Mackerel wrote, "Embroidered in these six yards of silk are the thirty years it took me to find who I am and slowly become who I was meant to be."

Vicky Shinde, founder of the Shiv Shakti foundation, which fights for the rights of transgenders, who organized the first transgender health camp with Cancer Patient Aid Association recalls, "I wore my first Sari when I was about 15-16 years old for a lavani performance." A strong voice, advocating for the rights of women, she embraces the beauty within and outside with utmost grace. She recalls how she was fascinated with the Sari from as long as she can remember. She reminisces the times that she used to wrap around towels as saris and dance around in the house. She tells how pants and shirts didn't give her the comfort that saris did and how they gave her with a sense of feeling beautiful and something that garnered her respect. "Sari is a feeling," Vicky Shinde remarks, a feeling that brought her closer in touch with her femininity.

A Sari is not culturally bound. It is to be across religious, cultural and socio-economic divides in India.

It sews the nation with the thread of modernity on the cloth of the past.

It is what keeps the past prevalent.



A SARI HAS ALWAYS BEEN A PIECE OF CLOTHING THAT HAS EXPRESSED MORE THAN WORDS, BE IT AN EXPRESSION OF MATURITY, AN EXPRESSION OF POWER OR EVEN AN EXPRESSION OF A NEW-FOUND IDENTITY.

Society wants to keep you safe

Should women have the right to go where they want when they want? Or should society sequester them where they're safe. Parul Rana tries to decode this old question.

Which is more important? Freedom or security? Would you give up the freedom for safety? Is safety really in your own hands?

These questions often pop up in our daily lives but seldom get answered. Freedom is of utmost importance to each one of us for it allows us to speak, to act, to do what we feel like doing, to live and pursue happiness without any fear and without facing unnecessary restrictions.

But how free are we? With the idea of free choice, free expression, we immediately shift our thoughts toward security, especially for women. It is ironic and even tragic that women willingly compromise on much of that freedom to have security.

The book, *Why Loiter? Women and Risk on Mumbai Streets* by Shilpa Phadke, Sameera Khan and Shilpa Ranade (Penguin, 2011) talks about the patriarchy that lurks behind the low visibility of women on certain streets and at certain times. In one of the chapters of the book which talks about the measures of safety a woman keeps in mind before stepping out of the home; what to wear to what occasion; and by what time she'd return home. But it isn't just what time she needs to get home and where she's going. A

woman, Phadke, Khan and Ranade point out must think out everything. "...the mental gymnastics that a woman performs when thinking about what to wear, where and when" are a matter of course for most of us.

So, the theory is that women's safety can be achieved by restrictions on their freedom of movement, on their access to campuses of an educational institution, public streets, markets, etc.

Is it?

Swara Bhaskar, known for playing unconventional roles in films like *Anaarkali* of Aarah, *Raanjhanaa* and *Nil Battey Sannata* says, "Often, the whole onus of being safe falls on woman in a way where it actually becomes restrictive. I think, for me, the way to go is not to back down and claim the places that are deemed unsafe in an intelligent way as a collective. Don't restrict yourself. Just be safe about it. Go in a group, wear whatever you want, but make sure you have enough people around at all times. I think it's a negotiation. A part of it is also fighting, perhaps with your parents, perhaps with concerned people. Nobody will give it to us in a platter; we will have to claim and fight for safety and freedom."

Miss India Pacific 2000 Winner, an actress and now a UN Environment Goodwill Ambassador Dia Mirza said, "I think it is important for you to be responsible for your safety and allow yourself to do what you believe is safe. If that means that you should not go to

certain places unaccompanied, then maybe, you shouldn't. It is important for you to be a part of the narrative that questions why women have to do this. You are empowering your choice by securing your safety."

Rasika Duggal, best known for her role in films like *Qissa*, *Kshay* and *Manto* shares, "As far as freedom is concerned, my parents have always allowed me to take my own decisions and have never really said no to anything. They allowed me to do whatever I wanted to and supported me. Other than that, I trust my instincts, and I do not work with people I don't feel comfortable with."

There was research conducted by Jackson Katz in his book, *The Macho Paradox* on what steps men and women take on a daily basis to prevent themselves from being sexually assaulted. The women in the book had replied, "hold my keys as a potential weapon", "always carry a cell phone", "don't go jogging at night", "be careful to not drink too much", "never use parking garages", "only go out in groups", "make sure family knows my itinerary". Compared to the men who said, "Nothing, I do not think about it," no women had such carefree approach toward their safety.

The habit of thinking so much before making decisions is also a reflection of how deeply women have been conditioned from their very childhood, that to do things in a certain way or



The trade
off between
security and
freedom

wear certain kinds of clothes will make them safer.

"Safety is always a priority for me. However, it does not mean that I have to sacrifice my freedom, at least not all of it. Also, as long as things do not change, it is better to be safe than sorry," said Barkha Dua, a 22-year-old law student.

Vaishali Kashyap, who is 25 years old, works in an advertising agency says, "I would prefer freedom over security. It is about what I want, what my decision is and then with that comes safety. I am responsible for my decisions."

When I asked the same question of my aunt, Ms Ruby (she goes by a single name), who is 53 years old and has a 26-year-old daughter, she said, "Of course we have to think about our safety, and it is fundamental to check the places that you are going to, to see whether you are going at the right time. Security is a must. How can you enjoy being free when you are not even safe?"

Even in the political scenario, the underlying image of women as victims everywhere has led the political parties competing over who will push for a

more policed and disciplined city.

The measures governments take, only if they do, for creating a safe environment for women includes "more policed areas, more CCTV, more street lights, more suspicion, more control, et cetera."

That is because the talk about safety for women has been dominated by victimization and helplessness. The parties are more inclined towards promoting control, but not freedom.

Anubha Sharma, the General Secretary, Madhya Pradesh Congress, said, "Freedom cannot be taken away as our progress depends on it. But we live in a time which largely depends on safety. Therefore, freedom might become limited. Clothes, timings and what we speak is a personal choice. We will all have to take this decision individually, and we might not like it, but freedom is compromised."

The issue of women's safety needs to be addressed holistically and cannot be confined to separate stand-alone measures. Today, women safety legislation is focused on the punishment of crimes rather than their prevention. Such an approach is

unlikely to bring any real difference in women empowerment and safety in this country, as is evident from the continued instances of violence against them.

Surbhi Mehta, an advocate in the Supreme Court, says, "In my opinion, the focus needs to shift from deterrent legislation to a more proactive and broad-based approach in education, health and empowerment wherein children, men, women are sensitized about these issues and taught to understand the rights of women so that they may appreciate their role in the society. We as a society need to get sensitized to women safety concerns so that we become more sympathetic and proactive."

It is essential to create awareness and impart education to children at a very tender age where they can understand and develop the right kind of mindset. Nobody is giving us our freedom because it is ours and when we talk of freedom, it includes being free from the stress of safety that worries us all the time. Therefore, being secure should be a part of freedom in itself which allows the possibility of doing what a woman wants to do and live the way she wants to.

House Gali No.9 Nala: Abode Of Mumbai's Mahanayak

Aakansha Malia follows the life of Sunil Kasare, a manual scavenger

Gali No 9, Grant Road East. I am standing knee-deep in the middle of a nala in which plastic bags and dead cats are floating. I am trying not to think about all the other possible things that are making this dark water stink like this. I am trying not to think. I am stuck. My worst nightmare comes true when I see a pile of human faeces dripping slowly from a broken pipe in front of me and hear a bunch of rats squeaking behind me. "Where do I go?" I asked myself a moment before I felt something warm up my legs and realized it was urine falling from the pipes. As I stood there, with my feet dirty, it hit me that I was standing in human shit, broken glasses and used syringes, "What if I got cut? What then?"

Of course, when I got back to the hostel, I washed. I washed the filth away. I washed with soap. I washed with Dettol. I washed my clothes. I washed until my hands were raw. I could do this because I have access to soap and water and Dettol.

In the fastest-growing economy in the world, many people don't have such 'luxuries'. And there are people who must do this every day.

One of them is Sunil Kasare, aged 50 years, a conservancy worker under Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), who cleans drains and sewers at Grant Road. He has been assigned to clean the Gali No. 9 drain from inside and has been working there for fifteen years. The drain is not only a meeting point for the sewage pipes of the two buildings

it lies between, but it is also a waste bin for the residents who throw their garbage from the windows. This is the reason why Kasare wears a yellow helmet while he enters the drain, and shouts 'Kude Nako Pheka' (Don't throw garbage) while dredging out dirt from the old rusted instrument given to him.

Another accessory they are supposed to wear is their gumboots, but Kasare doesn't wear them. When I asked him, "Sir, why are you not

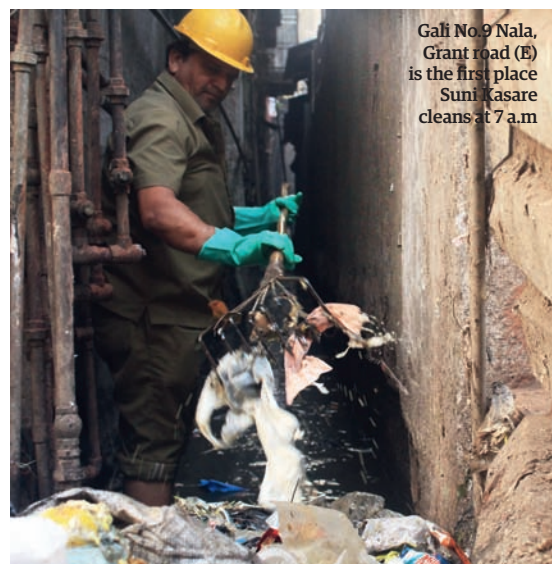
inconvenience of using such protection ultimately overrides apparent benefits. Workers feel it is better to get done with their tasks quickly sans protection, than fussing over inappropriate masks and oversized boots.

When I asked him why he has been cleaning the same thing every day, he says, "Aaj kam kuda hai, abhi dus minute ke baad aage toh yahi dobara milega." (Today, there is less garbage. But if you come here after

ten minutes, you'll see.

It [the naala] will be full.). I instinctively asked, "Toh Sir aap dustbins kyu nahi lagate?" (Why don't you install dustbins?) He says, "Madam dustbin chori ho jaate hain, mard bechke daaru peete hain." (But madam, they get stolen. Men sell them to buy alcohol). Meanwhile, a lady gets her garbage and dumps it in the pile Kasare has dredged from the filthy nala.

