

Hash#ag

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August 2021

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MUST TRY
AHMEDABAD
STREET FOOD

HOTNESS
IN THE
GENES

Krishna
Shroff

LOCKDOWNS
AFFECTING
LIBIDO?

HIDDEN
GETAWAYS
IN THE
MOUNTAINS

ETHICAL
CLOTHING
SUSTAINABLE
FASHION
BRANDS

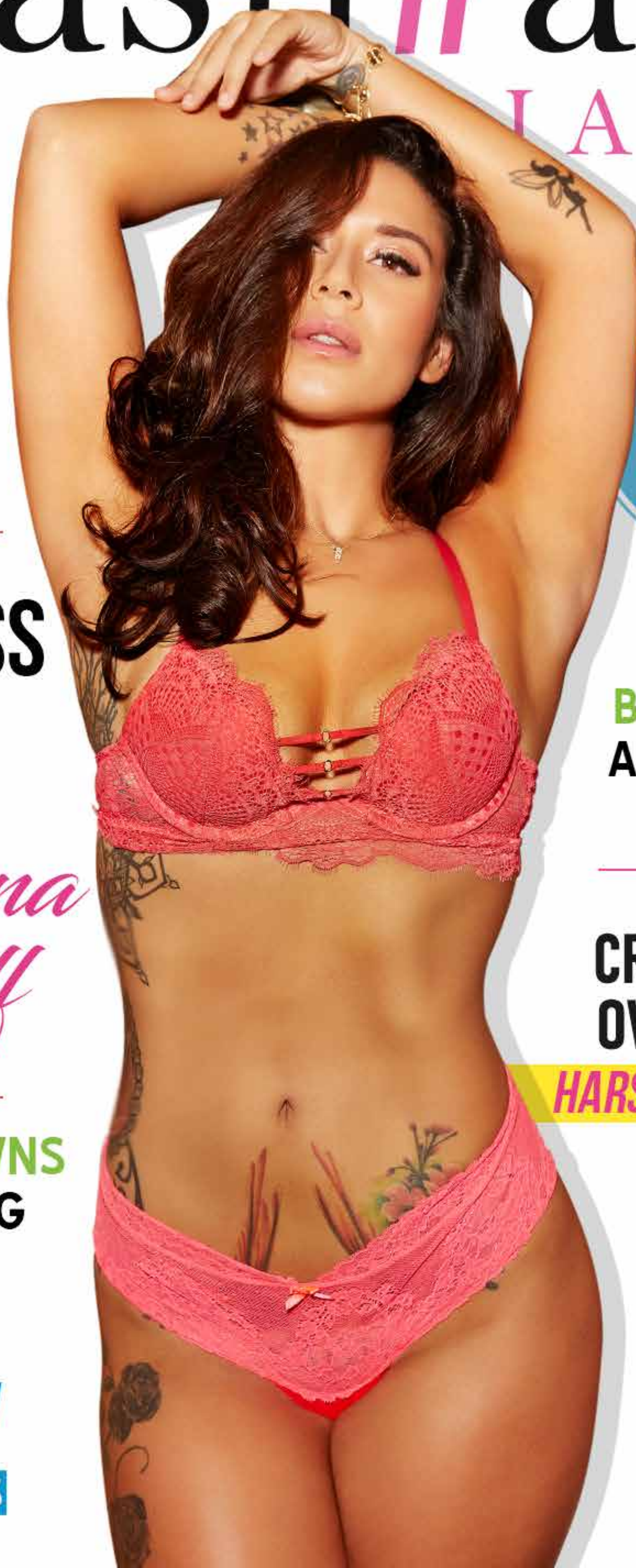
FOOD
BLOGGERS
AND THEIR
JOURNEY

CREATIVITY
OVER FAME

HARSHVARDHAN
KAPOOR



REVIEWS
TRAVEL
FASHION
& MORE



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From the Editor

FITNESS – MOST TALKED ABOUT, YET HIGHLY NEGLECTED!



No matter where you go or which part of the world you belong to, health, fitness and food are a prominent part of every conversation. If people are not busy discussing a recipe, a new pizza place to eat out at, or a fancy new cafe serving low cal organic meals, the conversation is about workouts, diets, how much weight an old friend lost, or simply the latest fad diets. I've come to realise that yes, we may be talking health and fitness more so now than ever since 2020 and COVID, but how many of us are truly healthy? I'm not talking of those perfect washboard ads and ripped bodies, but general fitness. I can bet you 6 out of every 10 in a gang are unfit or reeling from some lifestyle issue.

Poor lifestyles and obesity are going unseen and unheeded. According to a study, obesity is going to triple in the next two decades. Reading quotes for health and fitness inspiration is great but reading alone won't help you get healthier or fitter. Even when motivation hits zero, it takes discipline to work out or do some sort of physical activity to stay in shape. And hell no, all the 2-week detoxes and colon cleanses cannot help you achieve your fitness goals. Yes, you will lose 4 kgs in a week, but you will gain 7 kgs by the end of the next the second you start eating. Fitness is a lifestyle, and our cover girl Krishna Shroff highlights just

that in her chat with Hashtag. In an exclusive interview, she cuts through all the confusion and umpteen options and gives you reliable and sensible information on health and fitness. If there is one industry that is advocating health like never before it is the film industry. Be it actors in their 60s or the ones in their prime, they refuse to sit back and relax. They are constantly giving people fitness goals and youth icons like Krishna Shroff are responsible for inspiring thousands of fans into better health and fitness.

Of course, no conversation is complete without food. In this issue, we have spoken with trending food bloggers on their journey and inspiration. We also give you a sneak peek into the food streets of Ahmedabad and much more. Curated with a lot of care, we have a great balance of stories. From ethically sustainable fashion labels, unique travel discoveries to the latest in movies, music, book and more... we hope you enjoy this one.

Have a happy and safe August!

SINDURI VUPPALA



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THE
HAPPINESS
CO



DELICIOUS
AND
CRUNCHY

UPCOMING EVENTS

AUGUST 2021

Mine N Yours Wedding Show

Explore this opulent exposition showcasing the most exquisite and one-of-a-kind bridal fashion, stunning jewellery, and weddings accoutrements in the latest style. This is for all who are looking for some guidance and fashion-forward inspiration ahead of their big day.

Date: 27th – 28th August 2021

Time: 11:00 am – 8:00 pm

Venue: Taj Krishna, Hyderabad

27-28
Aug 2021



Fashion Affair 2021

Fashion Affair is a vivacious exhibit offering the hottest labels and a wide range of items from luxury and bridal to interior decoration and exquisite cuisine, all held at a well-known venue. The event will undoubtedly become an occasion to cherish.

Date: 06th - 08th August 2021

Time: 10:30am to 7:00pm

Venue: World Trade Center, Mumbai

06-08
Aug 2021



The Dream Home Expo



27-29
Aug 2021

A lucrative experience for all architecture enthusiasts, The Dream House Expo is a productive forum for increasing consumer exposure, brand promotion, product presentation, on-the-spot purchases, and much more, held in Uttar Pradesh's most promising market, Lucknow, and its surrounding cities. This is a three-day seminar focusing on both B2B and B2C platforms.

Date: 27th – 29th August 2021

Time: 12:00 pm to 9:30 pm

Venue: Indira Nagar Pratishthan, Gomati Nagar, Lucknow

Athachamayam festival

12
Aug 2021

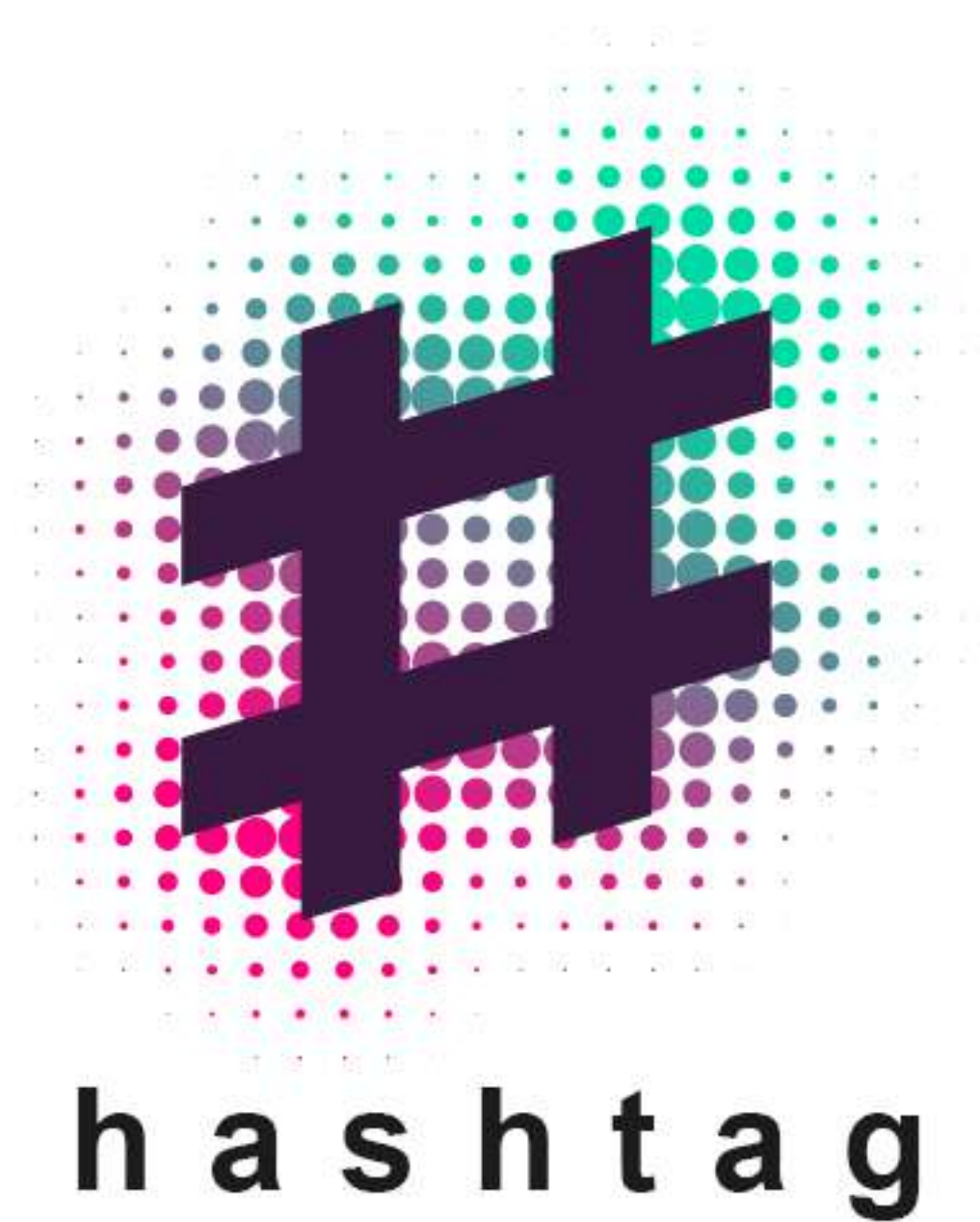


The Athachamayam festival is a traditional event held to herald the ten days of Onam celebrations. A magnificent parade is held wherein the idol of Emperor Mahabali is carried across the town with elephant processions, a melodic ensemble, floats, and performers at its side. Hundreds of people participate throughout this parade, and you may experience the vibrant indigenous singing and dancing styles of the region.

Date: 12th August 2021

Venue: Tripunithura, Kochi

To get your events featured mail us at contact@hashtagmagazine.in



TRENDING NOW

TRENDING
NOW

Making fitness a lifestyle...

Ultra-fit, and with a super-toned body KRISHNA SHROFF can give any actor in the industry a run for their money. Daughter of Ayesha and Jackie Shroff and the younger sister of Tiger Shroff, she is a 24/7 fitness freak, with an aptitude for mixed martial arts along with football, basketball and more.

A star athlete, this diva's name is synonymous today with fitness and with her taut six-pack abs and buff arms, she has time and again been giving all her followers ultimate fitness goals. From her daily fitness routine to her joint venture with Tiger – fitness studio MMA Matrix (Mixed Martial Arts), she gets candid in a conversation with SINDURI VUPPALA.



You guys are one good-looking family; does hotness run in the blood? What is the secret?

I don't think there's really any special secret apart from just doing the things that make you happy. I feel like when you're truly happy from within, it 100% shows on the outside.

Along with your dad and brother, you have also become an icon for fitness; tell us about your daily fitness routine.

The first hour of my day has to start at the gym. I love to get a 1.5-2-hour workout of strength and conditioning mixed with a little bit of cardio first thing in the morning as I believe it sets the tone up in the most positive way possible for the rest of my day.

Do you ever go to the gym with your brother? Who motivates whom, and do you inspire each other?

Absolutely. If you're not motivated having Tiger Shroff as your brother and living in your household, then I'm sorry to say, but you're a lost cause. He definitely inspired me to take on fitness, as it was so awesome seeing him do all these larger-than-life things growing up. It hasn't been easy keeping up, but I love a good challenge.

How have your parents and brother influenced your understanding of fitness? Is it true that you even put the lockdown to good use? We are told that your dad who stayed on the farm came back looking 10 years younger and you spent time working out with your mother...

They say you're as good as the company you keep, and not being biased, but mine is top-notch. I don't think it gets better. The four of us each have our own strengths that we can learn from, which is an absolute blessing. There's never a moment to slack off because we're all very competitive as people and we want to be able to keep up with one another.



If you're not motivated having Tiger Shroff as your brother and living in your household, then I'm sorry to say, but you're a lost cause.



Your dad is known for his passion for farming, do you also share the same passion?

Not specifically for farming, but I've learned so much from him when it comes to nutrition. Not just what to eat, but when to eat what. I'm so grateful for the fact that we get clean food delivered to our doorstep every week thanks to dad's passion and love for this. It's become so vital to know where your food comes from and the fact that we do is such a blessing.

In 2019, Tiger and you came together and launched MMA Matrix, a revolutionary concept for India. What are your future plans? Any big expansion plans post the pandemic?

Considering we've just opened our newest franchise through the midst of a global pandemic, MMA Matrix Lucknow, I can only see the future of MMA Matrix continue to grow bigger and brighter. We are surrounded by an amazing team who share the same passion for what we're trying to do and when the intention is pure, there's no limit to what you can attain.



The film industry had never been fitter. From Tiger to Disha Patani to Shraddha Kapoor, everyone is at their fittest best. Do you ever feel peer pressure being surrounded by such fit bodies?

To be honest and not to sound like a dickhead, but not one bit. I don't look at anyone around me and think that they have that on me because they don't. If you're going to compare me to my brother, then that's a different story.

From kickboxing to weightlifting to martial arts, what's your favourite? How do you balance your workouts?

I love all of them. I honestly can't choose. I think a blend of the two is what has helped me reach my ultimate potential. I wouldn't be where I'm at without one or the other.

What is your daily diet like? The entire nation is hooked onto some diet fad or the other. What is your take on these fad diets?

Fad diets are absolute bullshit. The key to success when it comes to your nutrition is sustainability. Fuel your body with everything it craves for but do it within limit. Life is too short to restrict yourself and go crazy doing so... Unless you're getting paid what Tiger Shroff is to look the way he does 365 days a year... I'd do it, no problem. Like I said, sustainability is key. Make sure you're following a nutrition plan for the long run.



They say you're as good as the company you keep, and not being biased, but mine is top-notch.



How do you control binge eating?

It's not difficult for me. Fitness and just overall well-being have become a lifestyle. I don't just train or eat to look good anymore, but it truly makes me feel better when I eat clean from within. I like to incorporate my cravings into my diet so that I don't go crazy or all-out on just one day because that can set one back. It's important to give your body everything it needs; however, in limits. Portion control is the key to being successful with your nutrition.

What are the three most important points one should keep in mind for an ideal weight loss routine?

1. Nutrition is key. It's 70% nutrition and 30% training. 2. Portion control. 3. Get enough sleep... Rest and recovery are vital in your weight loss journey.

How should women's workouts change in their 30s, 40s and 50s?

It shouldn't. A woman is as capable in their 20s as they would be in their 50s. My mom is the best example of that. Just keep at it and don't let go of your fitness routine and you'll be young for a lot longer than anticipated.

What's your biggest indulgence when it comes to food?