The mornings are beautiful for us because he plunges his legs in the dirt, even before we wake



wearing your shoes, do they not help?" He said, "Nahi main nahi pehenta kyuki boot phatt gaye hain. Usko pehenke bhi koi fayada nahi kyuki nale ka paani andar chala jaate hai aur plastic pair ko tang karta hai." (My shoes have torn. Anyway, there is no benefit in wearing them because they do not protect me from the dirty water of nala. And the plastic irritates my feet when I wear them.). The oversized rubber gloves make gripping impossible and are often tossed off while working. The

up. As Kasare comes out of the nala to head towards the other end, the poojari from the temple passes him while looking at him with an expression of contempt.

This condition prevails in the midst of the ongoing Swachh Bharat Abhiyan in remembrance of Gandhi's constant ideas to 'Keep India Clean' as well as make India completely caste-ridden. But manual scavenging, an umbrella term, a profession which clutches onto one's caste, lies in

juxtaposition with this. The inhumane practice enslaves people in India, who belong to the lowest rung of the society- "untouchables among the untouchables." They are subjected to on-going, intergenerational torture, and severe mental and physical pain rooted in caste-based discrimination.

While walking with him, residents form a crowd and one of them showed concern and asked us to wash our feet after coming out. I thought, "Shouldn't we be washing their feet first?"

Sunil Kasare's father worked as a mukadam (a position comparatively higher in the hierarchy, manual scavengers and conservancy workers will report to him) in the BMC, and his mother worked as a cleaner in a government school. His sons, Atul who is 23 and Aditya 21, he says, will follow him into this profession. There are reasons for this. He can only keep his house if someone in the family works.

Sunil Kasare lives in the 12 No. chawl at Mumbai Central. The house contains one room and a kitchen. As his wife, Tai was making tea for us, Atul talks about his dream to become a photojournalist. "My father was very proud when an offbeat photograph clicked by me was published in DNA, with a byline."

Tai tells us about the legacy of the house, "Yahaan par pehele 15 log rehethe the, hum, inke chaar bhai aur unke bacche, abhi pichle saal hi woh log sab gaye hain. Aadhe logon bahar sona padhta tha. Inke bhai yahi kaam karte the fir chal base 35 ki umar mein kyuki woh peete the." (Fifteen people used to live here. Our family and the family of my husband's four brothers, all of us used to live together until the last year. Half slept outside. My husband's brother died at the age of 35 of drink.)

Sudharak Olwe, a social documentary photographer who has extensively worked with safai karamcharis, speaks about alcoholism and the use of tobacco which is endemic. He says, "It is impossible for a person in his senses to get into a closed,

smelly pit filled to the brim with filth. Alcohol is considered to be a necessity, to dull their senses and ability to smell, before entering muggy sewage-filled pits. This behavior, however, is hard to condone as it aggravates the risk of unconsciousness in these open drains, not to mention the socio-economic aspects of alcohol addiction in general, where the man ends spend majority of his income on alcohol, leaving his family to suffer in penury, along with losing his respect in the society."

Manual scavenging was outlawed in 1993 by Indian government under The Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines Act. The law remains largely on paper. It was made more rigorous with harsher penalties in the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act 2013" or "M.S. Rules 2013". The broad aim of the act was to eliminate unsanitary latrines, prohibit the employment

contributors in improving sanitation conditions in India and have played an important role in the Swachh Bharat Mission. Anubha Bhonsle, a journalist who has worked on the Grit section of the The Wire, dealing with the in depth coverage of sanitation, health and manual scavenging in India says, "Women are doubly invisibilized in this caste-based oppression. They are the ones who clean human excreta from the dry pit latrines because this task has the lowest of wages, sometimes none, two stale rotis. In many parts district officials will not even consider this as manual scavenging. In the case of dry toilets—95 to even more are women. There is a denial that the practice exists and even for those who have come forward to be identified, rehabilitation has been sketchy."

R P Amudhan, a documentary filmmaker, director of the film Shit and expert on Dalit politics, highlights the issue of low wages of sanitation

workers. He says, "Earlier workers were permanent and came under the direct jurisdiction of the government. Even the social groups discriminated against could make use of government facilities. Now workers have also lost permanent status due to privatization of the municipal corporations. There is no security due to the complete removal of government from people's lives, making their lives dangerous, precarious and extremely vulnerable."

He adds, "There are two types of people in this world — one, people who maintain the status quo and those who wish to crush it. There is a constant war happening between these two. The present government is attempting to remove all the roots and methods which help people to escape from the caste discrimination to maintain the status quo. You can introduce as many laws as you want, but as long as people don't change their mind, the implementation is impossible."



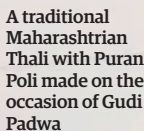
of manual scavengers and the hazardous manual cleaning of sewer and septic tanks, and to maintain a survey of manual scavengers and their rehabilitation. It also contained many measures for rehabilitation. People continue to be employed in the profession. These approaches have failed to place the issue of manual scavenging in the social, cultural and political context.

Many of these government schemes do not apply to women who are major

Kingkini Sengupta's Bengali taste-buds get a sense of Marathi food history

On asking her about how vast the expanse of Marathi cuisine is, she says, "Maharashtra is a very large state, only a little smaller than France. So imagine the variety that you find in France and multiply it manifold to understand the vastness of Marathi culinary traditions. Bengal is a much smaller state and ethnically less diverse. In Maharashtra,

Kaumudi believes that a lot of the Marathi cooking is not learnt or handed down as recipes but are learnt by the method of 'osmosis.' She mentions that when children help their family in kitchens by chopping or peeling vegetables, they learn the most by smelling what curry is being simmered. She learnt a lot from 'frying puris'



with her mother.' Many things have changed.

She said, 'Back in the day, in Maharashtra, it was often said that if a young girl knew how to make puran poli (a notoriously difficult and complicated process of sweet-mv aking in the state), she was ready to get married. Conversely, if she cooked rice that was sticky, she did not know what she was doing and was NOT ready to get married!'

Different regions vary in various ways in making Maharashtrian cuisine as diverse as it is. Kaumudi mentions a number of factors.

'What ingredients are indigenous to that region, what crops are grown there, and the region's climate and terrain affect what they eat. In the Konkan, for instance, people love rice, coconut, fish (if their communities eat fish at all), kokum (*Garcinia indica*), jaggery (made from sugarcane juice), etc. Inland, where people are landlocked, where crops don't grow as easily or plentifully, they favour peanuts to enhance the protein in their diet, add tamarind for tartness rather than kokum, and even use ingredients like watermelon peel that others might ordinarily consider trash, because vegetables are often scarce especially in times of drought or very dry, hot summers.'

"Passing down of recipes through generations is similar to maintaining a will," believes Ranjana Sawant, a 35-year-old homemaker who is making sure her children are well aware of the treasure trove of local recipes that her grandmother and mother-in-law have passed down to her.

Over the years, Maharashtra as a commercial hub of India has welcomed and embraced people from a lot of cultural spheres. Does that mean that it has forgotten its own? A lot of Marathi households use festivals and rituals to upkeep the culture and food jugalbandi in several parts of the state. In the Ganpati festival when Lord Ganesha is brought home, the deity is offered twenty-one kinds of

modak one if which is called ukdiche modak made of rice flour, jaggery and coconut but steamed. When the Lord is bid adieu anticipating a year-round wait, He is fed curd and rice for his send-off. On Nagpanchami which is one more auspicious festival of the Marathis, there is a tradition of eating Rajgira popcorns. Around the time of Holi, there is a huge craze among people to make Puran Polis which are jaggery filled chapatis. Each festival in the calendar of Maharashtra has a specific dish associated with it. Different households in this state maintain the tradition of preserving



their culture through their food. The same is also done by Dr. Rupali Joshi Panse, an ayurvedic medicine practitioner from Pune who avidly blogs on drupalipanse@wordpress.com about Marathi cuisines and delicacies that people follow for healthy eating and preservation of culture. Her book *Udarasth* which got published last year and won the Best Grantha Award awarded by Khadiwale Ayurveda Research Institute, which extensively records how food and its availability also depends on geological conditions of an area.

Though rice is a staple in all of Maharashtra, the various regions of Konkan, Malwan, Pune, Nashik have very different preferences when it comes to food as stated by Dr. Panse. Konkan is a more hot and humid belt but also receives an abundance of rainfall. Their staple is mostly fish and rice, as mentioned earlier. But Goa, a

part of what is essentially Konkan, has a lot of influence from the Portuguese as well. Pune and Nashik which is not as hot or humid as that of the Konkan region sees an abundance of preparation of what they call 'Thaali Peeth' which is a Gujarati's thepla, the only difference between them is that it is made of roasted pulses and green chillies and needs an accompaniment of buttermilk to initiate faster digestion.

Ghavan is another locally made Maharashtra dish typical to the Konkan region that is made by pouring freshly made rice flour batter in banana leaves and steamed. There is a considerable amount of usage of coconut, jaggery and banana-tree related recipes in the Konkan belt. The unripe bananas and banana stem recipes are still made and consumed widely by the Konkani people. What rice flour bhakri/ batter pancake is to Maharashtra, is ragi bhakri to the Beed area, kalani bhakri to Satara, and jawar and bajra bhakri to Pune, Nashik and Aurangabad area.

From the time of Sankranti around January to Holi in March to Ganpati in August, Maharashtrians have recipes for every occasion. Maharashtra celebrates local produce and tries to use them in abundance in all of its cuisine. Their love for spices and raw materials is in plenty.

Kaumudi Marathe mentions that the State of Maharashtra is a very different place today, as is the world. She says, "The older generations have passed away so we can't learn from them anymore. People have moved far from home, families have become nuclear, and kids do not grow up near grandmas or other elderly women who cook. Mothers often work outside the home, so they don't have as much time to cook. Even if they do, they may not make dishes from scratch the way they did two generations ago. People use a lot more readymade spice blends and mixes than they did when I was growing up.'

'Some mothers are an exception,' she says very emphatically. 'Mine still makes butter by hand every week, but not many other women make that sort of effort anymore.'

My bike, my self

All Rosanne Terese Raphael needs is an open road



Rosanne Terese
Raphael on a
Yamaha FZ

Being born and brought up in an Anglo-Indian household in the historic town of Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh, my elder sister, Lizanne and I were brought up very differently from my friends and peers. In a house where music echoed seven days of the week, I remember waking up often to the tunes of Jim Reeves, Cliff Richards, Johnny Cash and Chet Atkins to name a few.