Savoury: Pizza. Sweet: Nutella: Straight out of the jar, with a spoon, and nothing else.





Life is too short to restrict yourself and go crazy doing so... Unless you're getting paid what Tiger Shroff is to look the way he does 365 days a year... I'd do it, no problem.



People always want to know what one move is best for the whole body. Is there such a move?

To be honest, I would have to give credit to the deadlift. If you want to do one exercise for the rest of your time, make it that. It works the maximum number of muscles in your body.

3 tried and tested workouts for weight loss ...

What might work for me, might not for someone else and vice-versa. Fitness is a game of trial and error, so keep at it until you find the perfect one for yourself.



A woman is as capable in their 20s as they would be in their 50s. My mom is the best example of that.



Quick takes:

The fittest celebrity according to you?

Tiger Shroff.

The biggest diet myth:

Carbs make you fat and fats make you fat.

I begin my day

with the gym.

Your fitness mantra:

Consistency is key. Give it 30 mins or two hours a day, but make sure that time and effort is consistent.

On your cheat day you...

Eat pizza for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Are there any quick fixes for weight loss?

Nope. Be patient and stay consistent. Results take years, unfortunately, but you'll start loving the process once you start seeing slight changes in both your physicality and mentality.

What is your biggest fear when it comes to your health?

Everything. Health is wealth. Without it, absolutely nothing in this world matters. No money, no fame, nothing!



Top 5 fitness rules?

1. Consistency is key.
2. Fitness is a game of trial and error.
3. Take the risk.
4. What might work for me might not necessarily work for someone else and vice-versa, so stay focused on your own path.
5. PATIENCE. These things take time.
6. Make fitness a lifestyle.



TELANGANA POLICE
THANKS FOR THE SUPPORT



Seva Ahaar



**FREE LUNCH
AT YOUR
DOORSTEP**



Contact us for lunch if you are
COVID positive and in isolation.

WhatsApp



77996 16163

HOW TO ORDER?

SEND YOUR REQUEST ON
THE MENTIONED WHATSAPP
NUMBER WITH THESE DETAILS:

NAME:

LOCATION:

CONTACT NUMBER:

DATE OF ISOLATION/
TESTED POSITIVE:

NO OF PEOPLE:

NUMBER OF DAYS REQUIRED:



TIMING & DETAILS

- ONLY LUNCH WILL BE PROVIDED
- PLACE YOUR REQUEST BEFORE 7 AM
- REQUESTS RECEIVED AFTER 7 AM SHALL BE CONSIDERED AS NEXT DAY ORDER



Senior citizens and children
in isolation are a priority


**NUTRITION
ADVICE**

**CONCERN
UNLIMITED,
NOT QUANTITY**



Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations
Telangana

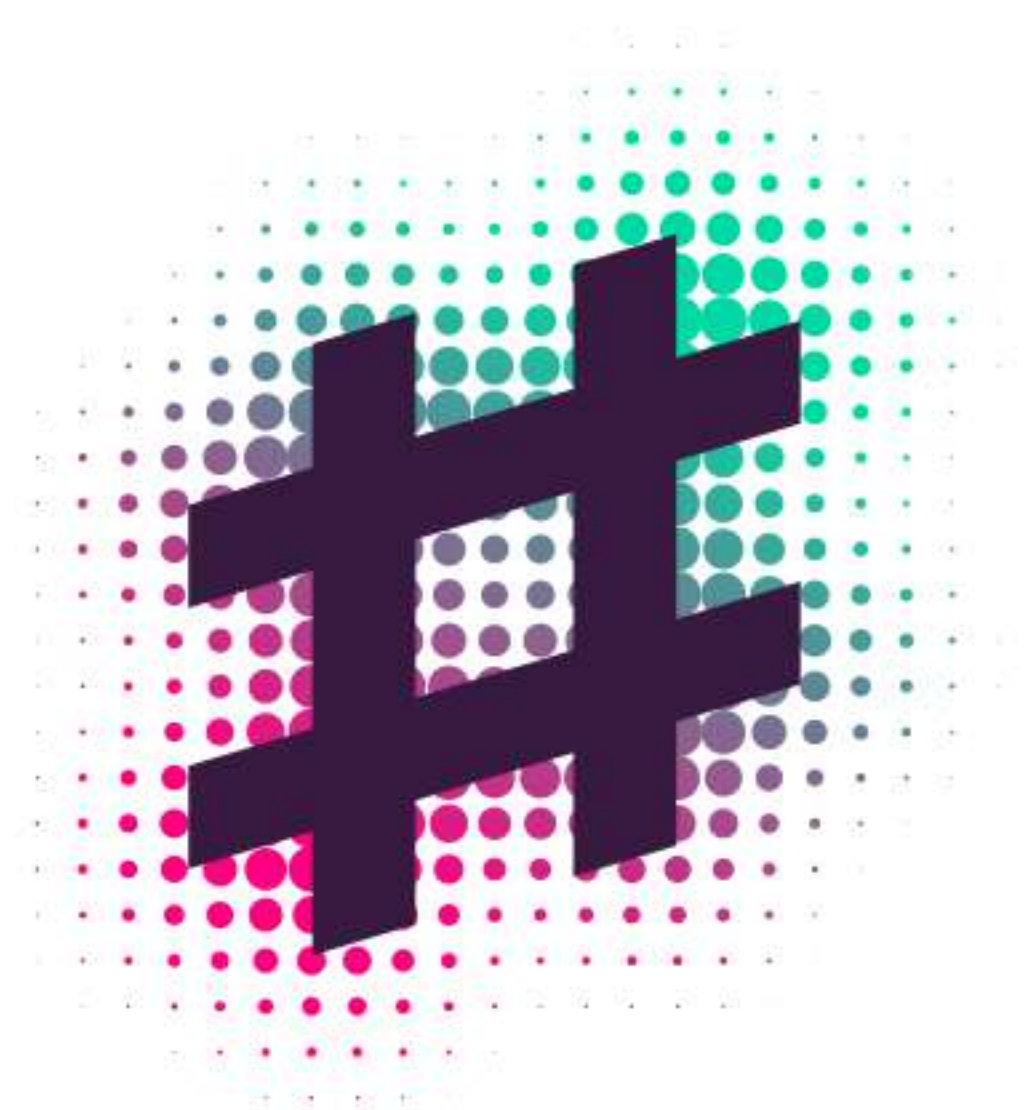


LEAD LIFE
FOUNDATION



HOPE TEAM





h a s h t a g

START UPS

AN ORGANIC JOURNEY

Sister duo **Mansi Vyas** and **Aditi Vyas** have made a positive impact on the organic space in India through Azafran Innovacion Ltd. In the deluge of organic startups that have showered the Indian market in recent times, Azafran is trying to return to nature, to simpler. **Bindu Gopal Rao** speaks with the sisters.

The company grows over 35 varieties of plants, flowers and herbs that are extracted and processed at their own facility that ensures 100 percent natural purity. "The products are made with pure ingredients that are home-grown at organic eco-certified farms that adhere to the NOP and NPOP standards, and those ingredients that cannot be home-grown are sourced from Ecocert/USDA certified vendors," say the sisters.

The sisters founded Azafran Innovacion Ltd sensing the market gaps in organic and sustainable consumer-based products for everyday use.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a huge consumer base shifted to online shopping, thanks to government-enforced lockdowns. "For the current fiscal year, we have spent approximately half of our target sales on marketing. Our marketing efforts have concentrated on not only skincare but also mother and baby, home care, food, and nutraceuticals. We provide 48-hour nationwide deliveries as well as quick customer service," says Aditi.

Azafran's website delivers to 115 countries. COVID-19 has accelerated the use of technology. This opens a new opportunity and channel for businesses to target consumers.



Azafran Innovacion Ltd was conceived in 2007 as an idea to bring genuine, certified organic products to consumers in India and abroad, in the domains of personal care, home care, edibles, and many more.

The brains behind the concept are two sisters Aditi Vyas, a B. (Hons) in Chemical Engineering from University College London (UCL), UK, and Mansi Vyas, an MBA graduate in International Hospitality Management from École hôtelière de Lausanne, Switzerland.

While Aditi's skills are in Engineering and Research, Mansi has experience in Managerial Finance and Marketing. The venture started with organic farming in a 40 hectares land with greenhouses to extract oils and botanicals and culminated into a pan-India drive to create awareness on ethically sourced ingredients and clean and green formulations.

"We come from a business family and entrepreneurial spirit is in our blood. Our father who single-handedly set up Dishman Pharmaceuticals, a leading API company, acted as an inspiration for us when we set out to establish Azafran. Quality has always been a concern when it comes to the skincare industry," say the sisters.

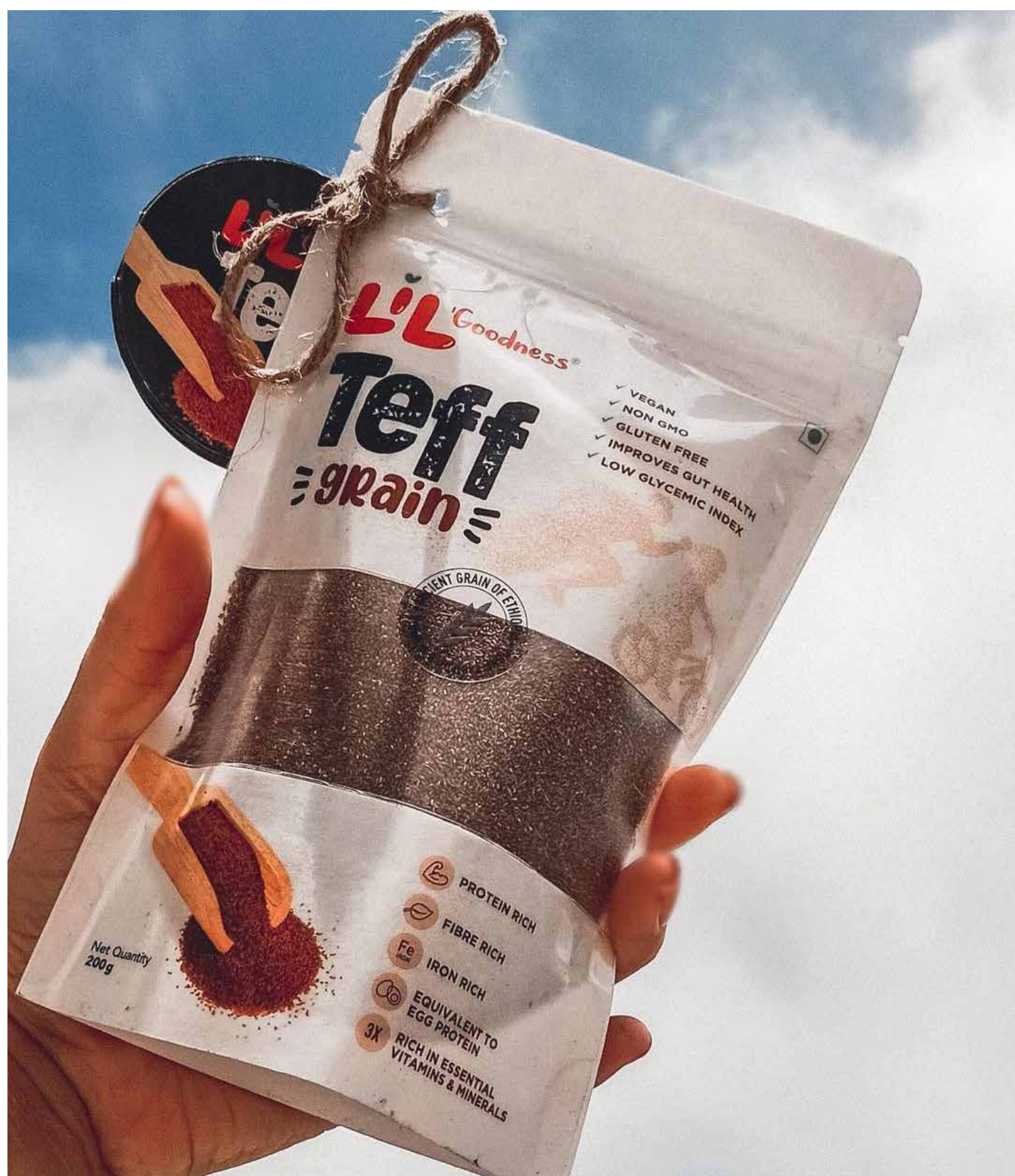
"We come from a business family and entrepreneurial spirit is in our blood"

The product lines at the company are created using the best organic ingredients grown, harvested, extracted and processed at an in-house facility. "Our verticals include a wide range of sustainable and natural products in food, beauty, health and nutrition, wellness, home essentials as well as baby products infused with organic ingredients," says Mansi.



Mansi Vyas and Aditi Vyas (Founders)

A Lil' Goodness for the lil' ones



Founded by IIM Calcutta alumnus Harshavardhan and nutrition expert Pariksha Rao, Lil' Goodness believes in using technology to solve health and nutrition problems. While Harshavardhan was formerly associated with the Tata Group, where he was responsible for setting and scaling up the Tata Health business in its formative years, Pariksha Rao holds a Doctorate in nutrition with over 15 years of experience in nutrition and wellness. "We connected over our shared vision and passion for creating India's first kids' food and nutrition start-up and aim to touch at least 10 million kids over the next 2 years. It was out of this passion that Lil' Goodness was born," says Harshavardhan.



Concerned with the unhealthy eating habits of children across India, Bangalore based food and nutrition brand Lil' Goodness seeks to transform how kids in India consume snacks. By providing a range of healthy choices, they aim to bring a daily dose of goodness and health into their lives. Rashmi Gopal Rao gives us an insight into the rising start-up.



Harshavardhan and Pariksha Rao

The duo firmly believes in the importance of good eating habits in the early years. According to them, healthy choices should not compromise on taste; hence their focus on making traditionally popular snacks more wholesome and healthier. As the team notes, kids want taste and variety, with parents focusing on aspects of health. Through their products, Lil' Goodness hopes to strike a balance.

While the company was formally incorporated in February 2018, full-fledged work began in July 2019 and the products were first introduced in March 2020. Popular items such as the veggie crackers were launched in May 2020, while the multigrain *teff* puffs were launched in 2021. "We launched our website in March 2021 and that has yielded very good results, with sales matching or sometimes even performing better from e-commerce websites," says Harshavardhan.

The product range

Products from their range focus on the nutritional gaps they wish to target. Items such as the multigrain puffs and veggie crackers contain no trans-fat, palm oil, or added colours and preservatives. Instead, they are made with real vegetables, and teff, an East African superfood grain that provides ample of vitamins and protein.

Apart from this, they also have products like prebiotic chocolates, B12 Jaggery and teff flour, which you can add to your daily diet. "Our prebiotic chocolates are

most popular. The recently launched B12 jaggery is also the fastest growing. In fact, we have sold nearly 70,000 sachets within 45 days of launch. The multigrain teff puffs have also done phenomenally well; within 6 weeks of launch we have sold around 20,000 packs, even with the restrictions around offline sales” says Harshavardhan, mentioning that they have launched products, both online and offline, in Bangalore, Delhi, Mumbai and Hyderabad.



Differentiating factors

The Lil’ Goodness product prototypes are manufactured at their micro-facility, where prototyping and standardization of recipes is also done. Standardised recipes are scaled up at contract manufacturers. The third-party manufacturers follow standard processes and controls established by the brand after extensive research, trials, and quality controls. “We audit all our contract manufacturers to ensure adherence to quality controls and process standards. Most of our third-party suppliers are located in Bangalore,” says Harshavardhan.

While there are competitors in this space, Harshavardhan believes they have cracked the code of taste and health in the form of exciting snacks. The team also plans to build a ‘Goodness’ circle around their consumers for all their food, nutrition and inner health needs through a platform that engages with them on key health issues.

Nutritional deficiencies of Vitamin B, C, and D and minerals like Zinc, Calcium and Iron, along with protein deficiencies and an excess of unhealthy fats and carbs affects at least 100 million kids in India.

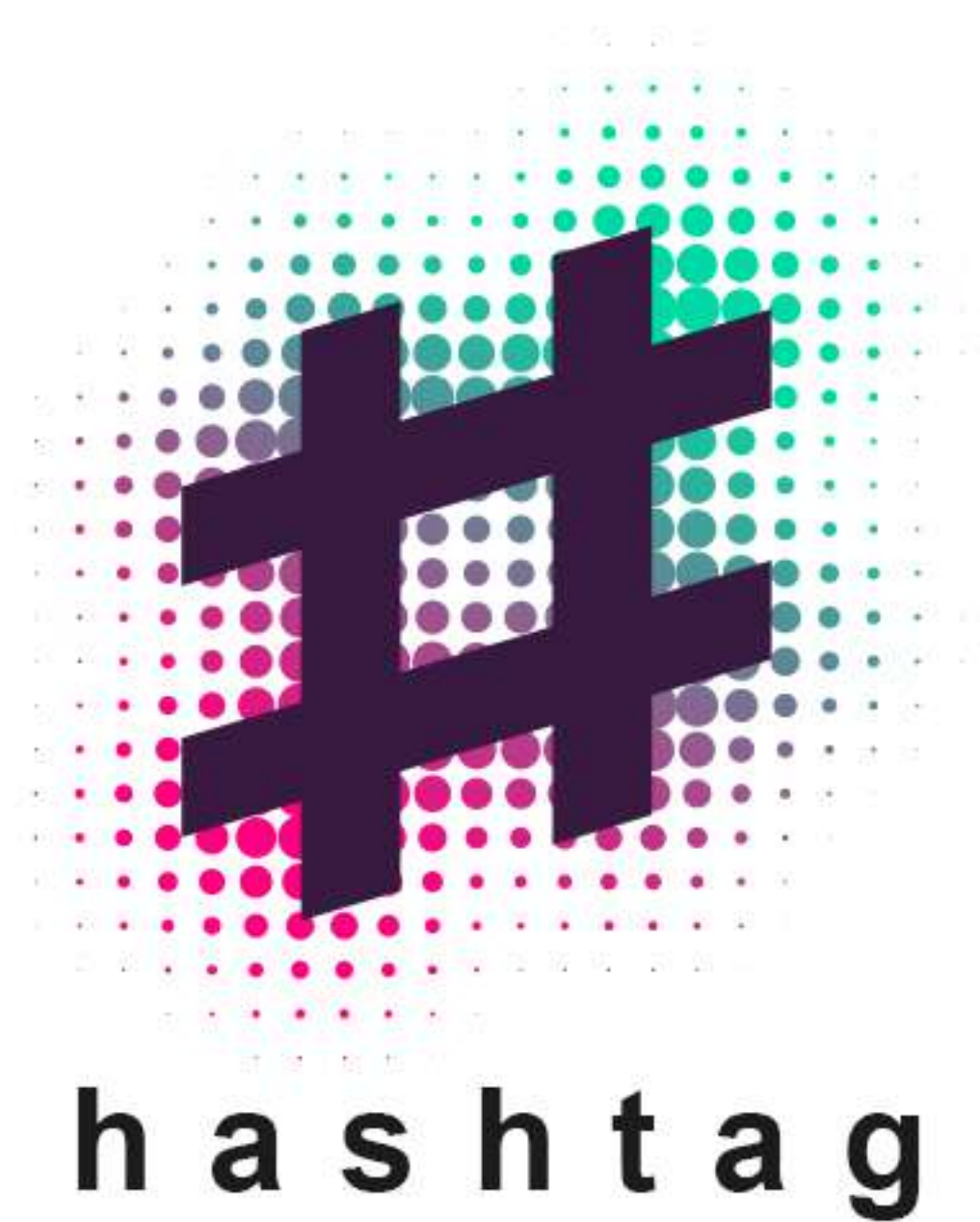
Looking ahead

Currently, Lil’ Goodness is launching some exciting new products, based on consumer feedback. “We are working on launching an immunity box for kids where we will have tasty yet nutritious snacking options, enhanced by active ingredients like curcumin. We feel that it will be the most ideal gifting box in these times. We are also working on an entire product line based on the use of pre and probiotics in

daily snacking, using natural ingredients,” adds Harshavardhan. While there are a lot of products in the market promising health benefits, they have questionable claims. According to Harshvardhan, the key was to find more effective ways to communicate the benefits of their products, which are designed and tested based on scientifically validated principles. While offline retail has been a strong pillar for their growth, consumption has been shifting online and closer to home. The team is working on ensuring a strong presence in the right stores and closer to home.

Their objective is twofold: to combat the growing nutritional deficiencies alongside fussy eating behaviours of young children.





CHANGEMAKERS



CREATING A FUTURE : AN NGO THAT IS SINGLE-HANDEDLY SALVAGING CHILDREN FROM A BRUTAL SOCIETY

Meet **Sandhya Puchalapalli**, the founder of **Aarti Home**, a network of individuals committed to responsible citizenship and upliftment of the girl child. **Canta Dadlaney** travels back in time with Sandhya to discover how she single-handedly took up the cause of the girl child and educated the town of Kadapa which experienced massive abortions and domestic abuse.

The acute poverty of Kadapa and the domestic abuse of women were glaringly conspicuous. A teacher by profession, Sandhya hardly saw any girls in the school she taught. Abortions were a vicious second nature in families where the girl child was 'unwanted'. They were forced into domestic labour or were left to the mercy of the night. Shaken by misery, Sandhya started looking for ways to alleviate the plight of the girl child in Kadapa. Many years later today, the district wears a drastically different look, thanks mostly to Sandhya's work and her organisation.



What prompted your decision to do something about the dire situation in Kadapa?

It was heart-wrenching to see how men beat their wives and girls were deprived of education. The violence and abuse did not deter me from speaking to people. At the onset, I voiced my concern with a few people and was relieved that they were ready to extend support. I was a young mother with two kids and it takes people to welcome someone who wants to bring about a change especially if it's a small town like Kadapa.

How did the organisation take root?

I became very active in 1991 when our washerman shared details about a girl abandoned on the roadside. I rushed there to get her home. I later learnt from the washerman, that the girl's Dad had pushed his wife into a well to die and left his daughter to fate. A similar incident took place in 1992. It was a very hot summer day and I was informed about a little girl, Radhika who had been left on the streets. I took Radhika home, discussed with my family and everyone amicably agreed that we would henceforth rescue such kids and bring them up as our own. Today, Radhika is a radiology technician in the National Thermal Corporation.





The process of building from the ground up must not have been easy. Talk to us about your growth.

In the first year of operations, Aarti Home had rescued 10 children which soon became 30. We managed to raise funds and purchased land from the government and bought a new place in 1996. However, the abandonment continued, unabated. We found infants in trash cans, in a state where rescue made no sense. These are scenes I can never forget. We then created a crib outside our home for people to have the sense to leave their kids in a more dignified manner. We also managed to arrange for a 'child helpline' in the district to rescue abandoned children.



What does the home look like today?

The complex is home to 125 children accommodated in 12 cottages in an environment reminiscent of a normal family. Over the years, it has been a home for more than 1200 children and for 5600 for short-term care. Most of them are engineers, data scientists, medical professionals and even entrepreneurs. Aarti Home also supports 550 children through a family-based care initiative where kids are provided with all the support including education, three meals a day, hygiene and social security assistance.

“To be orphaned is painful but to be abandoned hurts and scars.”

What are some of the issues the kids have had to face?

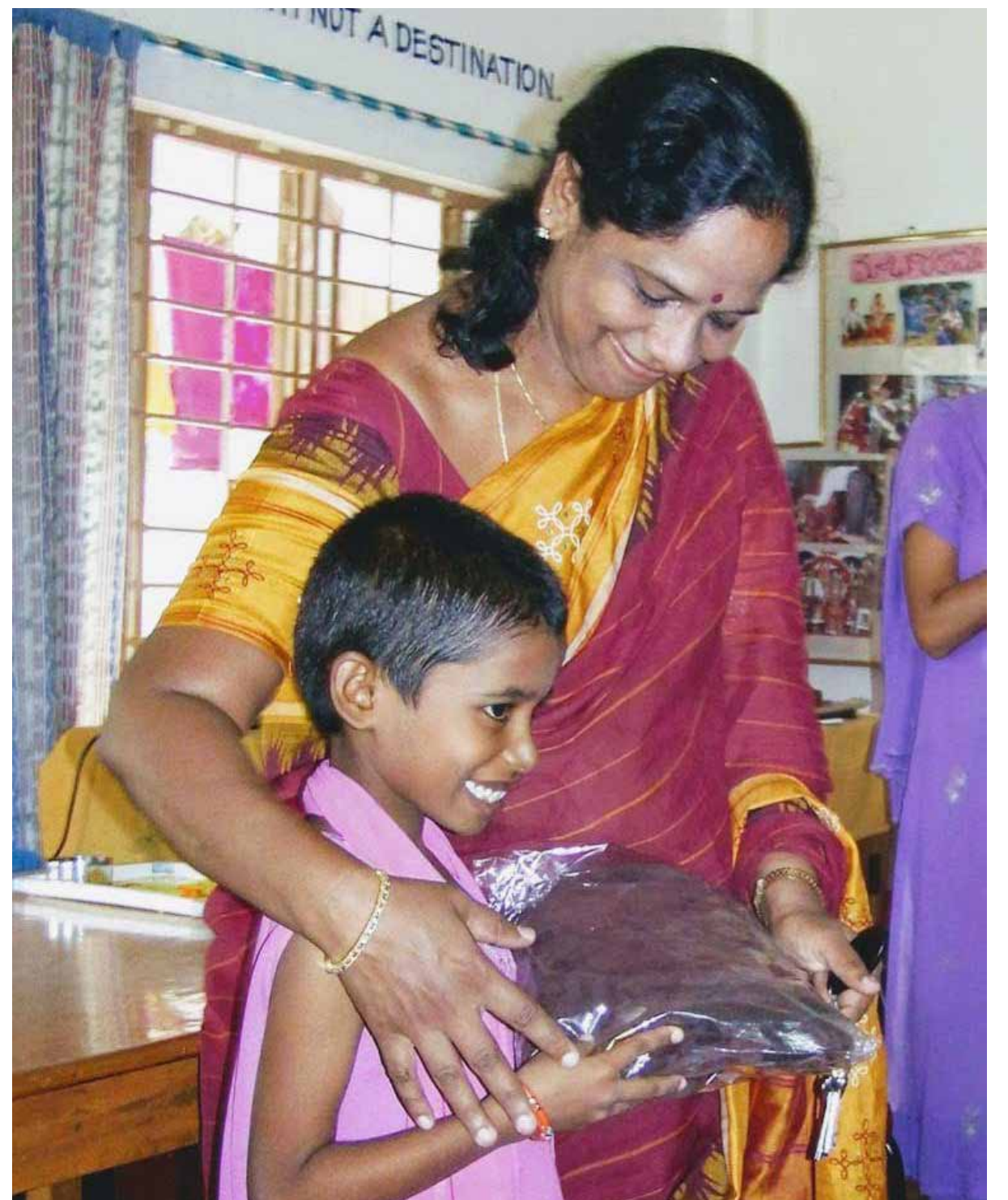
Every experience brought new challenges. We discovered that our children, who went to mainstream schools were struggling because of uneven beginnings in their education and went into a shell of their own. Bridge schooling was a start, but we understood that we needed to change the way our children were taught. In 2006, we started Aarti School, which today facilitates 640 children and is known for its innovative and holistic teaching.

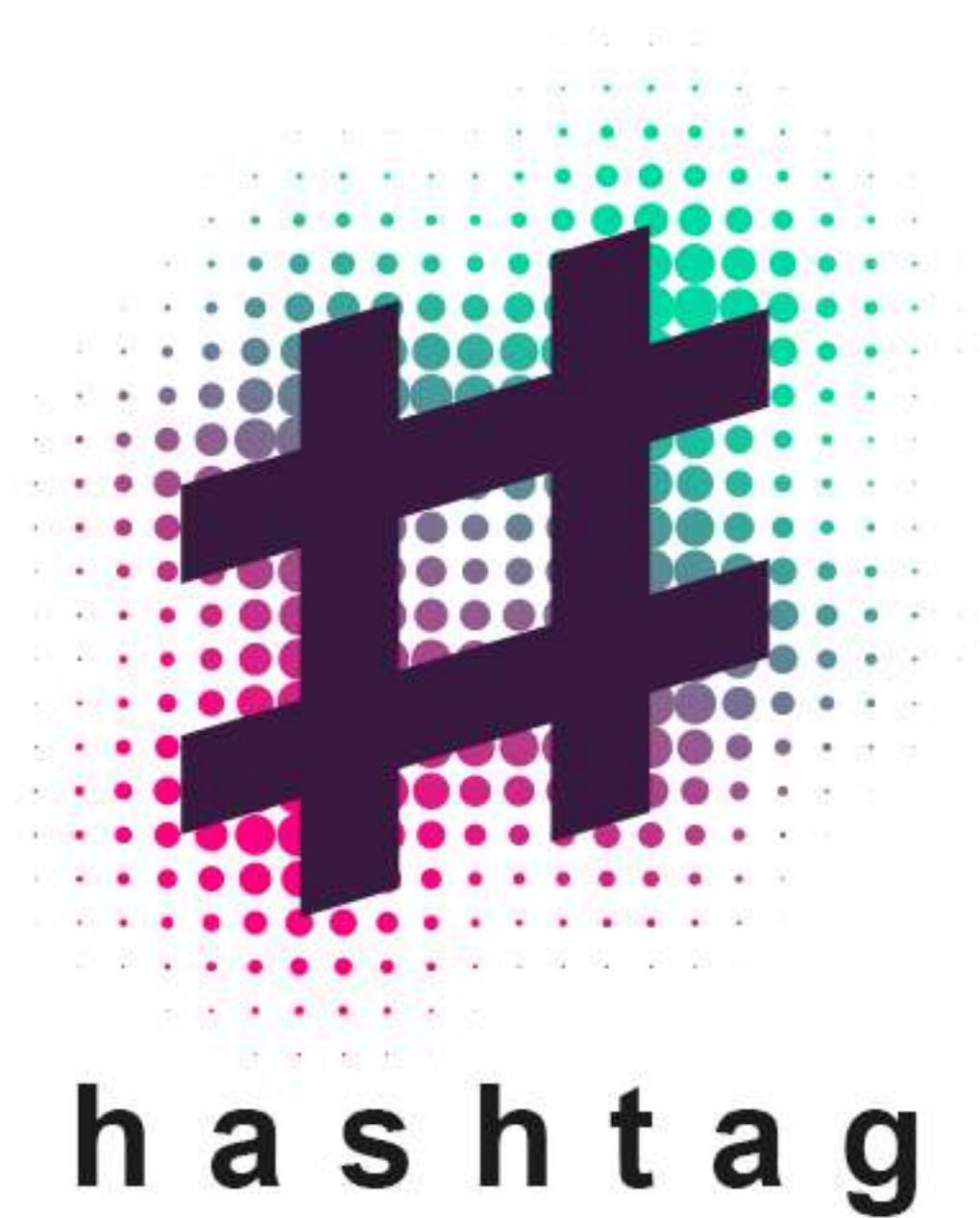
Mana Bidda Project:

Soon after the Prime Minister launched the 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padoo' scheme, we started the Mana Bidda project, which stands for 'Any child is our child; girl or boy.' I used to visit every single household and counsel them on female feticide, the importance of educating girls, on treating daughters on par with sons, and to stop aborting because eventually it impacts a woman's health too.

Where do you see the organisation headed in the future?

The state government offers scholarships to our outstanding students. My daughter is a doctor and my son runs a travel agency. Our individual networking has helped us form alliances with like-minded people, organisations, help groups, corporates, schools and volunteer communities all of whom have played a big part in strengthening our vision and establishing a brighter and positive future for these girls.





NRI IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The grace in grooves: Indrani Davaluri

A Bharatanatyam performer, actor, and guru, INDRANI DAVALURI has constantly pushed the envelope with her various activities. Now settled in Virginia, USA, this free-spirited Hyderabadi girl speaks to MALLIK THATIPALLI, about how dance is a passion, her various interests, and her upcoming plans!



Dancing like a dream:

"I want to perform till the day I drop dead," chuckles Indrani Davaluri. An actor, a model and chiefly a Bharatanatyam dancer, she began learning the traditional art form at eight years of age and continues till date, all while undergoing two pregnancies (she was back on the dance floor within three months of delivery!) and a debilitating knee surgery in 2009.