My parents, who are retired teachers, always taught my sister and me that there was equality between boys and girls and there was nothing a girl could not do that a man could. Due to this, I was always a tomboy at heart, watching World Wrestling Entertainment and

bike racing shows on the television. Perhaps because my mother, Patricia, was a working woman, I always had a certain admiration for women who were independent and could take care of themselves.

My father, John Raphael, is an avid bike enthusiast and would often tell us stories about a motorcycle that his family owned, a Norton, which was used during the First and Second World Wars. We would listen to the stories with rapt attention. The Norton in my family's possession was a 1940 16 H model with a sidecar and a 500-cc engine. It had been disposed of after the World War and had been bought by a police officer.

In 1940, my grandfather bought the Norton from the police officer for

Rs. 150. The bike was not in its best condition, so my grandfather bought books on how to maintain the bike and would often repair the bike if it ever gave trouble. "Your grandfather used to maintain it himself. Whenever anything went wrong he did it himself, he never went to a mechanic shop and (the bike) became the pride of our family," says my father.

He remembers, "The Norton bike was known as the world's best gripping bike, you can take very sharp turns on it. I've been so low that the footrest would just hit the ground and sparks would fly."

In 1965, when my father started his job as a teacher at the age of 19, my grandfather gave him the Norton to ride and use as a means of conveyance to and from work. My father's elder brother, Horace, also got a keen interest in bikes and would read and absorb whatever information he could about them. He became a genius regarding the makes and models of bikes, and I remember when he would come to visit us on Sundays, we would have innumerable discussions about motorcycles - the models, the designs, the seats, right down to the types of tyres used.

My father said, "The bike remained with the family until 1984, but it had to be gotten rid of as the magneto wire which was finer than a strand of hair had broken and getting it replaced was a task as the Norton company had shut down by then and there was no way to get it repaired."

"We, the Raphaels were known in Allahabad, for our love for bikes and even today I feel sad that the bike is not available for you and your sister to ride," my father says, "You all would have been thrilled to ride it."

My elder sister, Lizanne, who is seven years older than me, learnt to ride the Hero Puch moped in the late 1990s, which was much the rage at that time amongst the youngsters of the town. My father made sure to teach us how to ride a scooter or any geared vehicle in case of an emergency.

I remember many a time when my father used to ride the Hero Puch, I used to sit in front and when there was a clear road ahead, he would gently



Rosanne Terese
Raphael's
grandfather (1942)

release the clutch and allow me to take control of the throttle. I must have been around seven or eight years old at the time. I remember my tiny hands grabbing the throttle and accelerating away to my heart's content, enjoying the breeze through my hair and feeling the thrill of the ride.

With all the stories and the imagination of the Norton in my head, I often imagined myself riding a bike one day. I hesitated to ride a bike because of the fear of embarrassment of what a laughing stock I would be if I fell and I thought I would not be able to manage it because of my height, which I thought would be a hindrance.

One of my friends from church, who was a bike enthusiast too had added the sporty Yamaha R15 to his collection of bikes, which included the Bajaj Discover, Pulsar and a Royal Enfield. The Yamaha R15 caught my attention with its sporty look. It was red which quickly caught the attention of passers-by. Many a time after Sunday mass, my friends would ride the bike around the church, and my sister was the only girl to be one of those people to ride the bike.

A close family friend from church, Floyd, had a Bullet which was his pride. Whenever you heard the bike resounding in the church parking lot, you knew who was on his way. So, one day when Floyd saw my sister riding the Discover he told her instead of that "toy" why not ride this Bullet, a real mean machine. There were loud gasps heard from the boys standing



John Raphael on
the riders seat
with Uncle Horace
in the sidecar

nearby, as they were never allowed to even go near his bike. Lizanne got on the Bullet and took it for a ride around the church as the boys standing nearby were complaining that he gave it to her to ride and never gave them a chance. Floyd stated that he trusted her and knew that she would not be reckless with the bike.

On the 17th of August 2008, a Sunday morning, after mass, I saw my sister riding the Yamaha R15, and I gathered the courage that I was going to ride that bike that day no matter what. When my sister was done riding and brought the bike to a halt, I had compelled myself that it was happening. I got on the bike, and my feet just about touched the ground. Some of my friends looked at me as though I was crazy. I was nervous but hitting the start button to hear the engine roaring was music to my ears. My friend and sister held the bike as I managed to balance that beauty and not fall and embarrass myself. My friend kept revising the gears, one down and rest up, my sister assuring me that I would not fall. He gradually moved away as I released the clutch very slowly at the pace of a snail. He

kept moving along with me to make sure I was steady. As I changed to the second gear and rereleased the clutch, my friend let go, and I felt one with the bike and I was off. It came to me so smoothly and easily.

Lizanne says, "I felt happy that I had a biking partner now, happy and proud that my sister was looking good riding a nice bike."

"I am proud that both my daughters know how to ride bikes and are popular all over for riding bikes," my father says proudly. "When I saw you riding the bike around the church, I felt happy and proud that my younger daughter was keeping up the family tradition."

My mother grew up with five brothers, so she was used to them riding motorcycles, so wasn't concerned. "At first I was concerned that you won't

manage the heavy bikes, but then I felt proud that I was the only mother in town whose daughters ride bikes," my mother states proudly.

The sound of a motorcycle gets me pumped up, and whenever I ride a bike, it makes me feel like a total badass who can do anything I put my mind to. Whenever I get on a bike, I feel strong, confident. I am no longer the shy, soft-spoken person that people often think of me to be. The moment the bike starts, I end and another me takes over.

I have been idolizing lady bikers here in Maharashtra, including Urvashi Patole aka the Alpha Bikerni, who conducts bike rides for lady bikers to different parts of the country and Priyanka Kochhar, a sports biker from Mumbai. "Don't allow anybody to dictate terms to you. Allow your heart to lead you to what you want to do and who you want to be. Your gender shouldn't discourage you from achieving glory," says Priyanka Kochhar, a model cum biker and author of the photo blog called 'Bikewithgirl'.

My dream is to own a KTM 200 Duke and a Harley Davidson Iron 883 along with some other mean machines to my collection of motorcycles.



"WAITING" IN BOMBAY

John Lennon once said, "Life is what happens when you're busy making other plans."

Kashish Juneja waits and explores the city of Mumbai

At every point there are so many choices to make, as you are waiting to become the person you always thought of becoming.

You are always waiting for that special time, that special friend, that special event when one's life will finally begin, waiting for that big moment when your life will just sweep you off your feet and plant you into an office with glass cabins with all the lovable paraphernalia of the work you like doing the best, where there is nothing more stimulating than the desire to change the world for better.

In a city of so many millions with

scarce resources, we will always be waiting for something.

You stand in lines because there is something at the other end that is worth waiting for.

Or so you think.

We are always waiting for the adventure, the experience which will unfold ever so spontaneously and gracefully. And what is it? Normal, daily life cruising along on our streets and footpaths, in our homes, with our mothers still worrying about our erratic food habits, our unmade beds, dinner tables skipped by and ignored, a family with unruly kids waiting at the bus stop, a man snatching his forty winks waiting for the bus, cars stopping at

a red signal, fishermen waiting at the docks for the boats to come back with the dead haul, people waiting at the ticket counter for beautiful journeys to be undertaken, never mind the crowded local trains of amchi Mumbai. Before long you realize, you are not even aware that you are waiting.

You seamlessly navigate from the hours of waiting to hours of working, and vice-versa. As soon as you step down from the right side of the bed, you begin by doing justice to the few treasured moments at the breakfast table with family, in the corner of an office, in the photography workshop or in the kitchen. You begin where you are waiting.

KASHISH JUNEJA



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BLIND FAITH

Aakanksha Chandra chronicles the life of Ravi Wagh, president of the Cricket Association for the Blind of Maharashtra.

This is the story of a simple boy with a not-so-simple life. A four-year-old boy once said, "I know I am blind but I want to play cricket, play for India!"

"Poor kid," said the world.

Ravi Wagh didn't care. He had about ten percent vision in his eyes, built something which no one ever thought he could. He started the Cricket Association for the Blind of Maharashtra (CABM) in 2011, an organisation that brings together all the visually challenged who want to play cricket at the highest possible level.

In the 1950s, Wagh was born in a family where his father and his five brothers were cricket fans. "Being surrounded by cricket enthusiasts since childhood is what made me interested in the game. Many a time I would sit on the field and hear my brothers and friends shout with joy when they hit a six or took a wicket."

Ravi Wagh's desire to be one of them drove him to hold the bat. He would often find himself staying back after everyone left, just so he could sit on the ground and feel what the pitch was like. He pictured himself running and making the maximum number of runs.

Once in a while, his three elder brothers—all of whom had normal vision—would let him play with them. One of his brothers used to stand behind him and hold the bat with him, giving Ravi a partial satisfaction of playing cricket. During India's cricket matches, when his whole family and his friends would gather, the commentary used to teleport him to the field.



President of the Cricket Association for the Blind, MH, Ravi Wagh

At the age of four, Ravi took it upon himself to be a cricketer. "There was a factory near my house where every morning the bell used to ring at 10:00 am for the factory workers. This was also the bell for me to walk out to the small corridor just outside my house. I made this corridor my pitch; cleaning it all by myself. My brothers went to school but I went to play cricket every day. I didn't have a cricket kit to play with; a thick broad stick was my bat and an empty small Parachute oil bottle used to be my ball. I used this instead of stones as it was easier for me to find the bottle. I used to throw the 'ball' a little high and used to pretend as if I just hit a six! It was a task for me to hit the ball. But somehow, I could manage that. I would do a non-stop commentary while playing. It didn't matter if my ball hit the bat or not, but for me, all hits were a four or a six. My commentary was so loud that passers-by used to be amazed, but I didn't care

what people thought or said. I was happy and that was all that mattered. My day started with this and ended with this. In this small corridor outside my house, I thought myself to be the best player in the world."

When Wagh got admission in Poona School and Home for the Blind in Koregaon Park, Pune, he began to play cricket for real. The boys in his school decided to make teams among themselves and have a World Cup tournament each year in their school. It was only during cricket when the students from all the grades bonded. Narayan Warda, warden of the hostel, used to train them. His school warden was also blind from one eye. They made a special ball by stuffing mud in a plastic ball so that it'd make some sound. It was not a properly organized tournament but the students who played it treated it like a professional game and took the sport very seriously.