Armed with a Master's in Microbiology as well as a distinction-level Bachelor's in Dance, she is now pursuing her Master's in Bharatanatyam from the University of Madras. Apart from dedicating her life to dance, she has also acted in mainstream south Indian movies – such as *Bidda*, *Maya Bazaar*, and *Magane Marumagane*, amongst others.

Dance as a passion:

Indrani started learning dance at a very young age from the famous Thyagaraja Gana Sabha in Chikadpally in Hyderabad. She later trained under *gurus* Sri V.S Ramamoorthy and Smt. Manjula Ramaswamy. She recalls, "It was in those years that I understood the importance of a *guru*. The formative years of dance are extremely crucial for anyone and though my gurus were very exacting, they were loving and generous as well." The danseuse still recalls her first performance at a Ganesh temple in Secunderabad as a euphoric memory!



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*The formative years of dance are
extremely crucial for anyone...*

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A form of life:

Unlike any other profession or career, dance is demanding and requires a passion beyond the ordinary. It also requires support, states Indrani and adds, "I would like to thank my parents for not making me stop the dance. So many others would stop their kids to focus on academics, but my parents were keen on ensuring that I followed my interests."

Different facets, different moods:

Indrani is candid enough to admit that she grew with different feelings at different phases of life. "There were times when I hated dance as it was extremely gruelling, and no amount of practice was ever enough. Then there were times when I couldn't get enough of it, and I looked at the stage as my second home. Dance has shown me every emotion of life and I cannot be more thankful for it." Known for her *abhinaya*, Indrani has performed as a lead in several ballet productions like *Godha Kalyanam* and *Meera Bhajan*.

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Dance has shown me every emotion of life and I cannot be more thankful for it.

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The move overseas:

In 2008 she moved to the US following her marriage and was kept busy with domestic life for a bit. She started to dance after a year and even named her daughter after her fiery passion: Natya. When her daughter was two years old, she came to India and finished her Bachelor's in Dance from Hyderabad. She adds, "I had knee surgery and never really thought that I would dance ever again. But due to my persistence, I managed to step on the dance floor again which I really think was an achievement."

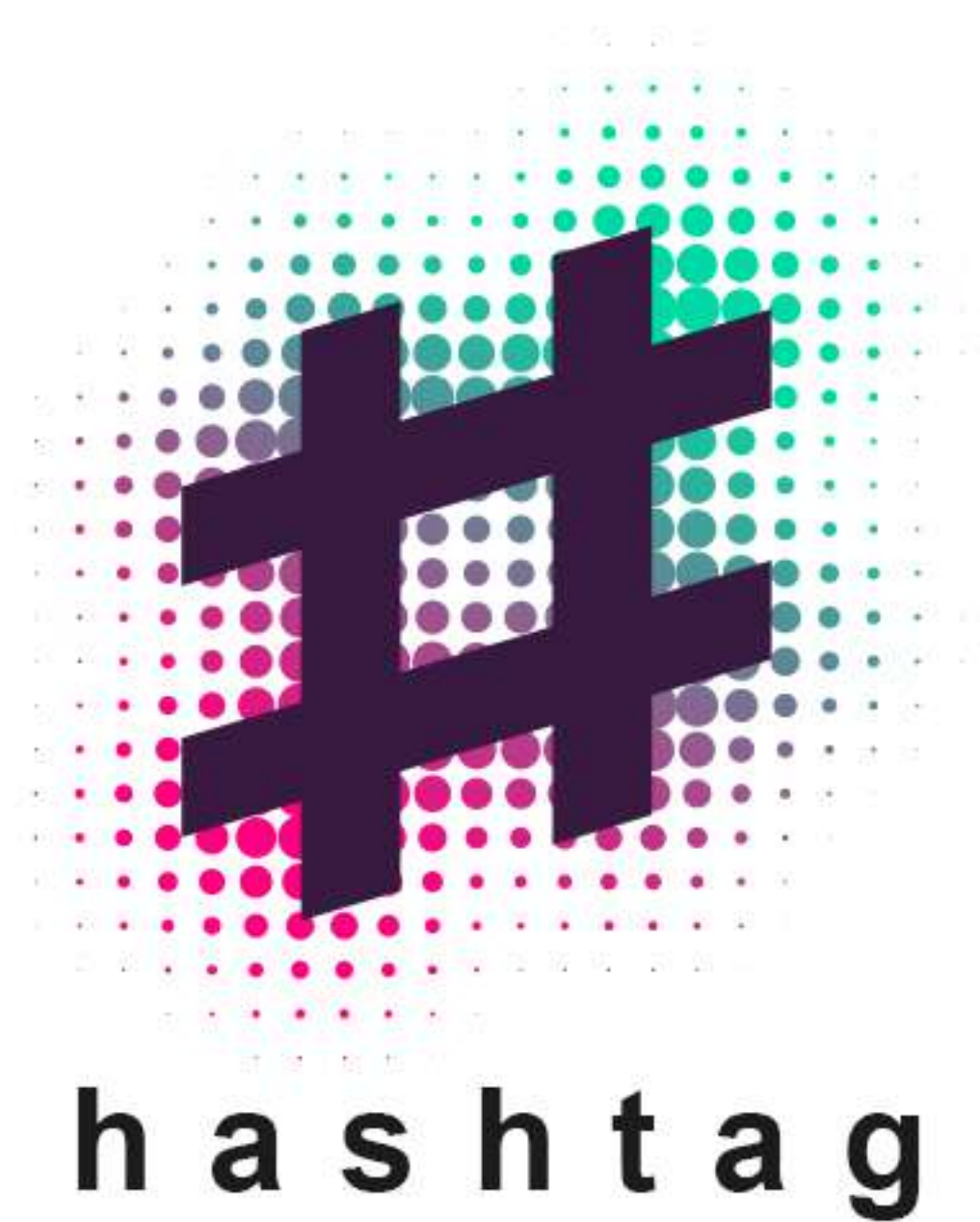
Continuing the journey:

In 2014 Indrani established Natya Margam, a dance school that relies on the principles of hard work, discipline, dedication, education and preservation of the classical Indian dance form. She explains, "I have 40 students whom I consider as treasures. We have had over 700 performances across various cities. I hope to continue to serve the community by raising money for non-profit organizations through dance recitals."



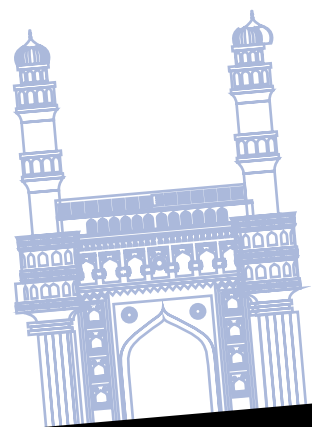
Looking ahead –

Currently, her book on dance physiology and injury prevention for Bharatanatyam dancers is slated for release later this year. Also on cards: a unique plan to bring together dance and science on a single platform, thus combining two of her greatest interests!



DUSK TO DAWN

Reinventing the Nightlife of Hyderabad



Live music is the new rave. Gone are the days of EDM and noise music; clubs are now seeking out regional bands to liven up their dancefloor. **BLUMA HIWRALE** reviews four such bands, whose music has been making **HYDERABAD** dance the night away.

Jammers



Jammers consider their early days as a band at CBIT college as key to their current fame. "Our videos and mashup song with the band Capricio did the rounds on social media, and we got an opportunity to play for Vasavi College, which was officially our first gig. All the band members are passionate about music; hence we had the zeal to experiment with new sounds and genres. I had taken advantage of every opportunity, and that's how it started," says Tejasvi.

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*Through independent music,
we can cater to a large scale of
audience across the globe.*

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The magic of classics never fades away. A homegrown band, Jammers have been regaling their listeners with regional covers since 2018.

Band members Krishna Tejasvi (vocals), Chinna Swamy (guitar), Shashank Bhaskaruni (drummer), Jagadish Chintala (bass guitar), and Naren RK Siddartha (keyboard) have performed at more than 150 gigs and fests, setting the bar high with their appearances on shows such as Star's *Maa Parivaar Awards* and Zee's *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa*.

The five-member band stands apart for their skill in blending Carnatic kritis with commercial Telugu songs.



Their creativity stems from their varied musical training. “I am trained in Carnatic music for more than a decade, and the other mates are trained in different forms of music like western. Hence, we tried to blend them as it sounds unique and interesting,” adds Tejasvi, noting the Bengaluru-based band Agam as their source of inspiration.

2021 has seen them release two original compositions to the delight of their fans. *Valalo* is a retro melody, while *Bird’s Eye* is revered for its lyricism. Talking about the process of composing the songs, Tejasvi says, “Lockdown was hard, but it gave us the time to complete our original compositions that were always on the cards. We received a good response, and we are looking to compose more original

compositions shortly. We are releasing our songs on different platforms and building our fan base in other places.”

The lockdown did not stop Jammers from engaging with their fans. With gigs on halt, they took to social media, releasing 25 jam sessions under the tag [#QuarantineJamWithJammers](#), which were widely received by their growing audience.

The most requested songs continue to be from their covers of Ilaiyaraaja and AR Rahman – their millennial twist breathes a fresh breath of air into these songs of old. It is their fans the band appreciates the most, thanking them for staying by their side for three years.



Merakee



This five-member band strives to live up to their name, channelling their passion and soul towards the music they create. With experienced musicians such as Ganesh Krovvidi (vocals), Manohar Sujith (guitar), Vishal Prodhutu (drums), Elia Kondamundi (keyboard), and Rithvik Premdas (bass guitar) at the helm, Merakee has been able to bring Telegu songs to the wider public.

In search of a different sound, lead vocalist Ganesh Krovvidi exited his previous band Capricio in 2017. “I even thought of switching careers; I didn’t have plans on starting a band again. Now I can’t imagine life without music,” adds Krovvidi. With him is guitarist Manohar Sujith, who works for musician and composer Mickey J Meyer. It is this deep level of experience that Merakee exhibits that set them apart from other regional bands.

When they first began, the band was faced with a lack of audience at their shows. Now, Merakee boasts of a huge fan base in the city and has gained the attention of the public.

A popular segment hosted by the band is ‘Micless with Merakee’, where the audience is the performers. What began as a way to ensure the growth of Telegu music is now a crowd puller, with a set of regular fans showing up to these sing-along sessions.

2021 saw Merakee exciting new avenues. They were featured on the popular talk show Sam Jam, where they performed live for stars Naga Chaitanya and Samantha Akkineni. The band loved the experience, noting how they were recognized more widely after the show. “The primary challenge was to sing only Aditya Music songs, and we had less than a day to practice,” says Krovvidi. “We recreated Naga Chaitanya and Samantha’s tracks to entertain the couple. It was an honour and beautiful experience to perform for them,” says keyboardist Kondamundi.

Currently, Merakee is working full swing on their original compositions and is looking forward to releasing new music soon.

“

Very few tables were interested in listening to Telugu songs, but within eight months, we started picking up; we’re a full house now, says Krovvidi.

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Band Elyzium



One of the youngest bands in the city, Band Elyzium has Hyderabad hooked to their sound, delving into multi-genre classics alongside the latest on the charts. Launched just a short three months ago, the band seeks to deliver as its name promises – a paradise for music at their shows.

Previously part of Capriccio, Dinker Kalvala (vocals), Kaali (drums) and Anurag Netha (band manager) regrouped to form a new band, with a clear focus on original compositions and collaborations. Together with Vidhya Sagar Nagavelli (drums and percussion), Charan NVS (keyboard) and Richard Madella (bass guitar), the nascent outfit has already released two original compositions, setting a tough to match benchmark for their contemporaries.



We formed Elyzium with great triumph. In three months, we hit 8k followers on Instagram, which was a major boost.”



While most of the team has a strong experience with the music scene, Kalvala is a familiar face, having made his debut as a playback singer in 2011. To date, he has lent his voice to more than 200 Telugu songs and has received industry accolades for the same.



Kalvala says the band’s primary focus is to deliver the best output and great sound production. He adds, “We are not compromising on music. We aim to deliver the foremost output to the audience. Once we give the best to the audience ears, they will come back to our shows and won’t turn back.”

Through collaborations, Elyzium wants to bring a sense of newness and freshness to their shows. The band once collaborated with a choir on stage, making them the first band in the city to do so. “I wanted to form a powerful and tight band which will take a lot of time for the local bands to match,” says Kalvala.



Their maiden gig at Tabula Rasa saw a full house, which was unexpected by the band itself. Kalvala sums it up, “We’re grateful for the love and support we’ve received from the audience and the venues.”

Although nascent, the band has already garnered accolades from their contemporaries as well as industry artists. They continue to engage with their audience and perform live throughout Hyderabad. We can expect tons of collaborations, original compositions, and avant-garde music from the band in the days to come.



This young band began as a duo in 2018, with Rohit Nallala (vocals and guitar) and Simon Induri (drums and percussion) seeking to play their music to willing crowds. Their first show at Moonbean was a turning point, allowing them to expand the outfit to what it is today. Now, the five-member band also includes Shravan Inovolu (bass guitar) and Abhyuday (keyboard). The lockdown saw 2018 'Paduta Teegaya' title winner Sree Poornima join the band as a vocalist.

Having two vocalists is just the icing on the cake. Taarey is one of the very few live bands with a fusion of female and male vocalists, making their sound unique and outstanding.



Talking about their journey, Simon says, “It was a herculean effort to get recognized; we went from pillar to post looking for a platform. We waited for long hours at different venues. We have done free shows to showcase our talent. At times, there was barely a handful of the audience watching us. There have been many musicians who came in and exited from Taarey due to commitment issues and lockdown. Rohit and I have been the pillars of Taarey in such times. Our passion for music did not let us give up.”

Taarey regularly plays three gigs a week at venues like Amnesia, Moonshine, and Prism. They have also performed at the *Economic Times Award* show, enthraling the audience with their tunes.



We did not have support or contacts to make the climb easy. It's a different struggle until you make a mark.



On a more personal front, the band openly speaks about the difficulties of juggling their employment with their passion. Says Simon, “Time management has been a hardship for the band as most bandmates are IT employees. We work on weekdays and gig on weekends. We also have family responsibilities to fulfil. For us, music is life, and playing for gigs is our passion. I love being on stage and entertaining the audience.” He adds, “The whole journey is a roller-coaster ride; from playing for zero crowd to having a packed house audience, from knocking doors at venues to venues approaching us, we have come a long way and it’s a colossal achievement for us.”

Taarey has already released 4 originally composed tracks and are looking to expand their horizons with their upcoming ventures. For now, they want to continue performing across various platforms and regaling their audience. Their journey is an inspiration for up-and-coming bands in the city.