The game was played thus: the

totally blind bowler would ask the umpire if he could throw the ball. The umpire would say PLAY aloud so that everyone would hear it. After getting ready, the batsman calls out "KEEPER", after which the keeper would shout "HEAR" and clap three times. This would give direction to the bowler as to where to throw the ball. Then the ball would be thrown.

The ball was thrown in an 'under arm' style. The batsman had to listen to the sound of the ball. This game was about making all senses alert, which was, and is more challenging. The fielders too had their role divided. The completely blind would stay in the 30-yard circle, while the fielding on the boundary lines was done by the partially blind. As the batsman hit the ball, he would shout to the fielder in the 30-yard group as to where the ball is going. The completely blind were also trained to be alert when the bowler said play and as soon as the stroke from the bat sound came, the fielder slid on to their right or left to block the ball.

When you are passionately crazy about something, you tend to do certain stupid and embarrassing things. One of his most embarrassing events was when Mr. Ravi stole thirty rupees from his father's pocket to buy plastic balls. He was in the 2nd grade. He didn't get scolded for doing this, but for him, this was against his principles and he swore never to do it again. His cricket obsession, however, did make him do many things like bunking school to watch a cricket match at Wankhede stadium with his elder brother.

Later, he joined Nowrosjee Wadia College. He started playing cricket matches for the visually impaired boys in his high school. Till the time he reached the first year in graduation, he was participating in local matches held for visually impaired boys throughout his college. During one such match in Nerul, he got noticed for the first time by Maharashtra Cricket Federation, which was looking for a good bowler. Encouraged by the recognition, he



Visually impaired member of Ravi Wagh's association

missed out on most of his lectures to practice. On weekends, he spent his time practicing in Mumbai, where the Maharashtra team players met. He would stay at his friend's place or Mumbai University hostel. Islamic Gymkhana and Parsi Gymkhana had become his new home. Now his goal was to get selected for the Indian team in World Cup tournament for the Blind.

He didn't get selected in the first instance. None of the Maharashtra players were selected for the final Indian team. He tried his luck for the second time but failed again. Feeling the pressure of earning a livelihood and not burdening his family, he started working in BJ Medical Hospital in Pune as an IT operator. He got married. But still there was a burning desire inside him to play cricket for his country. Then, he thought perhaps he should help someone else get into the team. The idea developed in his mind and Ravi Wagh is now the founding member and is the current President of Cricket Association for the Blind of Maharashtra (CABM). Wagh invited Ramakant Satam to work with him. Ramakant Satam was from Worli and known for his work with the school for the blind there. The students in that school loved chess. This intrigued him, hence he started volunteering for chess events held for the visually impaired. The chess event grew so that matches held were later played between a visually impaired player and players with no problem with their eyes.

Ramakant Satam agreed, thus becoming the Secretary of the Cricket Association for the Blind of Maharashtra (CABM). Today, the association covers 19 districts. It has been successful in sending their players for international matches. Maharashtra players Pravin Karluke, Anil Belsare, Swapnil Wagh and Amol Karache were the key players in 2014 World Cup for Blind which India won.

The current captain of Maharashtra, Swapnil Wagh (no relation) has been playing cricket since 2007. He says, "I work as a bank clerk in Pune. I earn around Rs 11,000 a month. When we win a match, the amount given to each player is about Rs 25,000 to be divided among the players. So, the funds are low and we hope CABM comes under the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) so that the association can be funded well. But we now have a field to play cricket in. We have a team which can meet regularly and practise together. But this is only at the district level. At state level, the story is different. Players from different regions practise on their own because they have jobs. The team meets only a week before a tournament, so we don't get much time to play together. I hope this changes."

Swapnil Wagh still works in IT. He says, "I want to live with no regrets. I have been passionate about cricket and I love meeting people who are as passionate as I am about this sport."

WHERE ARE ALL THE DALIT CRICKETERS?

Rajat Zamde, an inquisitive sports enthusiast, explores possible answers to low participation by the Dalit community in cricket.



On 25th December 2012, India was playing with Pakistan, at Bangalore in a T20 I match. India had just scored 133/9, so they had to take early wickets to remain in the game. A bowler from Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, making his debut, was handed a new ball. In the last ball of his first over, he bowled an in-swing from a good length to Nasir Jamshed. Jamshed was stuck in the crease and got bowled. The bowler then bowled the second ball of his second over, an outswinger to Ahmed Shehzad, who threw his bat and got caught behind the wicket. In that very over, the same bowler pitched the ball outside the off stump; it came

back sharply and bowled Umar Akmal through his gates, taking his middle stump. The bowler ended the match with the figure of 3/9 with 19 dot balls out of 24, best performance in T20Is is by Elias Sunny of Bangladesh who had picked up 5 wickets, giving just 13 runs. Though India lost the match, we found a quality swing bowler, Bhuvneshwar Kumar.

But Bhuvneshwar Kumar was the last Dalit player to play for India in Tests; after him, there is nobody to represent the Dalit community. In 86 years of test cricket history of India, India has awarded test caps to 295 players. Out of those 295, only four have been Dalits. They are Eknath Solkar, Karsan Ghavri, Vinod Kambli and now Bhuvneshwar

Kumar. Eknath Solkar was one of the best short leg fielders the world has ever seen. His 54 catches in just 27 test matches are a proof of that. Karsan Ghavri was a left-arm pacer and was quite handy with the bat lower down the order. Vinod Kambli, a left-handed batsman from Bombay was the next big thing after Sachin Tendulkar (Tendulkar debuted in 1989, Kambli in 1991) but because of his inconsistent form, he was in and out of the team.

Bhuvneshwar Kumar, the latest entry into this list, now leads India's bowling attack with Jasprit Bumrah in all three formats: one-day internationals, T20Is and Test matches. The standard belief in cricketing circles is that cricket doesn't take caste into

consideration, that it's a performance-based sport, like any other, where what matters is your skill, your ability and your numbers. Everyone we talked to said the same thing. Rajiv Adhtram, a former player for the railways and now a coach at the Shivaji Park Gymkhana says, "Cricket is a religion to me. I don't ask the caste of my players and you shouldn't ask about their caste either. You make your own level. Cricket doesn't consider whether you are a Dalit or not. Playing quality cricket is important and you have to prove it. When your average and analysis are good, you come into the team." Kiran More, former Indian international said, "I don't want to talk about this". Shreyas Iyer, Indian International, "We can talk about normal cricket but not this". Bishan Singh Bedi, former Indian Test captain, replying to our query in a text message, "it's an interesting query U've made, but honestly, I'm struggling to find a viable answer...fr one I'm not a Crkt historian...perhaps U ought to contact Ramachandra Guha." Gautam Gambhir, the former Indian captain, "Nahin yaar, I'm not interested in all this [talk about] Dalit cricketers." Pravin Amre, former Indian International, he says "NO, I SAY NO, IN ONE LINE"

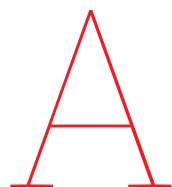
We live with the caste system but we are afraid to talk about it. But one might ask why Brahmins who are just 4% of the population in the country, hold close to hundred caps in Test cricket.

Most of the former Brahmins cricketers hold big positions in Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). Regional bias is well-recognised in Indian cricket. But are there caste biases too?

Writing in Outlook magazine issue dated 10, February 2003, Ramachandra Guha who says, "Cricket being a non-body contact sport was certainly one attraction for the Brahmin." That might be the reason why brahmins preferred this sport. Perhaps, that is why we have so many brahmins.

There is an economic aspect to playing cricket as well. Cricket is a game where you need proper clothing, a full kit, a cricket ball and a bat and many other things. Shoaib Khan, whose kid is six years old and plays

at Shivaji Park says, "I spend close to Rs 2,500 monthly. And this is for the cheapest club. Average kit cost around four to five thousand rupees."



Ashish Kulaye, coach at the Amre Cricket Clinic, who has been coaching players from the last ten years says, "It will cost around Rs 60 to 70 thousand a year on average cricket coaching, including travelling expense, match fees in age-level cricket." Cricket is an expensive game compared to other sports like hockey, football, badminton. Hence, not all people can afford it, that too in a country like India where the economic gap between upper caste and lower caste is so high.

According to 2011-12 National Sample Survey Office, the gap for household expenditure between upper caste households and Scheduled Caste (SC) household was 37% in rural India while in urban India the same gap was 60%. Between upper caste and Scheduled Tribes (STs) the gap is 53% in rural India while it is 48% in Urban India. This might be one of the reasons why we have a meagre 1.35% Dalit representation in Indian Test cricket.

Thousands of years of discrimination have limited the access to resources for the Dalits. They have been denied basic amenities how can they play cricket? Elaborating this point, Sudharak Olwe, a photojournalist and a Padma Shree awardee, who has been documenting atrocities against Dalit communities over the last decade said, "There is no access, I travelled extensively in Bihar and UP. Many communities have not yet gone to school. They don't have houses, they don't have an election cards. No government facilities reach them. In Madhya Pradesh, Dalit kids are made to sit separately. Because of that, they take mid-day food home, eat it and go on to do other things. With no access how will that person come up in cricket? There is too great a gap."