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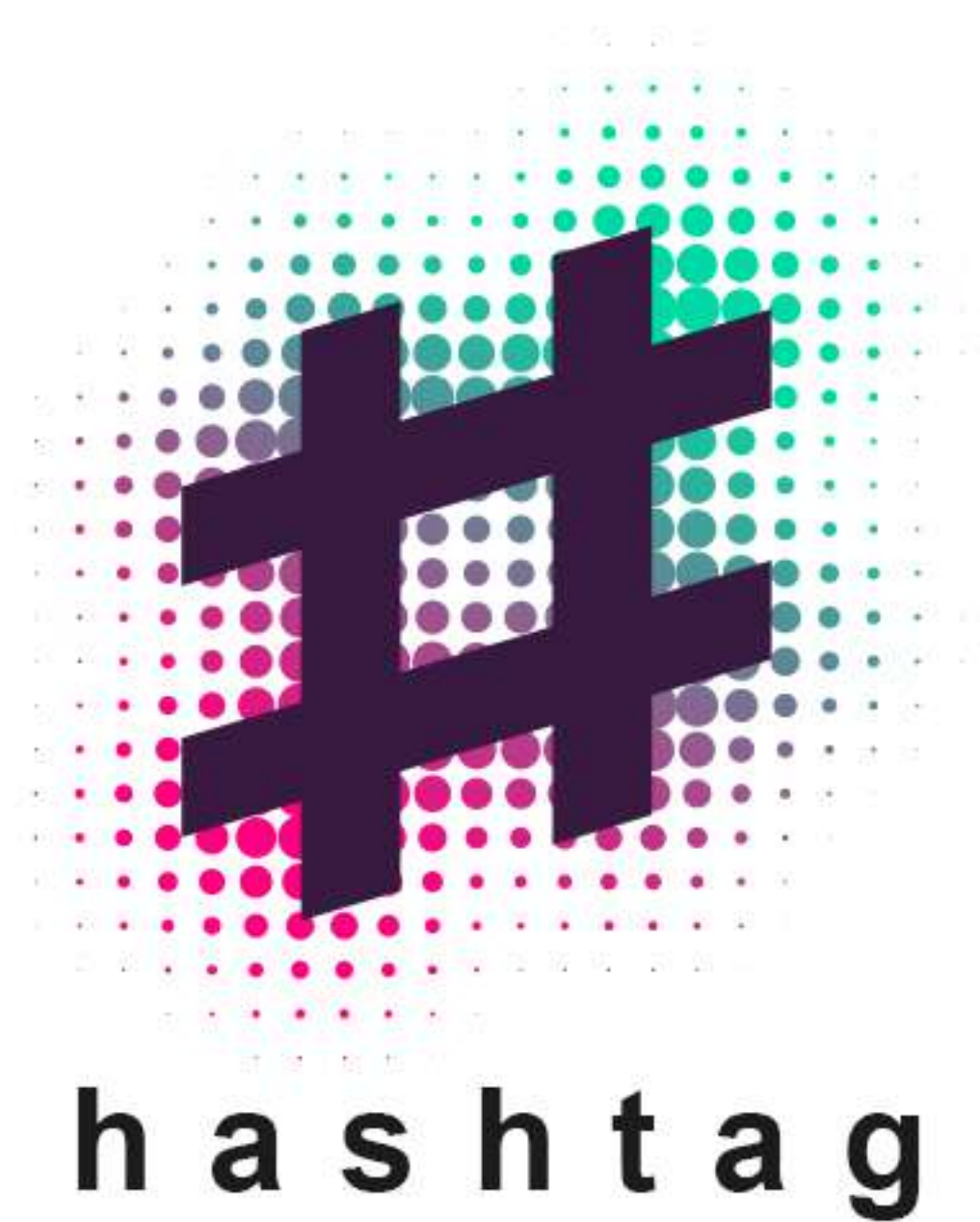
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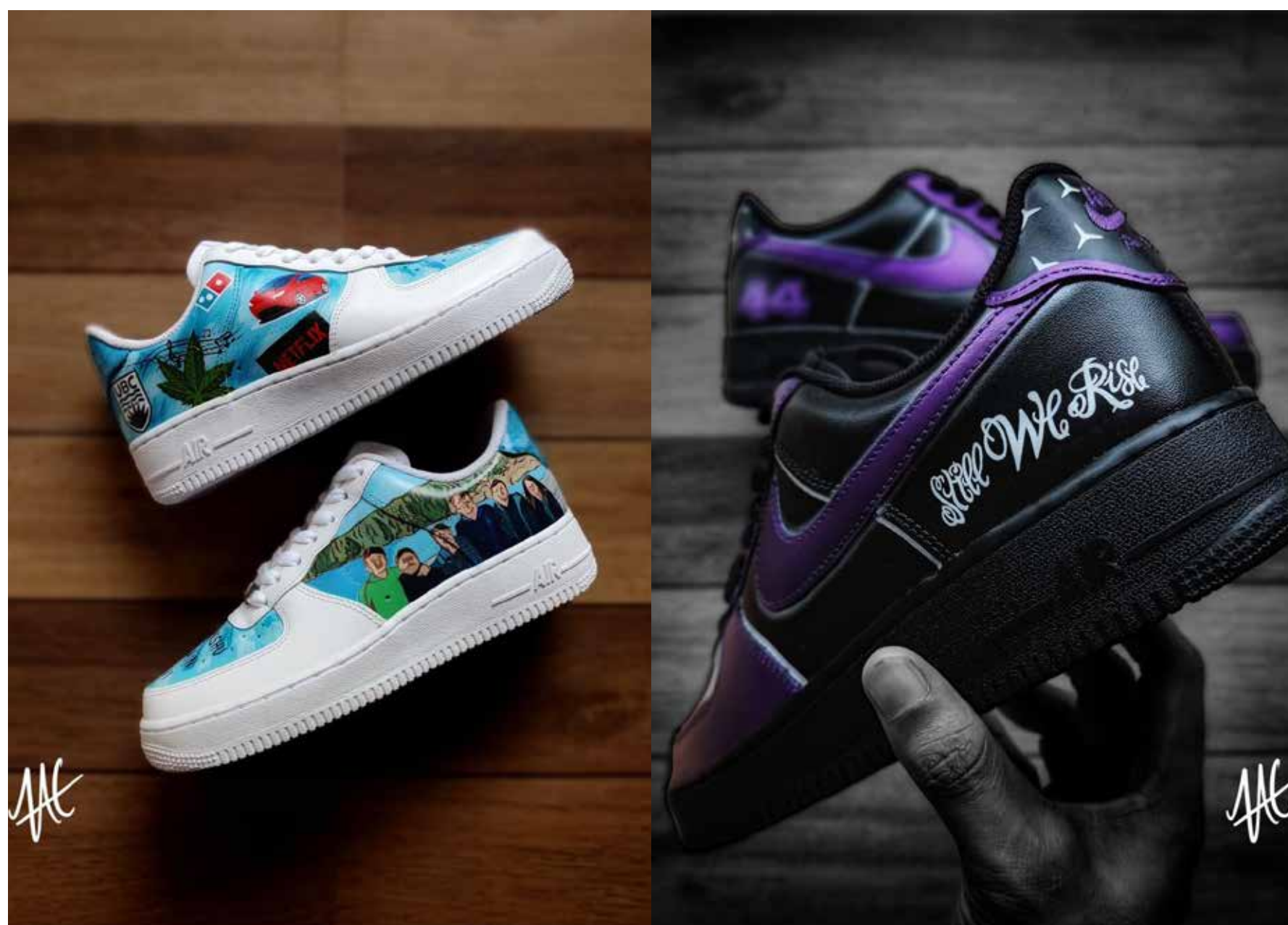
INDIAN SHOE CUSTOMIZERS YOU MUST KNOW!

What kind of shoes would an artist wear? Sketchers, of course! Have you ever wanted to customise your shoes to match your style but are scared to mess with your expensive footwear? We recently met with artists who specialise in customizing pairs for a small price. **HASHTAG INDIA** compiles a short list of artists who have a penchant for painting on kicks!



Often overlooked, shoes can be the most important part of your outfit if you style it right. A simple pair can go a long way. A customized pair can add flair to an everyday fit. Customisation through art on shoes can get you a pair that depicts your thoughts and matches your personality to a tee. You can also give a new lease of life to that old Converse pair by revamping its design. Read on to find out how you can get that spring back in your step!

Unhinged Customs



Unhinged Customs is the brainchild of Rahul Dev, an artist from Hyderabad. He commonly works with plain converse style shoes but can spruce up any old pair of yours. A wave of his magic wand and voila! You have a distinct pair of shoes.

"With my client's specific requirements in mind, I come up with a bunch of designs which justify and enhance the theme at hand. Once a design is greenlit, we start the process," says Rahul. Brimming with creativity, Rahul has started customizing jackets, wallets, caps etc. with his eye-catching art. He also hosts frequent collabs and giveaways, organically building his brand. Shoes can be bought and given to him for customisation, or he can purchase the shoes for you. The time taken for customisation is about 2 weeks.

Instagram: @unhingedcustoms

Contact: 7893458003

Mana Custom Art

This Bangalore based artist styles shoes with unconventional and striking designs. Her penchant for art began at a young age, always painting on books or walls with her younger sister. "In order to give a spin to my old converse, I painted on my shoes, and it was an instant hit and a talking point in my college. Soon I began taking orders from friends and family and later manifested it into a business," Mana adds.

"If I customise a pair, I don't repeat the same design elsewhere. It happens to be the only pair to exist in the world with such a design. But a lot of people come with me with the same theme, like a 'Batman' or 'Marvel'. The challenge here lies in taking the same theme and trying to come up with a different style," she said. She insists on having the shoes bought by the customer to avoid mishaps with the size. Mana prefers painting on shoes and canvas.

Instagram: @manasanthanam

Contact: 9739860711



Badhuche



This small business, whose name translates to “everything we have” in Gujarati, is spearheaded by Kanika Patel. Based in Gujarat, they offer a plethora of designs to choose from on their website. Safe to say, you will certainly be spoilt for choice. Personally, we’ve had our heart set on the quirky painted jackets that can instantly up the style game.

“I’m a trained artist and I lead a team of five uber talented young artists,” says Kanika. Badhuche works one-on-one, where you provide a brief about your requirements. Once details are finalised, sit back and let the creative juices flow onto the shoes. Your shoes will be vibrant and ready in no time!

Instagram: @badhuche

Website: www.badhuche.com

Contact: 9737769813

Product pick: BAMBOO CHARCOAL FACE & BODY SCRUB

Charcoal has become one of the most popular skincare ingredients for perfect skin and exfoliation. Body cafe, charcoal face etc., a brand known to be deeply inspired by ancient and natural healing has launched a new line using this powerful ingredient. The activated Charcoal Face & Body Scrub effectively pulls out deep impurities, grime, and dirt from your skin. A line made with highest standards of purity, this one is sure to leave your skin glowing.



SPICE UP YOUR PLATE.



Armed with a passion for keeping tradition intact through food, the family behind THE PICKLE STORY have made their mark. MAHATI SALIKE brings to us the story and process behind this bestselling venture.



Jaiveer and Prasanna began their brand after realising the importance side dishes like pickles held in nurturing a community. They would send home-made pickles to their near and dear every year but upon swivelling into a nuclear family one such year, they could not do so. Their loved ones dearly missed their delicacies so much so that later, small quantities of the pickles were sent out. All of their relatives were elated with the packages and that is when the idea of making it into a business was realised. The end of the mango season in 2018 saw their brand The Pickle Story jet off, bringing flavour and tradition through pickles and powders to a wide range of people.



Prasanna Lakshmi

The pickles made at this firm are a unique consolidation of flavours from Andhra, Rayalseema, Hyderabad and Chennai. It sounds like an odd and peculiar combination, but the tastes are ground-breaking. In the very beginning, mango pickles in 5 varieties were made. With successful marketing, they began to receive orders. "Most of the orders we receive are from word of mouth. The raving appreciation of our customers fostered us towards giving the best to them," says Jaiveer. Lately, the brand has moved into an office where all the packing happens with utmost care and responsibility.

With the business growing, the brand expanded on the varieties of condiments it offers. Overall, the firm makes 19 varieties of pickles and 21 types of powders or *podis*. They also boast of non-vegetarian pickle options for those looking for a little zing on the plate. The onset of the pandemic saw a rise in demand for snacks and side dishes. The Pickle Story rose to the challenge, making yummy snacks that gave a dose of nutrition. The snacks they prepare undergo a procedure called the centrifugal process. As a part of the process, the oil from the snacks is extracted to make them healthy, resulting in mouth-watering snacks with minimal oil.

The ingredients incorporated in the recipes are brought from a farm. The farmers are taken care of by the couple. The brand's achievements are amazing! The Pickle Story was picked by Magicpin as one of the top six homegrown brands in India. Chef Kunal Kapoor has visited the couple to share the recipe of his famous boiled mango pickle, now one of the bestsellers.

We recommend...

- **Pickles:** Ginger Garlic Pickle, Boiled Mango Pickle, Stuffed Nimbu Pickle
- **Powders:** Idli Kaaram, Moringa Podi, Curry Masala

Price Range: Rs 129 to Rs 299

Delivery: Local delivery is within a couple of hours, while pan-India is 2-5 business days. International delivery takes 5 days.

Order Now @ <https://thepicklestory.com/>





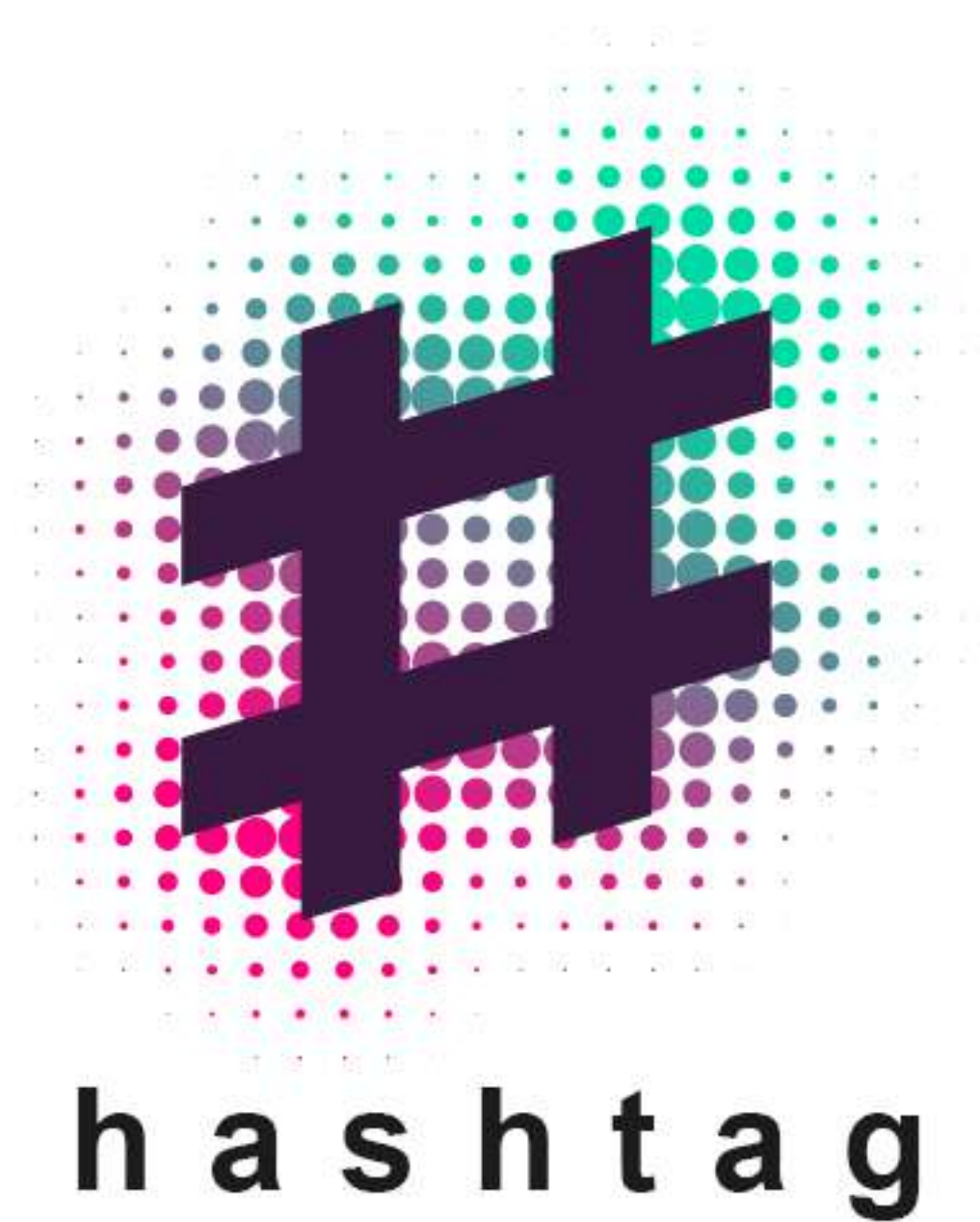
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FASHION FORWARD

DRESSED TO SAVE: FASHION FOR THE PLANET



Gone are the days of fast, unsustainable, and exploitative fashion. Slow fashion is making a steady rise, providing clothes that are made to last. Made with eco-friendly materials and produced ethically, slow fashion is fast pulling the attention of conscious shop-goers everywhere. **Shambhavi Dutta** discovers three **sustainable fashion brands from India** for you to check out...

I. INCRESCENT

Increscent is a zero-waste online store from Jaipur, Rajasthan, that sells vintage clothes for women. Their collection consists of flowy dresses, scarves, jumpsuits, summery tops, and skirts, in a variety of design options.

After graduating in fashion styling, founder Kamakshi Singh realised that her work generated excessive deadstock fabrics. Always wanting to start her small venture, Kamakshi decided to utilise this leftover fabric to create her own garment business, thus starting Increscent in 2018.