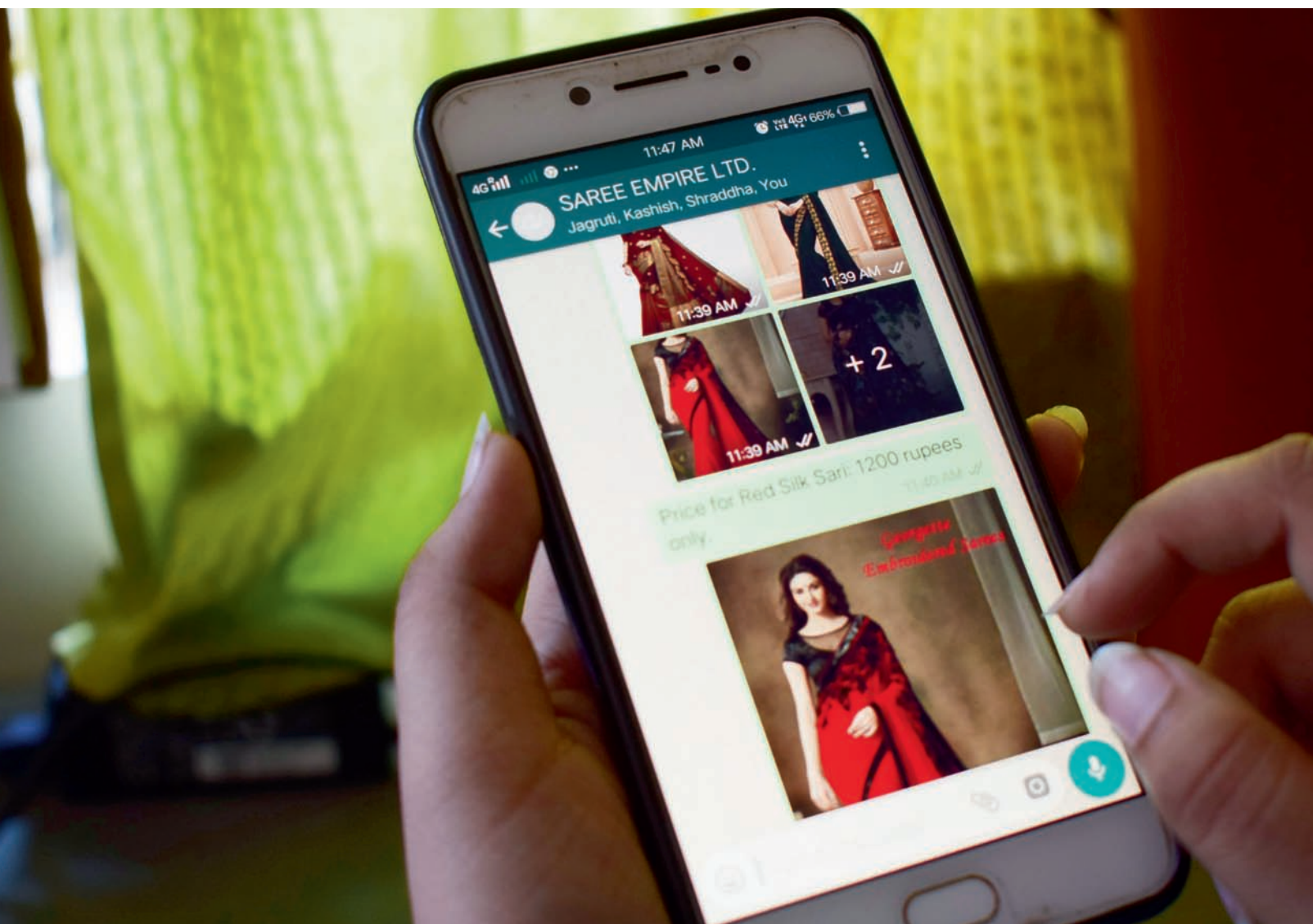
Mr. Olwe continued, "Unless the caste system is abolished, the Dalits won't get a chance to play cricket. There's the social and the economic problem. But the country runs on caste

segregation. Until that goes, the system will always keep them marginalised."

The social problem is there and will be there, in the 21st century of India we have different utensils for Dalit people, they have a different well for water, they got humiliated at working places, we still stopped them from entering into the temples. There are all kinds of social problems for Dalit people to face.

How can then we get players from Dalit communities? What about affirmative action? Before you blench and say, 'That will be the end of any chance we have of succeeding,' you should know that it has already been tried by Cricket South Africa, the organisation that chooses and runs the national team. They started reservation in year 2010 in domestic cricket and then they applied it on the national team in the year 2016. According to it, there has to be six black cricketers in a squad of fifteen. It has worked for them. Can this type of reservation be useful? Their solution cannot be applied without thinking. South Africa has only to deal with issues of race. We have many more categories including Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Vimukta Jatis, Nomadic Tribes, Other Backward Class, Special Backward Class among others.

We all agree that cricket is a national sport. If it is, it should represent all the colours of the nation. If that is to happen and we are still to have a viable team, the BCCI must go out and find such players. As a private organisation, it has no requirement to be nationally representative. According to the BCCI's annual report 2015-16, the board made a profit of 7847.07 crore in that financial year. After having deducted for expenses, that's a lot of money that can be put into training national hopefuls across the country, in economically underprivileged areas. If every village school has a kit or two, if every village could boast a pitch specially prepared, if every child has an equal opportunity, perhaps our national game could truly represent the diversity that is our nation. Cricket is a game of uncertainty and because of the caste equations in our country, there will be uncertainty for the Dalits in mainstream cricket and in mainstream India.



WHATSAPP WITH THOSE SARIS

Samiksha Mishra interviews the creator of a WhatsApp-based saree empire

Shanmuga Priya, a young woman entrepreneur, owns a sari empire built on WhatsApp. The 33-year-old resident of Chennai understands that millennials are all about the media. We speak, we debate, and communicate on social media platforms across the world in seconds. As a corporate

employee, Shanmuga was one of the many who witnessed this technology establishing itself as the pastime of choice among the young but she was also one of the few who saw that it could be used for work and business as well.

Shanmuga Priya was a human resources consultant in a multinational company. in 2014. She

says she was earning 70,000 per month and was quite happy with the shape of her world. That was the year in which she got married and one year later, she had delivered a baby boy. That was a moment of inflection. Her son was not in the best of health and then to make matters worse, her mother-in-law died in an accident that also caused an injury to her two-month-old baby. Now she was a stay-at-home mom and found that her life had changed.

"I had long been an independent woman. I did not ask my husband for money for anything. But without a salary, I found that I had to ask him even for my basic needs," she says. Reminiscing about those times, she adds, "I always wanted to be independent financially. Asking money for every other thing was

21st century
entrepreneurship
tool



never acceptable to me." Now she was like every other educated Indian girl who gives up or is forced to give up on her career once married. This was not acceptable to Shanmuga. She said, "I thought I should do something of my own, something for myself, but I had to think of my child as well."

Her mother-in-law used to sell saris, going door to door to people's houses. Finding it the most flexible option, she started selling saris like her mother-in-law to close acquaintances. But what began as a small side-business turned into a huge one with a yearly sale of about INR 2.5 crores. All of this in just three years, and now, she aims to keep working and empowering women like her.

Shanmuga started her business with an investment of twenty-five thousand rupees. Her husband

was supportive of her and helped her in establishing a base for her business which now has a stream of approximately 70,000 resellers, of which 80 per cent are women.

She said, "Many women approached me because they too wanted to earn and be financially independent, but couldn't because of their daily chores. It was then that I created a business group on WhatsApp which made selling and buying easy for women across the country. Using this digital space, I not only empowered myself but also thousands of women across the nation."

Shanmuga transformed the first floor of her house into a business space with four employees. With a kid to take care of on the ground floor, Shanmuga was able to balance both.

She says, "Every evening my orders dispatch at six sharp. Every minute I get a message, my WhatsApp keeps buzzing. At 10 in the morning, my staff comes home, and the whole run begins. One of them will start sending and tracking information for the orders dispatched yesterday. Others take the order for the day, check the quality and go to buy stuff from a

vendor. So a day in my life is about my child's homework and my business going together."

There were times when it was difficult for Shanmuga to manage her business. But her husband played the role of catalyst. He supported her and motivated her to strive harder and fight stronger. She said, "I was very depressed after quitting my job. It was a tough phase. And I told him that I want to start a business. We travelled together to suppliers. He would come early and help in packaging and also take care of our son when I was busy. More than anything else he has been so motivational and supportive throughout."

When a woman takes charge of her life and starts making her own decisions, she becomes aware of her worth and capabilities. However, a little support from a partner can turn into a wonderful boon for both man and the wife, in this case, is what this couple stands for.

Business and finance are the tools that bring power into one's life, and for ages, men have kept it away from women and women have allowed them to take these away. But in the century where feminism drive is at its peak and women across the globe are fighting for freedom, Shanmuga keeps her financial freedom not just alive but also essential for her household. Her journey is an answer to everyone who questions the capabilities of women and defines her role in society. Standing up for your rights, creating a change, and believing in yourself are key mantras on which Shanmuga functions. However, Shanmuga hugely credits her success to social media.

She said, "If it weren't for WhatsApp, I would have never been able to manage my child and business this efficiently. Also, now when I look back, I wouldn't have been able to have these many resellers."

"Every evening my orders dispatch at six sharp. Every minute I get a message, my WhatsApp keeps buzzing. At 10 in the morning, my staff comes home, and the whole run begins"

BOLLYWOOD: FEMINIST ENOUGH?

Samiksha Mishra tries to get to the bottom of the newly promoted feminist notions in Bollywood while in conversation with filmmaker **Leena Yadav**.



Leena Yadav on the sets of *Parched*

Though it has time and again made attempts to fly the flag of feminism, the patriarchy seems to be secure in its position, whether it is in how much male stars are paid or how many women directors there are in the industry. Leena Yadav, the director of *Parched*, *Teen Patti*, *Shabd* and now *Rajma Chawal*, dissects feminism and filmmaking in the following conversation.

It is believed that Bollywood is changing and is becoming more aware of gender disparity. We have witnessed narratives which have introduced strong female characters recently. But is the audience ready for a character that does not coincide with the stereotypical heroine of Bollywood?

There is no black and white, we are all grey, and we react to circumstances in different ways. There are now many more well etched female characters than there were in the past, so people are changing. There is no doubt about that. But Bollywood is still very far from attaining the feminism we want. People talk about female-driven stories, and when they say that what they mean is that fifty per cent of the narrative should be about the female character. That's a low bar. If you have a romance, you would think fifty per cent of the time and attention would be given to the female character but it is the male character that hogs the time and the limelight. But it is something that we now see women characters as important and as worthy of delineation. So acceptance will come a little later. First, we need to start writing characters that actually portrays a strong woman character. Throughout our cinematic history, we have made female-driven films, but there have been trends which come into fashion for a while and then die. A hit film with a central female character will bring other copycat films but they will not be made with the same empathy so they will fail and then everyone goes back to the old formula. So unless it sustains and grows, I don't see it as a change.

Most of these female-driven stories on women sexuality and their issues are written and directed by men,

When Geeta (Gayatri Joshi) decides to run her parents' school and refuses to marry a man who was not ready to take a working woman as his wife, she did somewhere take a step towards feminism. But then the writers of *Swades* lost their nerve and when it came to saving her school from the panchayat, it is Mohan (Shah Rukh Khan) who comes to her rescue. Our heroine dances as Sita, begging her Rama to come and save her in the song 'Pal pal hai bhaari' (Every moment

takes its toll).