Increscent is a brand that is combating the wastefulness of fast fashion by sourcing its raw material from fabric waste of export houses. Further, they create garments to prevent stock pileup. Quality and durability are paramount to Increscent as they endeavour to produce timeless pieces for all sizes. They have also launched the 'Pre-Loved Project' where they accept and repurpose old clothes for secondary sales, thus strengthening their resolve that nothing goes to waste.

While the business is already minimising waste, Kamakshi also aims to optimise her production process to regulate its carbon footprint and maintain sustainable practices. For her, sustainability in the fashion industry is multifaceted. It can range from working with plant fibres to creating timeless, durable fashion products mindfully. She also says that green fashion does not have to be boring, and her collection is testimony to that. Increscent looks to the future with hope; Kamakshi states that they "intend to continue working on their [our] zero-wastage policy and are striving towards incorporating more eco-friendly practices."



Kamakshi Singh

Website: <https://www.increscent.in/> (online store only)

Instagram: @increscent.in

Price range: Approx. Rs 2,000 and 6,000

2. KA SHA

Ka Sha is a women's apparel store in Pune, Maharashtra, specialising in bold tie-dyed colours. Their collection includes dresses, jackets, tunics, skirts, scarves and pants. 'Ka Sha' are the initials of Karishma Shahani Khan, who began the business in 2012. The brand goes beyond using eco-friendly or organic materials, focusing on the way garments are used and reused and all other mindful processes that are involved in the production. It is the constructive environment built at work and interacting with each other that inspires their ideas.

The brand aims to champion the artisans that create the clothes. As is the case with most sustainable fashion brands, Ka Sha garments are also made to prevent waste. The waste fabric produced from Ka Sha's garments is utilised again in their sister venture 'Heart to Haat'; this extends their zero-waste policy.

Although Ka Sha started merely a conscious brand, their ideology has evolved to be shaped by a passion for textiles and craft, for the hands that create them and mindful processes that go behind the production process. As Karishma states, "The diversity of handwork and craft we have here in India is unlike any other and the way it can take on any form, contemporary or traditional, is something very challenging and inspiring to work with."

While Ka Sha is already upcycling, recycling and repurposing, their vision is to encourage mindfulness in the process of production and to find more purpose through work and awareness.



Karishma Shahani Khan

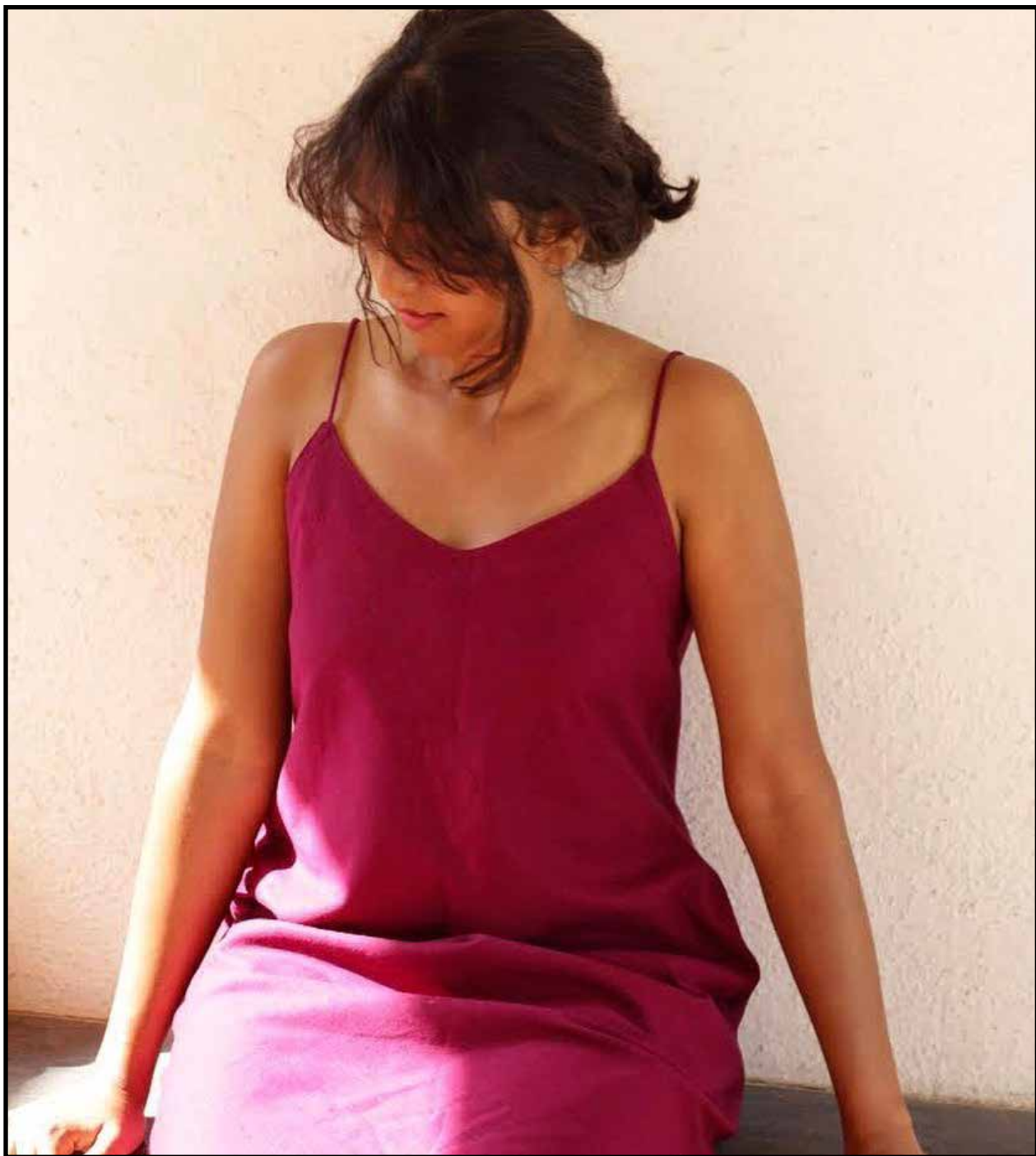
Website: <https://ka-shaindia.com/home>

Instagram: @ ka_sha_india

Price: Approx. Rs 500 to Rs 25,000

Offline store: Gold Field Enclave CHS, Row House No. 1, S Main Rd, Koregaon Park, Pune Pune, Maharashtra





3. POMOGRENADE

Madhulika Umapathy and Aiswarya Kutty started their ethical fashion brand Pomogrenade in 2015 with the belief that we are what we wear. For them, one’s fashion reflects their identity and beliefs. Fashion is about people and Pomogrenade aims to reinforce this by giving each garment a story of its own. Aiswarya and Madhulika want to transform the shopping landscape from malls and retail showrooms to one that reminds us of stories of crafts, art, artisans & producers working together to make something beautiful.

Pomogrenade recycles waste fabric and reduces its carbon footprint by using handloom fabrics that do not require electricity. They also emphasise fair trade, vegan raw materials, local sourcing, and enable conscious fashion. For orders, they try to maintain transparency. Clothes do not have to be trendy and profit-oriented for them, but ethical and long-lasting.

Aiswarya and Madhulika are constant learners and try to integrate everything they learn from various sources into their goal of becoming more and more sustainable. As they state, “We’d like to believe that each conversation we have imbibed a little bit of goodness from each source that has shaped us & our journey so far and will continue to do so.” Pomogrenade clothes can be found in ‘Go Native’ stores in Bangalore.



Aiswarya and Madhulika

Website: <https://www.pomogrenade.com/> (online store only)

Instagram: @pomogrenade.shop

Price: Approx. Rs 600 to Rs 4,000



What exactly is slow fashion?

Slow Fashion emerged in the fashion scene as an earth-friendly answer to fast fashion. Maybe you’re reading this article with a metal straw between your lips, drinking water from a reusable glass bottle. You use cloth tote bags everywhere you go, but you only buy from brands like Zara, H&M, Fashion Nova, and Mango. Your lifestyle choices are sustainable to an extent, but your clothing sure is not.

Brands like Shein, GAP and GUESS are fast fashion brands. This means that they rapidly produce clothes that are trending on the fashion ramp. While globally popular, these brands tend to mass-produce clothes with cheap, inorganic raw materials, and these clothes soon find their way to overflowing landfills.

Not only is fast fashion dangerous for the environment, but it is also wasteful and is slowly abolishing the notion that each cloth has a story to tell and memories to store. So, the next time you want to invest in long-lasting clothes that you can pass on as an heirloom, make sure your legacy is ethical and sustainable for the coming generations. “The most sustainable garment is the one already in your wardrobe.” - Orsola de Castro

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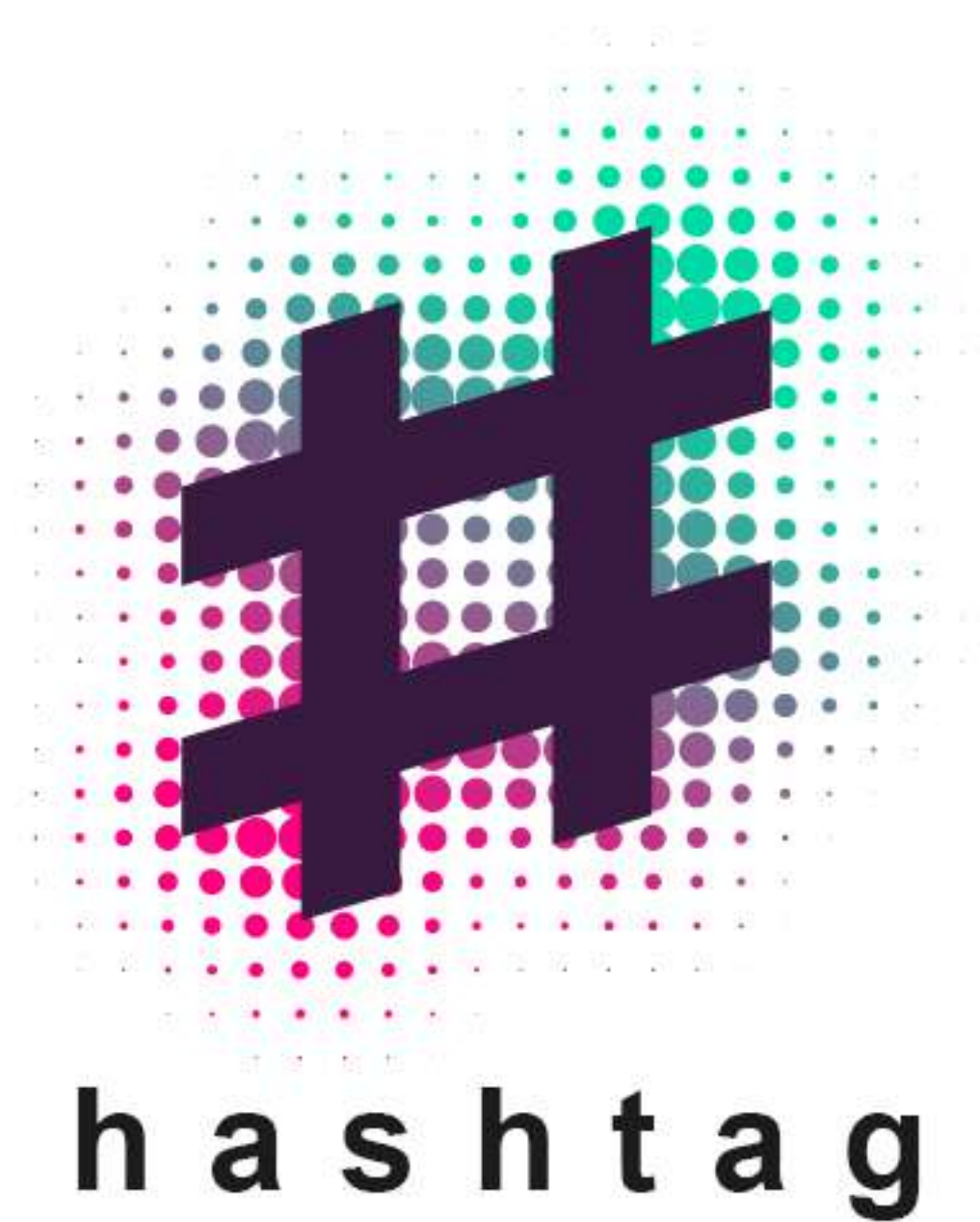
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HEALTH & WELLNESS



Mugdha Godse opens up about the relationship between the “Complete Couple” that she forms with Rahul Dev. Speaking to LIPIKA VARMA, Mugdha shares her relationship mantra in an exclusive for HASHTAG INDIA.

Mugdha Godse :

“I fail to understand why there is such a hue and cry about age difference in relationships”

Your parents have accepted your live-in status. Tell us more about that.

My parents are fine with our live-in status. Parents want their kids to be happy. And if they see them being happy as a couple then there are no complaints. You can't hide your happiness, and for parents that is enough.

What was the lockdown like for you?

I will come to Mumbai when the lockdown is over. Now I am caught up with sweeping and swapping and cooking at home. It's not as bad as the first lockdown as this time maids are allowed. The whole COVID situation has taken us back to our roots and taught us all about life. We should do our own work and take care of our environment. There is nothing greater than health. All this realisation has happened in people owing to the recent development.

Are you looking to go on vacation now?

I remember I had a long holiday of about three months at home. We were sitting at home and relaxing. After the pandemic is over it will be work time. Rahul has been working continuously. I have been working on, and off. We want to get busy and work. And then holidays will happen.



Is space important to you two as a couple?

Space is definitely crucial in a relationship. We have two sets of TV in different rooms so we can watch our own channels. We are not one of those who sit and watch TV together, because our watching interests are very different. We are from the industry so it's homework for us to watch films and shows. I like watching series, right from chick flicks and light comedy and murder mysteries. And he likes watching movies. Generally, it depends on mood. I want to watch horror films and probably he doesn't want to watch that, so why force him to watch it. I am a morning person and he is a night person. I do my yoga, and chanting. He has his set of time for his gym. We don't like disturbing each other's personal space.

Rahul is older than you so do you feel he handles you with care as a partner?

Age is just a number. Actual age is what we think and do. As long as you connect with each other, that age does not matter. I guess I didn't even realise when we were dating. He is older, and he did mention it initially. But then it didn't really matter to me. There is something that got us well connected. There are so many couples in our industry with age differences.



Tips to *deal with* pandemic anxiety



With the second wave barely behind us, we once again find ourselves adrift in the uncertainty COVID-19 has brought upon us for over a year now. ARUSHI DUSAJ speaks to PSYCHOLOGISTS across the country on how to make oneself feel better during the pandemic.

With the pandemic almost bringing our lives to a standstill, mental health has become increasingly important to consider. Here are some tips shared by mental health professionals to help you sail through these difficult times. Do note: anxiety, and other aspects of mental health, should be worked upon with the advice of a professional.

**This time is not about productivity,
it's about survival!**



Ishant, Clinical Psychologist, Bengaluru

"Remember that this time is not about productivity, it's about survival. Comparing yourself to other people will make you anxious. Engaging in meaningful activity is important but that's not the only goal. Accepting your emotions in such difficult times is important, as fighting with them will only bring more harm. Sharing your worries with people is very helpful as it makes you feel good. Keep in touch with your friends and family as it will give you a sense of belonging. Fun activities like board games, drawing, or painting, will help you distract yourself from the negative emotions in your mind. Physical wellbeing is equally important – having a balanced diet, drinking enough water, and doing a little bit of exercise will surely help. Keep yourself off from social media for a while to prevent anxiety."

Get a social media detox



Ayman Ali Khan, Psychologist, Hyderabad

"It depends from person to person on the ways to cope with anxiety. I would recommend going to a professional to get help but following these tips could be an added relief. Take care of your health, and make sure you are eating well in terms of greens and exercise. Get a social media detox – stay away from the news to keep away from negative information. Meditation would help during such times. Involving yourself in your neighbourhood in terms of helping someone will help in finding a purpose. Just make sure you are kind to yourself; survival is the main goal at this point."

Rituals can help in boosting self-esteem



Ritika Matta, Counselling Psychologist, Hyderabad

“Cultivating rituals can be small acts of self-care. They don’t have to be elaborate; just simple ways to take care and cope with anxiety surrounding the pandemic. Rituals can help in boosting self-esteem and can be a great source of accomplishment. Family time, a self-care routine, and a play routine can feel particularly rewarding. The anxiety surrounding the pandemic translates to fear of the unknown. Hence, we need to create as much structure in a day as possible which will give us a feeling of being in control. This can include simple tasks such as a sleep-wake routine, exercise, meal planning etc.”

Take it easy sometimes



Divija Bhasin, Counselling Psychologist, Delhi

“Try to ease yourself. If you aren’t able to be productive, it’s okay and normal. Take a day off if you can. It is a pandemic and you are allowed to take it easy sometimes. Avoid talking about the pandemic as it can increase worry and won’t solve anything. Feeling overwhelmed is normal; calm yourself down by holding a piece of ice in your hand. This is a grounding technique. Use self-soothing activities if you feel really low – watching a nice video can make you feel good. Talking about your worries really helps, so don’t keep your feelings to yourself as it makes things worse. Remember, you’re not alone in this.”

If you find yourself or anyone near you in need of help, do reach out to the appropriate sources. Even though the pandemic makes us feel alone and cut off, we are all in this together. Let others support you just as you support them. Be kind to yourself!



For orders contact +917893565262



Lockdown libido loss is for real. Stress, fatigue and sorrow have run over our regular routines, and taken our emotional and physical health for a toss. **Hashtag India** explores the toll this has taken on the sex lives of people with inputs from **Dr. Anubha Singh**, Gynecologist.

Has COVID-19 Destroyed your libido?

Lockdown would have been an ideal opportunity to get close with your partner and spend some quality time, but it hasn't been the case for a lot of people. But, between caring for your quarantined family members and trying not to catch COVID-19 yourself, sex might be the last thing on your mind. Let's be real, the days since 2020 March have been plenty stressful. The uncertainty brought about by the pandemic, and the fact that no one really knows when this might end, has resulted in widespread panic. Between a global pandemic, anxieties have been skyrocketing unchecked. Will schools reopen in September? Will I still have a job come next month? Are my family members and loved ones safe enough? You have every reason to feel swamped.

Absent Privacy

Even apart from all the anxieties, most couples in India have also been facing the issue of considerably compromised privacy. Certainly, one of the frequent issues is no time, no energy, and no privacy. Intimacy is often a natural result of two individuals who desire a closeness, merging or fusion of themselves but for those who share their home with partners, family members or kids, intimacy is scarce. Shefali Arora, (name changed) a teacher, shares that very few boundaries delineate us while we eat, sleep, work and navigate the same space all day



long. The more we are aware of the other members in the house, the less appealing is the idea of getting intimate with your partner. "There is also the added burden of physical work due to non availability of house maids," says Shefali.

You cannot be stressed and have great sex. You need to feel at ease, and safe.

The pandemic and related concerns about health, income, work, children and the uncertainty of it all can leave us feeling overtaxed and under-resourced. You can't be stressed and have great sex. You need to feel at ease, and safe. There are a lot of obvious reasons why people can't relax right now. When the body is stressed, it releases cortisol, a hormone that causes us to feel withdrawn and pressured. Our body will pull resources from anything that's not essential to our basic life functions. It also decreases the release of testosterone in your body, making it hard to desire intimacy. When cortisol is raised for long periods of time, say, during a worldwide pandemic, it impacts everything from digestion, to immune function, to body fat storage, and the ability of your brain to process and react to sexual cues. So even people who typically have a high sex drive may experience a decrease in desire.



Cortisol hormone released during stress causes a significant decrease in any possibility of arousal or desire, affecting even those who otherwise have a high sex drive.

Treatment

Unfortunately there is no simple pill that people can pop, forget about their problems and get to their normal sex life. The pandemic has been taxing on all our basic life functions, and sex is one of them. Eat healthy, exercise frequently, and work on maintaining a healthy emotional relationship with your partner. Acknowledging and discussing your sex life with your partner is always a healthy habit, and will help you stay on the same page, and be considerate of each other. Taking care of each other, and of your own physical, emotional, and mental well-being will keep you healthy in the long run, and once times get better, you can always find that spark in your relationships. Staying safe and sane are the most important requirements in the chaos that is the COVID-19 pandemic.

Acknowledging and discussing your sex life with your partner is always a healthy habit, and will help you stay on the same page, and be considerate of each other.

You can also take steps to boost your libido on your own. The following have the potential to increase your libido:

1. Live a healthier lifestyle
2. Get enough sleep
3. Practice stress management
4. Reduce alcohol intake
5. Counselling

Hash#ag INDIA

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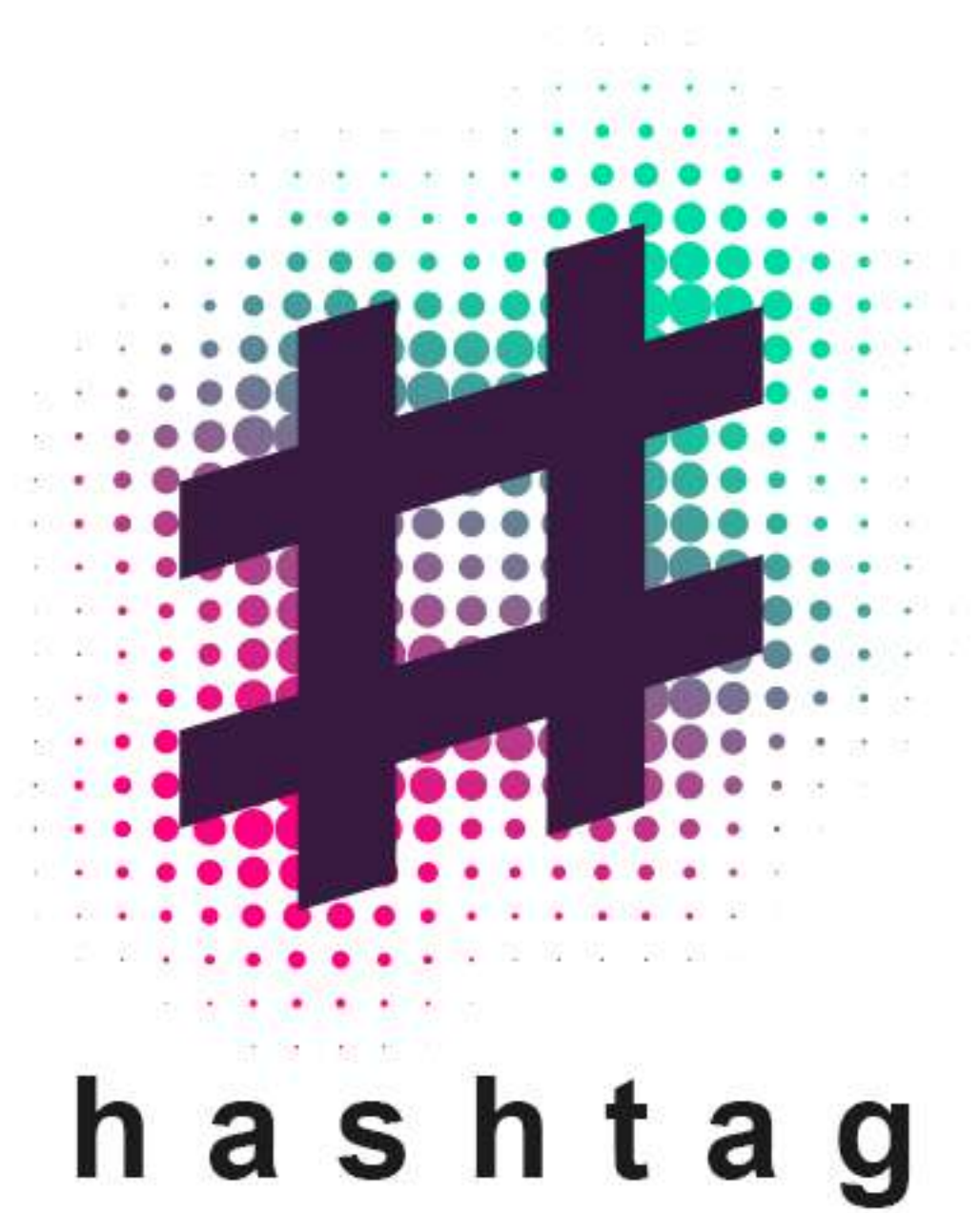
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FOOD INC'

Blog what you eat: TRENDING FOOD BLOGGERS IN INDIA

Food has always been our favourite and these talented bloggers have turned their food cravings into a wholesome series of blogging. In a conversation with AVANTHIKA REDDY, trending food bloggers across India share their success stories.



ESHA SHROFF SHAH

INSTAGRAM: @foodholic.mumbai

With over 90K followers, this food and travel blogger began with blogging when it was a niche area. "When I started blogging, It started with my love for food and cuisines; back then there wasn't even a thing like blogging, but my love for food got me this far," exclaims Esha. Her fondness for travelling and food were some of her biggest motivations to get going with blogging her journey and exploring culinary delights. "One of my biggest achievements is getting people to recognise me for who I am. Being the reason for people to follow their passion for food blogging makes me feel really happy and that's what keeps me going," says Esha.

Esha has proudly made her mark as a vegetarian blogger. She has been featured in various news articles, Instagram pages and has also received the 'TOP INFLUENCER AWARD'.

Esha's cup of tea:

Pizza, Chinese, Vada Pav, Chaat.



ROHIT SHARMA

INSTAGRAM: @foodiee_gabbar

YouTube: @foodiee_gabbar

This resident of Delhi NCR has over 15k followers on his blog, where he is lovingly referred to by the eponymous name Foodie Gabbar! "I have always been a foodie; whether it is homemade food, restaurant-style or even street food, all of it has always been an important part of my life. The art of culinary photography and trying different delicacies has gradually interested me in being a food blogger," says Rohit. The fact that his subscribers and followers cherish his content a lot is one of the main aspects that keep Rohit motivated and interested in exploring new cities and their delectable cuisines. For Rohit, "being called in for reviews on taste and ambience by top restaurants makes me highly proud of myself and completely obliged". Recently, his YouTube channel of the same name hit 50k followers, a cause for a feast of celebration!

Rohit's cup of tea:

"Being a typical non-veg lover, my all-time favourite is *Mughlai* cuisine," says Rohit. Other favourites include Butter Chicken with *Naan*, *Changezi* Chicken and *Gol Gappe*.





DEEPAK BELEL

INSTAGRAM: @foodengineering

From his mother saying, “Don’t waste your time in all that, it’s good for nothing” to “When is the next food hamper coming home?” the blogging journey of Deepak Belel has come a long way. Professionally an engineer, and passionately a foodie, this talented blogger from Hyderabad boasts of over 18K followers. He has been a food critic for over 4 and a half years now and is never tired of his work. Being born in Hyderabad and his parents being from Kolkata, Deepak has experienced the best of both cuisines.

Deepak says “To be honest I didn’t have any clue what food blogging or reviewing meant but one day a very good friend of mine gave an idea of starting something which was related to food and fashion. My knowledge about fashion is still not great but somehow the food part worked.

Deepak’s cup of tea:

“Being a Hyderabadi, Mutton *Biryani* will always be my favourite,” says Deepak. Prawn *Malai Curry* and *Samosa* always top the list alongside *Awadhi Cuisine*.

RITIKA RAINA

INSTAGRAM: @themanritlife

This food blogger from Jammu & Kashmir has been a food buff from her childhood. Her interests ranged from regional Indian cuisine to Italian. “I have always loved to explore food. It has helped me a lot with my cooking skills,” exclaimed Ritika. The 24-year-old MBA student is a happy-go-lucky person who never misses a chance to get to know more about food and her passion to do so has now turned into exclusive food blogging. Ritika says “*Khaate raho aur muskurate raho* will always be my tagline”. Constant motivation from her family and friends keeps her going and makes her want to never quit.

The recognition Ritika gets from her blogging is something she respects the most. She adores the internet family she has created, where strangers have become her constant supporters. “When people recognise me and praise my work, I feel extremely elevated and blessed,” she says. Some of her proudest moments include when she was interviewed by the well-known local news channel J&K Media and was invited as a special guest at a cooking show. With over 5K followers, Ritika is one of the budding food bloggers in India.

Ritika’s cup of tea:

Rajma Chawal, *Kalari*. Ritika recommends, “These are the best dishes of Jammu, so whenever you decide to visit, definitely try these”. *Dogri*, Kashmiri cuisine and *Momos* are her go-to picks.



MOHAMMED ZUBAIR ALI

INSTAGRAM: @hyderabad.food.diaries

One man that never fails to make Hyderabad proud with his blogging escapades is Zubair, a renowned food blogger with over 110K followers. This is not just a passion; Zubair holds a degree in Hotel Management, with an extensive knowledge of the retail sector. Zubair says, “My story with food began while I was training at a star property. Curiosity of knowing cuisines kept me glued to food and now after 10 years here I am with Hyderabad Food Diaries.”

After learning immensely about food and beverages, the curiosity to explore new lounges, cafes, restaurants, and clubs in Hyderabad transformed his passion for food into his everlasting profession. Whether it is street food from the back alleys of Charminar or Continental food festivals at five-star properties, South Indian breakfast spreads or midnight buffets, Hyderabad Food Diaries covers it all.

Zubair’s cup of tea:

Tahari (Hyderabadi dish), *Biryani*, *Qurbani Ka Meetha*.





PRUTHVI GARLAPATI

INSTAGRAM: @hyderabadfoodbowl

Making our hobby into something that others cherish too is what Pruthvi has achieved through his blogging endeavour. The blogger from Hyderabad has over 18k followers. "It all started as fun for me when I was studying engineering. I used to visit a lot of places back then and my relatives and friends started asking me for recommendations," Pruthvi says. That is when Pruthvi started to post about places and started his journey. He says, "I started writing blogs on WordPress and people started reading them before visiting new places". Pruthvi loves the feeling of satisfaction he gets when people read his recommendations and share their cherished experiences with him. Pruthvi exclaimed, "I refuse to go for tasting sessions as I felt that visiting as a commoner will help me write even better reviews and make my opinion fair and honest".

Pruthvi's cup of tea:

Mutton *Biryani*, *Mudda Avakaya Pappu*, Taro leaf parcels.

VIRENDRA BUNDELA

INSTAGRAM: @bundelaofficial

From Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh hails Virendra Bundela, who leaves no stone unturned in his explorations of the culinary world. Virendra Bundela, who currently lives in Delhi with his family, is a trending food blogger with over 14k followers. He is a full-time social media influencer who dabbles across multiple platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. He also reviews food on Zomato. Speaking on his passion, he says, "From my time in school, I was connected to food. Whether I am happy or sad, food is always my partner".

His enthusiasm to travel and discover new cuisines eventually turned his passion into a profession. "My family and my zeal to explore keep me going," says Virendra. He feels that his profession offers him a lot; from tasting food to reviewing them, he has an ocean full of new opportunities to try and learn from. One of his biggest achievements was when he went to Ansal University to taste and review the cuisines prepared by their hospitality and management students. The blogger says, "It's not a medal or a certificate for me, it is the recognition and respect I get for being honest towards my passion and my career".

Virendra's cup of tea:

"Being a Delhi blogger, the first thing that comes into my mind is *Choley Bhature*." Other favourites include Chicken Lollipop and *Parathas*.



AYESHA SULTANA

INSTAGRAM: @watchucraving

The 21-year-old MBA student has over 5k followers on her blog. "I am definitely a food lover, and a nature and travel enthusiast," says Ayesha. Her motto for life is to 'Slay your demons while you are awake so that they don't get you when you are asleep'. She has always been interested in café hopping and loved documenting what she explored. Her interest in the flow of time was nurtured into her creative blog. "I think when you do something you love you just keep going, your passion for it is enough motivation to continue," says Ayesha. From attending food events, meeting new people, and being featured in a lifestyle magazine, Ayesha says the best experience so far is her learning outcome.

Ayesha's cup of tea:

Lebanese grilled chicken, Cheese *kunafa* and anything prawns. "I am a big-time prawn monster," says the blogger.





Khavanu, pivanu, majja ni life! This is the mantra residents of **Ahmedabad** swear by! Whether they are catching up with friends, or a business meeting, shopping, or picking groceries, snacks and especially **street snacks** are looked forward to more than often and are the highlights of the day. **KETKI GADRE** goes on a lip-smacking journey...

A food trail in *the heart of Ahmedabad*

You wouldn't know the number of items that can be cooked up with *besan* (gram flour) unless you visit Gujarat. Fried *besan* snacks are especially popular in Ahmedabad and form the majority of their street food. Ahmedabad's street food scene is evergreen – no matter what season or time of day. Let's dig into the favourites!