Swades was a well-intentioned film with a failing; the failing was that it could not see its female characters outside the matrix of masculine agency and feminine helplessness. But what can one make of the very recent blockbuster *Simmba*, we see a celebration of masculinity by trivializing the important issue of rape, using it as a mere plot point. *Simmba*'s narrative ignores the nitty-gritties of the cause but uses rape to foreground and even celebrate toxic masculinity, which the audience enjoys. So from mild disparity to big blunders, we witness it all in Bollywood.

the very recent example being Lust Stories (Netflix) where three out of four directors were men. How much justice do they bring to the narrative when they write these stories?

Firstly Lust Stories were not 'lust' stories; they were more guilt stories. So that is our attitude towards sex, and even today, four filmmakers interpret 'lust' as 'guilt', so that is where we are when we talk about exploring women's sexuality. Similarly, Simmba used rape as a plot device, and its success may bring other rape films to be made, so some filmmakers oblige audiences. Also, whatever happens in the society does get reflected in our cinema. So probably, all the lust became guilt because of that.

Then, being a man or a woman is going to affect your narrative. If I write a male character, it will be more of how I see men or how I want to see them. People often tell me that the men in my stories are more vulnerable and sensitive than the norm, but that is how I see them. So it's not that men cannot make feminist films, it's a very individual thing. Men have made some of the best feminist films, so it's more about how sensitive an individual is towards understanding a woman's perspective, and it can be a man or a woman.

How difficult was it to make a film like Parched which talked about a lot more than women's sexual desires?

Nobody was ready to finance Parched, but this is an issue with most narratives. So maybe there is content out there, but nobody is ready to back it. It is a vicious cycle. Your hero drives the market. He will decide the cost of your film, and he will also determine the value at which it is sold. Then we complain about the disparity in the pay cheques, but it is bound to be there because the market is driven by 'who the hero is'. So to break the cycle, the onus is not just on the filmmaker but also on society. It is still easy to make a film like Parched, but if the audience doesn't support it, it will never get made again. Often filmmakers are asked this, but we need to ask the audience if they will support a film like Parched. The answer would be no. They still want a prominent face on

the poster. So for me, the issue exists at every level.

Talking of finance, most of the producers in the industry are also men, what role do they play in this vicious cycle we are talking about?

That is the case all over the world. In America, a movement had begun when all the studios suddenly had women chairpersons and vice

women and also because women can come out and talk without being shamed because rape or sexual abuse is generally about the women's shame. So yes, it is a positive thing. But again, I hope it is not just something that 'trends' on social media and then is replaced by a new trend. I hope that it will grow. But the problem is more than just this; there is no single solution to it. For the longest time, I believed



From the sets of Parched

presidents. But even then at the back of all decisions, there were men because well...men have the money. So all our structures are controlled by men. You may see a woman on the face of it, but it is usually men behind all the decisions. And it is evident because it is a general statement that in most of the households, a woman decides the expenditure which suggests that a woman decides what movie they would go to watch, and simultaneously another woman is sitting at the head of a production house. The question arises as to why there is no content for women. The answer is simple: a man is controlling both these women.

What is the solution to this whole situation? With 'MeToo' in talks, we see women now standing up for women, so can we say that it is a step ahead in the fight of achieving equality in workplaces?

'MeToo' is the wonderful step ahead because it brings solidarity among

that education is the key to all of it. But then, while making Parched, I witnessed the young, educated section of men questioning the film and its content. It was then that I realized that it starts from the very beginning, at the very root of society and we need to change there. We need to sensitize our children from the very beginning of these constructs, and it will take time.

What would you tell young women who are aspiring to become a filmmaker in this space?

First, never call yourself 'a woman filmmaker.' They will try their best to keep you in a box, at least don't help them do that.

Second, write stories that resonate with 'truth,' and it will resonate with the world. Never make a film for someone else, make it for yourself. Let it come from a personal space and tell your story, make it your account.

That is the best I can say to all the budding filmmakers.

PAIN IN THOSE PAWS

Kritika Champawat investigates the pain behind the clipped ears of the Mumbai stray dogs.



On a lazy Sunday, catching up on sleep at Marine Drive

When I shifted to Mumbai, apart from the local trains and the hustle and bustle of the city, what caught my attention were the clipped ears and collars on stray dogs. Why were their ears like this? Why did so many of them have collars around their necks? To know the answer to these questions, I did the next best thing, I 'googled' and thus began my journey of understanding sterilization of dogs in Mumbai.

Honestly, I didn't really understand it. Being an avid dog lover and a

pet owner myself, I just could not understand, why would anyone want to sterilize dogs? Isn't human population a bigger concern than dog population? Aren't there other issues which need to be dealt with?

Abodh Aras, Chief Executive Officer of The Welfare Of Stray Dogs (WSD) is an extraordinary man. I had seen a collared dog outside a store at Breach Candy who was always sleeping, who was never active or moving around. He had been sterilized. When I asked Aras about it, he knew the dog I was talking about.

When I asked him if there were any behavioural changes because of

sterilization of dogs, he said, "Not all the dogs go through a behavioural change, but some of them do. However, in my opinion it is for the better. Stray dogs can be aggressive and that causes them to fight, so the people who might come in their way get bitten. When a female dog is on heat, the males run behind her to mate and fight with each other. Sterilization brings down the levels of aggression because testosterone levels go down in male dogs. When a female dog is sterilized, she does not go into heat. This is in a general sense. There might be different effects of sterilization on individual dogs."

KRITIKA CHAMPAWAT.JPG



Asking him specifically about the lethargic dog I had seen outside the store in Breach Candy, he said, "No, there's no lethargy or anything like that. The effect on individual dogs are different. He might just have been a quiet dog in the first place."

When I asked about the physical effect of sterilization on dogs, he said, "Actually, any veterinarian will tell you that it is always good to get the dogs sterilized because they develop health issues in later life if they are not. Females can develop tumours in the mammary glands. They might develop ovarian issues or infections. Recently, the dog of one of our volunteers passed

away because she had developed cancer of the mammary glands. Maybe, if she had been sterilized, that might not have happened. Prostate cancer can be avoided in the males. So from the point of view of their health, to get your dog sterilized is better for them. As for the stray dogs, naturally there's a different objective behind sterilization like controlling the population and controlling rabies."

Meanwhile I kept thinking about my pet Shelby. The thought of her suffering from any of the above mentioned diseases scared me. Was there a right age to sterilize your dog?

"Veterinarians say the good time to carry out sterilization is when your dog is about eight to nine months old. But the law says that a street dog can be sterilized after six months because female dogs go into heat very early in their lives. There is no upper age limit because dogs can procreate even at the age of 10-11. But the important thing to consider is if the dog is fit for sterilization. Not all the dogs can be sterilized at the age of nine months."

The operation does not take long. "The surgery takes about 10 minutes. When the dogs are caught either by the municipal cooperation or by WSD, they are brought to the sterilization center. On the next day, they are checked to see if they are fit for surgery. If they are, then they carry out the operation. The dogs have to go through a 12-hour fast just like a human surgery. After the operation, they are kept for seven days for post-operative care. Once the stitches heal, they are returned to the streets after giving them a rabies shot."

I was still not convinced if sterilizing dogs was an injustice to them or not. I wanted to know more about it, and this time from a different perspective.

When I asked a friend, Manali Swargiary, a Ph.D. holder, who had done her thesis on a topic related to public health, she said, "The process of sterilization of dogs under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animal Act, 1960 can be divided

into some processes which are: intervention (sterilization of dogs), output (reducing fertility), outcome (decreased number of stray dogs) and reduced impacts. Impacts include reduction in prevalence of rabies, less number of road accidents due to stray dogs, hygiene issues, less number of workforce or expenditure will be involved in controlling them which can be utilized in some other programmes."

But what are the ethics of the situation? How do we get the right to decide how many animals of a species should live or die? How do we repay the love of humankind's favourite animal by controlling their numbers.

Aaron Savio Lobo, marine conservationist and technical advisor for the Indo-German bio-diversity program of Deutsche Gesellschaft Fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit (which translates as the German Corporation for International Corporation) in India said to me, "I know sterilization is supposed to have particular effects on dogs in terms of mating and also in terms of hormonal changes, but that is not my problem. My issue is that stray dogs are a man-made problem. I say a problem because most of the stray animals whether dogs or cats pose a huge threat to biodiversity. These strays dogs and cats actively feed on wild birds. They pass on canine distemper to jackals because of which their population is in decline. The thing is that when we lose a specie we lose them forever. There's a common argument that the strays also have a right to live. But this is only within the confines of your house where they are vaccinated and properly taken care of. Strays dogs and cats are a man-made issue. Their population is increasing because people feed them. Because of this their fertility rate increases and they tend to breed faster. This has a negative influence on wildlife. Stray cats have wiped out complete island-bird population in places like Rann of Kutch; the dogs there chase nilgais. The single largest predators in our country are stray dogs."

My mind understood why it is important but my heart still does not want to accept it.



UP TO UTTARAKHAND

Kashish Juneja recalls the ten days in the hills of Uttarakhand

As we grow up, everyone around us tries to push us out of our comfort zones. "It's a part of growing up," people say and it is. We know it is, but the discomfort makes us reluctant. SCM enveloped its motive of making us step out of our comfort zones and overcoming our fears into this beautiful idea of "exploring" the world which Bollywood romanticizes for us. We transformed from being apprehensive about the trip because of the cold weather and the difficult living conditions, to actually feeling the humble self in the foothills of Himalayas.

We went to Uttarakhand to make short films on subjects like children

who are running their own libraries and teachers from the Gandhi Fellowship who had left the comforts of the city to work in the villages. We saw strong women use a local variety of millet (madua) into a variety of foodstuffs including biscuits. We tried to explore the problem of waste management in the state. We captured all of them through our broadcast features while one of the teams captured us capturing these stories. While we worked in the harsh terrain of the state, we realized how privileged we are.

SCM also made us step over the line, beginning with jumping off a rock into the ice cold water in Mukteshwar followed by rappelling down a cliff and then climbing back up. We saw the world unfold its beauty through our camera lens as the sky changed from

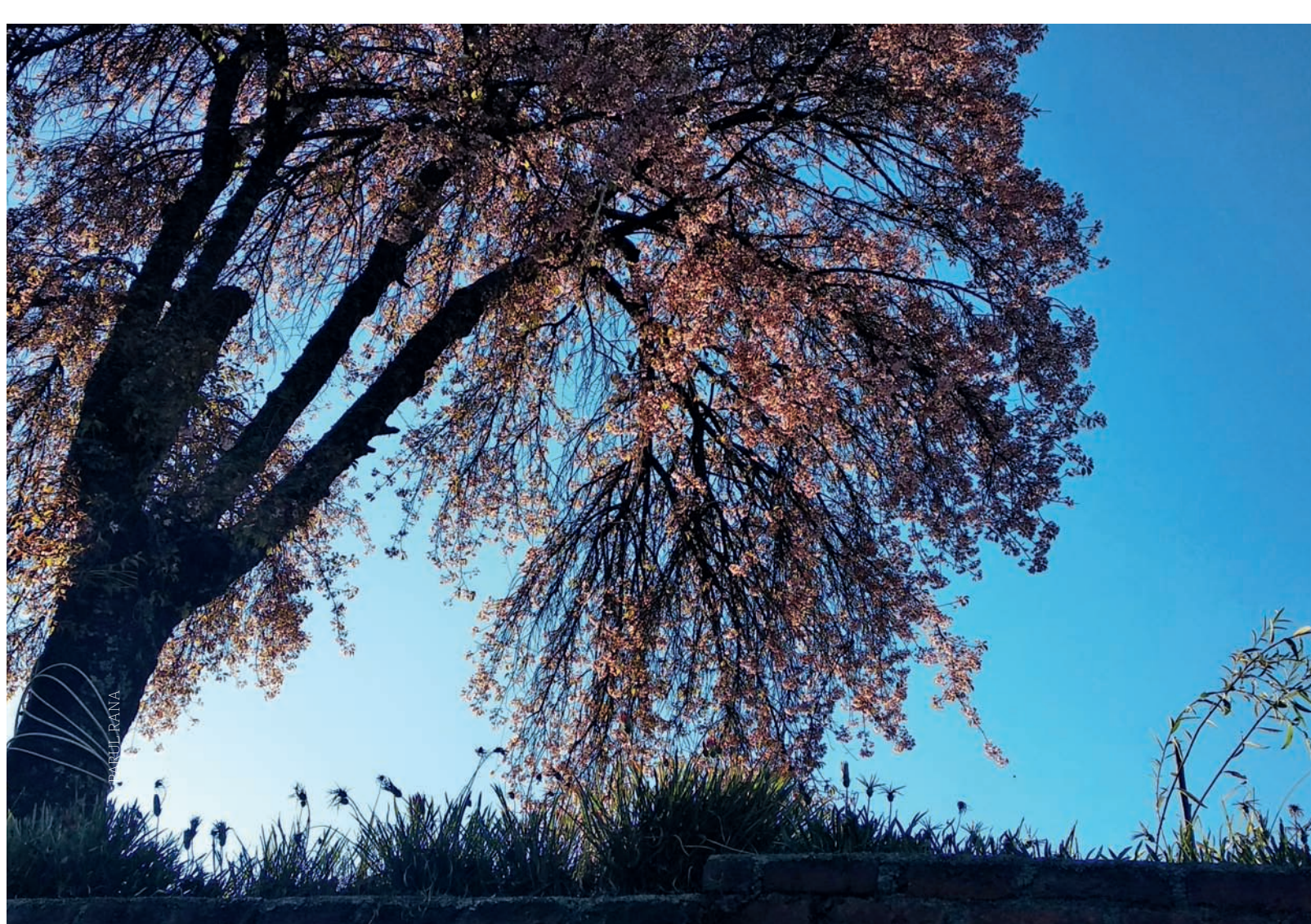
blue to yellow to purple.

We climbed up the bus roof, pretended to be in an Imtiaz Ali film, hopped over rocks, skipping alternate ones to cross streams as if we were in Takeshi's Castle, and stayed up talking to each under the canopy of stars while the early birds resigned themselves to the tents. People got to know each other in ways that they had never known each other before.

Each one tried to capture a photograph and hoped that it had escaped the eyes of the rest. Most of them had the same blue sky with flaming white clouds, the same old man with freckles, the same elephant rolling in mud and the same long winding road that led into the forest. What differed was the way everyone looked at the same things.



KASHISH JUNEJA



PARUL RANA



AVANTIKA SINGHANIA



KUNAL SUTHAR



HELI SHUKLA



"THE STRONG CENTRAL WOMAN CHARACTER OFTEN GETS LOST."

Parul Rana speaks with actor **Rasika Dugal** about her journey in the industry

Best known for her roles in *Kshay*, *Qissa*, and *Manto*, Rasika Dugal has carved out a niche for herself in the Hindi film industry. From playing a character named Beena Tripathi in her latest webseries *Mirzapur* (Amazon Prime) to her upcoming web-film *Hamid*, Rasika Dugal has kept audiences engaged and intrigued with her brilliance.

From graduating in Science at Lady Shri Ram College (LSR) to studying Social Communications Media at Sophia Polytechnic, and then pursuing an acting course at the Film and Television Institute of India, you seem to have wandered in and out of many potential career pathways. What was the reason behind that?

You make decisions like these when you don't have a plan. When you are young, you make decisions according to the fantasies you have at the time.

After finishing SCM, I worked as a research assistant. Eventually, I realized everyone around me was very academically oriented and had a background in social sciences, so I got bored with the job.

It was around this time that I found that the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) was restarting its acting course. I had been involved in theatre while I was in Delhi at LSR. So I thought it would be great to learn something new. I was also quite mesmerized by the thought of FTII because we used to watch a lot of films while we were at SCM. Ms. Jeroo Mulla was the head at the time, and films automatically became a crucial subject for us. She had a great influence on

me. At that time, I did not have a desire to act in films, but I was interested in acting. However, once I joined FTII, I realized that acting is what I wanted to do.

Were your parents supportive when you were figuring out what to do with your life?

My parents never imposed any of their decisions on me. I think that was not really because they wanted to give me freedom. But I guess they did not take me seriously...(laughs)

Sometimes when you are the younger sibling, your parents are ambitious for the elder one while you are left on your own. However, I can say that they are caring parents.

I don't think that it was a conscious decision on their part to give me the freedom I enjoyed. I think they didn't expect me to achieve anything significant. So, they allowed me to do whatever I wanted to and supported me in that way. They never said no.

How difficult was it when you started your journey in the film industry, to make decisions like which auditions to give, what kind of scripts to look for, the kind of people to work with?

It was purely instinctive. I think I am very particular about the kind of people I work with and that's a very intuitive decision. I had nobody to guide me, but all my friends from FTII were living together, helping each other out and sharing contacts. So there was a support system in place. Other than that there was nobody else to guide me. Sometimes I didn't know what was right or wrong. There were a lot of ups and downs all the time. So

in terms of being able to take better decisions, I always felt that if I had somebody around who could guide me, it would have been better. But I never had anyone like that. I had to find my way.

Since you have always been very selective and particular about the kind of work that you do and the people you work with, do you think there have been certain consequences of that?

There have been some decisions in which I have not trusted my instincts and have ended up working with people who did not match with me creatively. I need to find a connection with the work I do. But sometimes, you put yourself through work, and you invest a certain amount of passion which requires a lot of vulnerability from your side and then the other actors do not respect and reciprocate. That is very disappointing. It feels like a waste of time then.

There has been an increase in the number of films which are said to be female-centric but those films mostly depict merely a women's sexual life or desires, so how much in your opinion has the role of women actually changed in the film industry?

I think the kind of change that is happening is very superficial. Feminism has become just like nationalism. People follow the trend. However, I am grateful even for that because at least now there is a conversation happening even if it is superficial. At least there is an acknowledgment that we are not getting women's roles which are

sexual desires anywhere.

All the conversation seems to be happening about the women in the so-called woman-centric film. In some films, the women play the central role, but the part is written as if she was a man. So, the idea of masculinity perpetuates in this way.

In this new age, there seems to be a lack of understanding about the ideas of masculinity and feminism. People impose their own idea of what and how they want a woman to be in today's society.

For instance, after having watched *Manto*, one person told me that Safiyah is a very weak woman. I had to tell that person that she wasn't. Safiyah displayed great strength in her world and her reality. The strength for me is a nuanced character. She would stand up for herself at times, but sometimes she would not. But in experiencing life and creating situations for herself, she knows how to react. Sometimes she is ready to speak to the world, sometimes she is prepared to fight, but sometimes she is not.

So, that is the kind of strength a woman possesses. I don't want her to see herself as a man and I don't want to see her as an object of sympathy.

I am also not comfortable with the narratives where women rebel against men, or where women are merely a subject of titillation or sympathy. These are not the only narratives.

I want to see a narrative, where a woman has desires. For instance, the character I have played in *Mirzapur*. But sometimes you know the visuals can look sexualized, it is also about how society is viewing it. It is tough to be able to tell whether that visual, in which I am acting, is an object of titillation or not because the audience will have a subjective view. When somebody else comes and tells me that it is very sexualized, it is difficult for me to decide whether or not that is indeed the case. There is a very thin line, and everybody has a very different opinion on it. It varies from director to director. However, I think that we are moving towards an era of films with more nuanced and interesting women characters.

meaty enough, long enough and good enough.

I think we are moving in the right direction. But there is still a long way to go. The roles for women when they are written on paper seem to empower. But for some reason, when they are translated on screen, the central idea of having a strong woman character gets lost. However, I am glad that they are being written on paper. While I am not satisfied with it in the present moment, I am looking at the positive side.

I think there is a thin line between a woman being an object of titillation and a woman having sexual desire. The acknowledgment of woman and her sexual need does not exist in our society. While there is a considerable amount of conversation about a man and his sexual desire, there is no conversation about a woman and her

I think there is a thin line between a woman being an object of titillation and a woman having sexual desire. The acknowledgment of woman and her sexual need does not exist in our society.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Contrary to nature, SCMSophia is a single moon that shines through the reflected glory of its many suns. The achievement of our alumni is at once our proud moment and cement that strengthens our core. From senior alums to fresh young scmites, they are all making a difference and shining bright.

Saswati Bora (SCMSophia 1998-1999)

Saswati is currently employed at the World Economic Forum (WEF) where she heads WEF's agriculture work in India as well as the global work on technology and innovations in food systems. As part of this work, she is responsible for content development, partnership facilitation and program management. She is also responsible for managing the World Economic Forum's Stewardship Board on Food Systems, which includes around 40 global CEOs, Ministers and heads of international and civil society organizations.

Shuchi Talati (SCMSophia 2005-2006)

Shuchi recently story-produced Wyatt Cenac's Problem Areas, a documentary series for HBO, which was EP'ed by John Oliver and Ezra Edelman. Shuchi is collaborating with an all-woman team to develop her first



feature film—a coming-of-age story set in India. We look forward to watching the film.

Rasika Dugal (SCMSophia 2002-2006)

Rasika held her own as Safia to Nawazuddin Siddiqui's Manto in Nandita Das' acclaimed biopic Manto. She also turned in a splendid performance as Ishrat, Hamid's mother in Hamid, a tender story of a Kashmiri boy.



Amrita Mukhopadhyay (SCMSophia 2005-2006)

Kapadia is now Head of Content (In Africa and the Middle East) for Tickled Media, a multinational publishing company that caters to 13 million monthly parents in southeast Asia. She helped grow their SEO traffic by 206% in a year and launched a Nigerian parenting website in less than a week in December.

Anushka Shivdasani Rovshen and Madhuri Mohindar (SCMSophia 2001-2002)

A documentary, Breathe by Anushka Shivdasani Rovshen and Madhuri Mohindar explores the intersections between identity, sexuality, mental health, and the many alleys through

which women negotiate freedom and dignity. It has been screened at the International Documentary and Short Film Festival of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram and Dialogues: Calcutta International LGBTQ Film & Video Festival.

Aparna Shukla (SCMSophia 2014-2015)

SCM alum, Aparna Shukla along with the NGO Dhan foundation, has received the Asia Pacific Journalists grant of Rs.14 Lakhs from the British Council. They were selected from the whole of Asia. The grant will be used to mentor village journalists document and report issues relating to the coast of Bay of Bengal through reports, documentary films, audio podcasts, etc. Aparna was there when the Gaja cyclone hit Tamil Nadu and is helping the village youngsters rebuild their lives.

Manjiri Prabhu (SCMSophia 1985-1986)

An author of mystery novels, Manjiri wrote her 11th novel and destination thriller Voice Of The Runes. It takes place in 36 hours in Sweden and along with a mystery, is a haunting love story. She is also the Founder and Director of the Pune International Literary Festival, now in its 7th year.



scmsophia



JERRY NAMA

Every year there is an arch of emotion that students go through with Jerry. It is from 'terrified' to 'I think he's a genius but he's terrifying' to 'Perhaps, he's a genius and I can learn something from him' to something like 'My God, he was right' at the end of the year. By the time you realize his importance, Jerry no longer comes in at 8 a.m. in the morning screaming at you, talking about Mahabharata and section 377 in the same sentence.

You don't forget Jerry. In the twenty-five years he has given to SCM, the students who have sat in his class and listened to him telling the most outlandish, yet believable stories, remember him fondly. Yes, he is a brilliant story-teller, you won't find anyone emphasizing on exactly the part of the story one should emphasize on and you won't find a teacher dancing on 'Dil Hain Chota Sa' from Roja in the middle of the class.

His modus operandi is 'SHOCK AND AWE'. On the very first day of classes, the Jerry Pinto who was calm and friendly during the interview, storms into the class, and gives us a week to interview a celebrity like it's no big deal.

One fine day, Jerry said, "Read the fucking papers every day if you want to be great. And if you don't want to, stand up and say that you have committed yourself to failure." Throughout the year, he keeps coming up with different ways of telling you that you are not working hard enough, you are not putting yourself through the grind, and even if you are hurt, even if you feel, to put it mildly, like 'shit', you know somewhere in your heart that he is speaking the truth.

Jerry always asks each of his students to call him by his first name, and if not his first name then, 'Mr. Pinto'. You never call him 'sir', just because the protocol dictates it. And if

you still end up saying it, he is always happy to take a ten rupee fine, which goes into a piggy-bank for charity. Little did we know that this was an exercise to understand skewed power dynamics at play in a classroom and patriarchy in India.

Jerry Pinto's teachings are an extension of his own life. Be it the beat areas we were sent to, the MLAs we had to interview, the buses we were asked to take and the 5000 words assignments on our mothers. Some of us went to places that were flooded, some MLAs had scary criminal records and some of us cried because of the things we got to know about our mothers that we would never get to otherwise. Jerry Pinto is John Keating (Dead Poet's Society) and Terence Fletcher (Whiplash) at the same time.

We never knew a teacher who told us to ask any question on whichever topic we found interesting. The highlight for us is the time when he

analyzed the beginning of the film 'In Cold Blood' with us. We never knew one could see a film in that manner. Beneath the hard-hearted man all of us were terrified of, we all found a sensitive soul who understood us in all our complexities and knew us in and out. He had once said something to the effect of, "I don't love you. I just want to make you the best you can be." But it doesn't matter because we have accepted to not accept ourselves the way we are and to aim for something which we thought we could never be.

The phenomenon that is Jerry is not only limited to our classes. You can tell when Jerry is in the SCM department when you can hear the loud laughs and passionate arguments happening inside.

Nirmita Gupta, the Head of SCM and Sunitha Chitrapu, a faculty for Fundamental Concepts, remember, "Our Spartan lunches in the faculty

lunchroom become Marquezian trips like the one in which an aunt's neighbour sacrifices a camel for Eid, complete with blood spurting into the face of the aunt who happens to look out of the window at that very instant. Did we mention we are mostly vegetarians at that table?"

She adds, "But it almost blinds you to the anonymous (well, not anymore now, is it?) donations; incredible purchases to support self-help groups and non-profits; the constant reflection and learning; and the line-by-line edits with students for their magazine articles."

Jeroo Mulla who ran the department for thirty years, who was the one who hired Jerry to teach at SCM, recalls,

"Jerry was introduced to me by Kaumudi Marathe, one of my students. I invited him to teach at SCM and now it has been 25 years! He

has without doubt been an excellent teacher. Of course, like most creative people Jerry has his delightful quirks which can both annoy and charm simultaneously. The nuns initially (now they love him) would grumble about his attire and behaviour. He is a glutton for punishment - the most number of assignments given by any teacher in the course are his. I always wondered that with his writing work and NGO work where he found the time to correct them, but he did. His commitment to teaching is absolute. His contribution to SCM has been enormous."

There is not really anything we can say about Jerry that hasn't been said already.

Thank you Jerry for giving time to us novitiate and for being the guiding light for all of us.

Congratulations for completing twenty-five years.



SMRUTINAMA

"M any years later, as she faced the class, Smruti Koppikar would

remember that distant morning twenty-five years ago when she stood in front of the class for the first time".

This would have been an apposite beginning to a novel about Smruti Koppikar, no less than a Marquesan (her favourite) protagonist in the scheme of things.

It was 29th June 2018. We were three days into the course, when Smruti entered the classroom and said, "Do I need to introduce myself?". If we knew then, what we know now, it would be that very moment we would start counting our blessings. Probably the first thing that we learnt in her class was that it was not for the weak, she was a firebrand and if we did not put our 100%, it would be our major loss. She left the classroom, leaving

all twenty-seven of us devastated about how ignorant we were. That is the 'Smruti Koppikar' effect, the class ends like the climax of a Hitchcockian thriller, leaving half of us with our mouths wide open and the other half in an existential crisis. But there's one thing we would all agree on - Smruti Koppikar changed our lives.

We were introduced to the theories of Manufacturing Consent, Agenda Setting, Gatekeeping and the Propaganda Model. She opened our eyes to the other side of media and taught us about it was never free, objective and unbiased. Ma'am said, "Most biased choices in life arise from internalized preconceptions", a lesson we will never forget. "I've started influencing the way you all think, haven't I? Am I not manufacturing your consent?" And we collectively gasped.

Smruti would often talk to us about the times she got in trouble with the authorities for her constant pursuit of justice and challenging the status quo. We remember her telling us stories about being a fearless reporter, speaking truth to power and always being driven by the desire to dissect the truth.

Smruti has been a rock for the department as well. Nirmita Gupta (1982-1983) and Sunitha Chitrapu (1992-1993), Head of the Department and a faculty at SCM respectively, "Smruti is always trying to build a

better media professional here at SCM. Smruti has a way of cutting through the verbiage and getting to the heart of any matter. Smruti's greatest contribution is that she is willing to play Devil's advocate. The idea for The Week That Was as an in-class media coverage exercise came from her insistence that students needed to engage with the news in a substantive manner. She has also been generous enough to let some students work on stories with her and it was a great boost to everyone when one such story got picked up by The Guardian, London.

We know that students and alums benefit from her years of experience in the field and her unstinting support to fledgling journalists. Working with Smruti has been an incredible learning experience for us as faculty."

Jeroo Mulla, who was the SCM Head of The Department for nearly thirty years, fondly remembers, "Smruti was my student, and for me a very special one. Over the years Smruti has become a close friend too and I value that friendship enormously. When I was unwell and unable even to walk, she helped my husband get me admitted to the hospital. I shall never forget that act of kindness. I will also always remember the day she cooked an entire meal for me. Nothing gives me more pleasure than eating what someone has cooked for me with love."

We got to know very recently that we were her 25th batch of students, a huge milestone for her. It also opened our eyes to the fact that it was kind of a huge responsibility. Was her 25th batch, a batch she would remember? It also made us realize that for twenty-five years, Smruti has been impacting the lives of thousands of her students other than us.

With us she introduced My Own Journalism (MOJO), just so that each one of us had something solid for our resume. She worked tirelessly with us for the entire year, taking updates from us every week, in effort to teach us consistency, order and dedication. She never gave up on us even when we failed to deliver or were lazy. That is the charm of Smruti Koppikar, and we know a large reason of our success will always be dedicated to her.

With our hands jittering and hearts beating fast, we walked into our last lesson with her. She said "You're at an age where you are idealistic about certain things. It's good to be idealistic. You will also have two thoughts- Who you want to be and what you want to be. At this age, you'll fight for what is right, you will voice your opinions about things and do things that you stand for. But as you grow old, you'll become cynical. So, in the process of finding out what you want to be in life, don't forget WHO you want to be, Do you want to be the old cynical person who'll always complain, or you'll want to be that one person, who still stands and fights for change no matter what" With tears in our eyes we were left speechless and thought we do not deserve a professor like her, so inspiring, so genuine.

Happy 25 years at SCM ma'am. Hope we weren't too bad. You've taught us to question, to think and never just believe. You've taught us that we're all storytellers, no matter which field we will eventually go to, and what matters is we tell someone's story with honesty. You've made us better people over the past year and for that, we're forever grateful. Smruti Ma'am, you are inspiration for all of us and we will always be indebted to you.





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