Fafda and Jalebi

This is the breakfast staple in Ahmedabad and Saurashtra. A day cannot start without eating this fried plateful served with green papaya spiced salad and *kadhi* (a thick gravy made from gram flour and yoghurt, with Indian spices). On the side? Crispy *jalebis*. There are generationally run chains of family-run restaurants that make and sell *fafda* and *jalebi* for all days of the year, making it a staple street food and must-have. *Fafda-jalebi* is especially popular during Dussehra when locals line up at midnight in queues to get a piece of fried heaven.

Where: Oshwal, 14, Ajanta Commercial Complex, Ashram Rd, Usmanpura

Khaman

Soft, spongy, sweet, and savoury is how khaman can be described. Though it is confused with *dhokla*, *khaman* is softer and juicier and one of the favourite street foods of Ahmedabad. Garnished with mustard seeds, green chillies and coriander, *khaman* is a healthy and delicious snack.

Where: Das Khaman, 2, Trade Center, Stadium Cross Rd, Navarangpura Gam, Navrangpura



Dal-Wada

Dal-Wada is to Ahmedabad what *kanda bhajji* is to Pune, especially when it rains. This deep-fried concoction of ground fermented yellow lentils with ginger and chilli paste is a monsoon must-have street food and enjoyed otherwise too.

Where: Ambica Dalwada Centre, G - 3, Shivam Complex, B/h H. L. Commerce College



Chai and maska-bun

Bread-Butter is revered in Ahmedabad in the form of *maska-bun*. Tea is the official beverage of Ahmedabad, and it is known that business deals worth crores happen over *chai-ki-kitli* in this city. The *maska-bun* makes for the perfect tea accompaniment on street in between meetings.

Where: Lucky Restaurant, Opposite City College, Lal Darwaja

Dabeli

Also known as the Indian burger, *dabeli* is a bread bun sandwiched in the perfect mix of potato filling, spices, chutneys, peanuts, and pomegranate, nicely bathed in butter and served hot. It is an explosion of sorts in the mouth with crunchy as well as soft textures and a combined taste of sweet, hot, and sour. It feels like a festival when one is savouring *dabeli* – a gift from Kutch.

Where: Karnavati Dabeli, Shop No. 1/ Ground Floor, Radhamandir Complex, Opp. Hirabhai Tower, Uttamnagar, Maninagar



Samosa

Samosa is probably the favourite street snack all over India, served in so many varieties and versions. There is no dearth of options: while the most common is the potato filling, there is also the Chinese flavoured noodle filling, as well as paneer or chicken fillings. *Samosas* in Ahmedabad have a special *daal* filling available and is known as *Navtad na Samosa*.

Where: Maharaj Samosa Centre, Kunjan Complex, 1 & 2, Kumkum Society, Sardar Patel Stadium Rd, Naranpura

Burgers

This is a place that serves *desi* burgers in the heart of Ahmedabad and has a fan following due to its variety of meat burgers as well. For almost two decades, this place has been selling burgers with different fillings such as *aloo tikki*, egg, chicken burgers, and many more, all topped with cheese. Other snacks which make it to their shelves are *paneer puff*, *aloo puff*, Danish buns and cupcakes.

Where: Salimbhai's Burger and Puffs, Besides L.J Campus, Sarkhej - Gandhinagar Hwy, Sarkhej

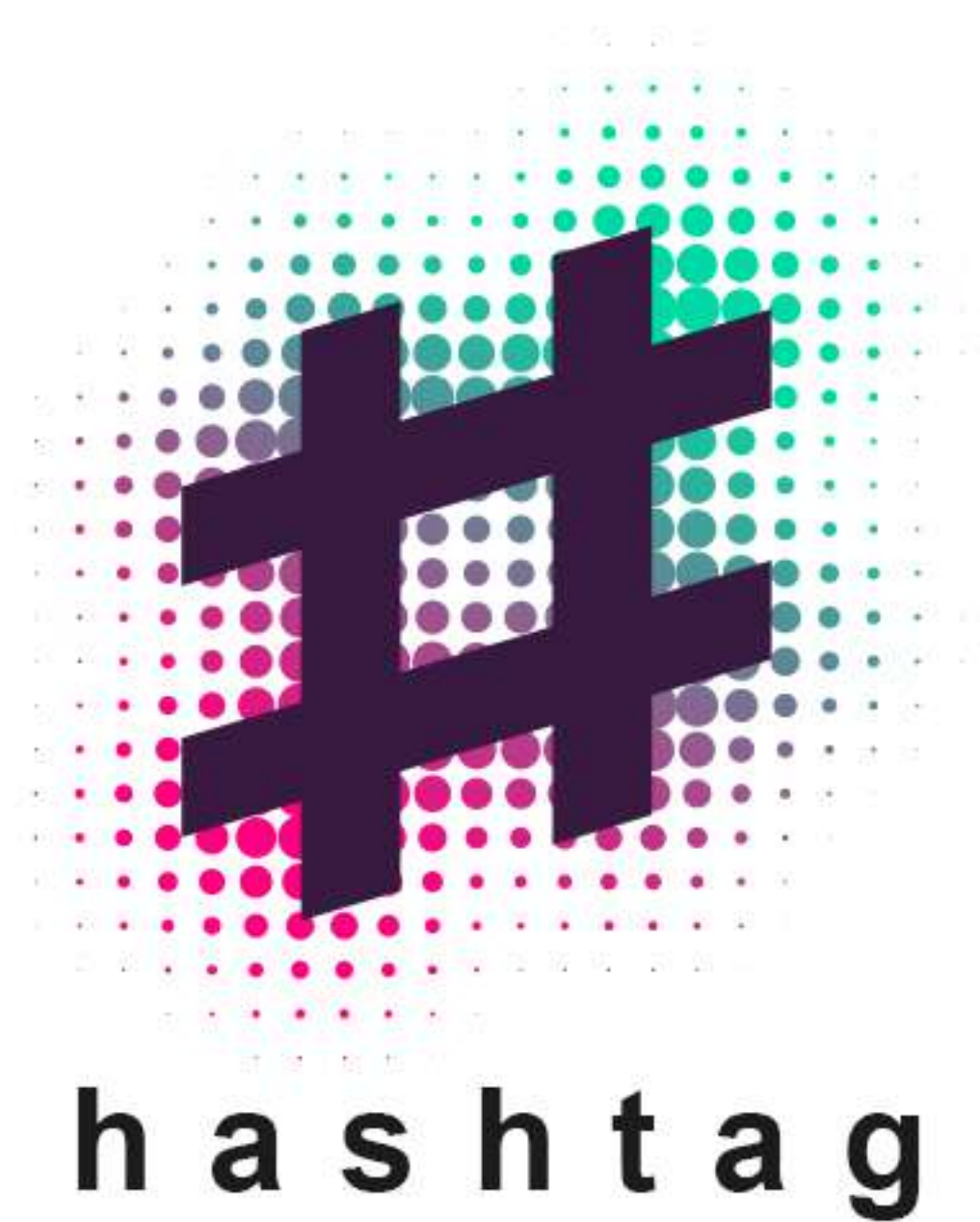


Kulfi

This list would be incomplete without mentioning the sweet tooth of Gujaratis. This street dessert is a favourite among the locals. The humble *kulfi* is the one that can single-handedly take on the frosty cupcakes, chocolate pancakes and maple syrup waffles.

Where: Maharaj Samosa Centre, Kunjan Complex, 1 & 2, Kumkum Society, Sardar Patel Stadium Rd, Naranpura

All these food haunts are a beloved part of the city and their wares can be best enjoyed standing by the roadside, or sitting on rickety benches and plastic chairs, while the Ahmedabad traffic moves on.



AUTO & TECH

The Best of Wearables in Every Price Segment

While watches have been one of the most essential parts of our lives, the advent of smartphones has seen watches evolve. SMARTWATCHES AND SMART BANDS have changed the face of wearables, effortlessly blending utility with fashion. ANIKET PANDE from BLAZETECHNICA lists some of the best picks for smartwatches and smart bands in the market, in every price segment.



BUDGET FITNESS TRACKERS



Source: mi.com

Mi Band 5

Price - Rs 2,499

Features - The most popular option in the fitness tracker market has always been Xiaomi's Mi Band series. The Mi Band 5 is no exception. it comes with a 1.1-inch AMOLED display for notifications and call alerts. It also has a total of 11 workout modes. The band is water-resistant up to 5ATM as well so going on a swim with it won't be a problem. Other useful features include trackers for heart rate, menstrual cycles, and sleep. With a battery life of 4-5 days, this is also long-lasting and durable.

USP - Mi bands also have third-party app support with which a lot of customisations can be added to the band, making the smart band an easy recommendation.



Source: OnePlus

OnePlus Band

Price - Rs 2,499

Features - The OnePlus band comes with a 1.1-inch AMOLED display, a heart rate sensor, tons of workout modes and is also IP68 water and dust resistant. Battery life on this is 4-5 days. It offers almost similar functionality to Mi Band 5, but the OnePlus Band lacks third-party app support which we get in the Mi Band 5.

USP - OnePlus Band comes with a SpO2 sensor with which it tracks the blood oxygen levels, which is handy in terms of the ongoing pandemic. For those looking to monitor their oxygen levels diligently, this band is a great choice.

BUDGET SMARTWATCHES



Source: Realme

Realme Watch S

Price: Rs 4,999

Features - A good option for an entry-level smartwatch, the Realme Watch S comes with a 1.3-inch LCD display, a total of 16 exercise modes, and is IP68 water and dust resistant. The watch also has sensors for heart rate as well as a SpO2, with a battery life of 12 days. The only major downside of this watch is that it is currently only compatible with Android devices, so iPhone users will have to look for some other options.

USP - The Realme Watch S is a great option at its price-point for android users who are looking for their first smartwatch with a good design and some useful features.



Mi Watch Revolve

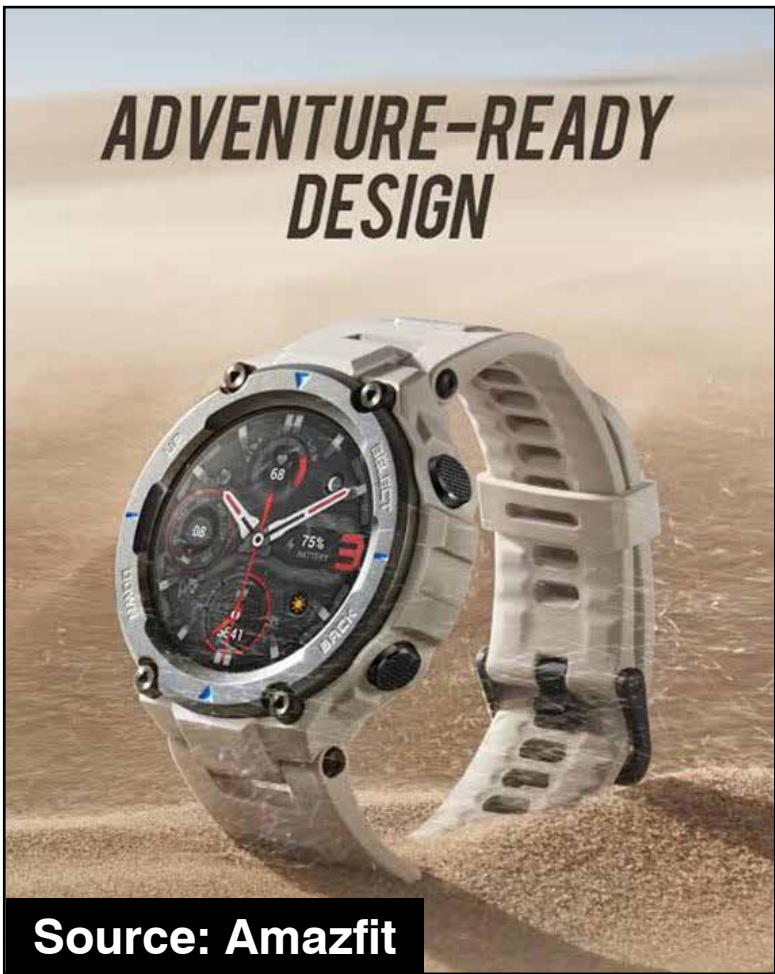
Price - Rs 9,999

Features - This fashionable smartwatch has a circular dial of 46mm, with a 1.39-inch AMOLED display protected by corning gorilla glass 3. It is water-resistant up to 5ATM and has a battery life of 8-10 days. Additional features include a built-in GPS, and stress and sleep monitoring features. The Mi Watch Revolve however does not have a SpO2 sensor. Other software limitations include the phone call and notification alerts, which can only be viewed but cannot be responded to.

USP - For someone looking for a smartwatch with a premium design and some added features like GPS, Mi Watch Revolve is a good option.

Source: mi.com

MID-RANGE SMARTWATCHES



Source: Amazfit

Amazfit T-Rex Pro

Price - Rs 12,999

Features - Equipped with a 1.3-inch AMOLED display with a 46mm dial, this smartwatch offers over 100 sports modes. It is Military Standard Certified for 15 tests and water-resistant up to 10ATM. It also has a built-in GPS, along with a SpO2 sensor, and a battery life of 4-5 days.

USP - The tough and rugged design of this watch is something that makes it unique. For those looking for design and durability, the Amazfit T-Rex Pro is the best option.



Source: OnePlus

OnePlus Watch

Price - 14,999

Features - This smartwatch comes with a 46mm dial with a 1.39-inch AMOLED display. The watch has over 110 workout modes and comes with a built-in GPS and IP68 water resistance. It is well-equipped with features such as health monitoring and SpO2 tracking. The battery life of this wearable is 5 days. The OnePlus Watch supports OnePlus's ultrafast warp charging.

USP - Added advantages of the OnePlus Watch include features for music, which can be stored in the watch itself. One can also answer phone calls. Overall, it is a good smartwatch one can consider buying.



Source: OPPO

OPPO Watch

Price - Starting at Rs 14,990

Features - The OPPO Watch starts at Rs 14,990 for its 41mm model and Rs 17,990 for its 46mm model. The watch comes with 1.6- or 1.91-inches AMOLED display options. It also has a built-in GPS, and it is water-resistant up to 5ATM. The biggest advantage of the OPPO Watch is that it runs on Google's wearable operating system Wear OS. It has a play store from where apps can be downloaded, which is missing on most of the smartwatches in this price segment. Other features include making phone calls, replying to messages, and navigating through Google Maps. With all these features the battery life on this watch is only for a day. The one downside is the lack of sensors for SpO2 monitoring.

USP - For someone looking for a complete smartwatch experience with Google's Wear OS, the OPPO Watch is the right choice.

LUXURY/PREMIUM SMARTWATCHES



Samsung Galaxy Watch 3
Price - Starting at Rs 25,900

Features - The Galaxy Watch 3 comes with a stainless-steel frame, giving it a classy look. Available in 41mm and 45 mm, the watch also has variants for Bluetooth and LTE. The 1.2- or 1.4-inch SUPER AMOLED display is protected by corning gorilla glass dx. The watch runs on Samsung's Tizen OS and has 40 workout modes. It also comes with a built-in GPS and is IP68 water-resistant. Some of the health-oriented features it offers are sensors for heart rate and SpO2 tracking, as well as blood pressure monitors, ECG monitoring and fall detection. The battery life on this watch is 3 days and it also supports wireless charging.

USP - For someone looking for a premium smartwatch that offers a lot more features such as making phone calls and monitoring health, Samsung Galaxy Watch 3 is a great option.



Apple Watch Series 6
Price - Starting at Rs 38,900

Features - Apple Watch Series 6 comes in two sizes – 40mm and 44mm, with either GPS or GPS + Cellular. The Watch comes with an aluminium design and offers almost every feature which a smartwatch should have. It also offers health-oriented features such as ECG monitoring and fall detection. Battery life on this watch is 1-2 days.

USP - The major upgrade with the latest Apple Watch Series 6 is the SpO2 sensor for blood oxygen monitoring, a feature that was missing in the earlier generation of Apple Watches. For iPhone users, Apple Watch is an ideal pick as it goes well with the Apple Ecosystem.

FUND RAISING FOR OXYGEN CONCENTRATORS

Post the success of
N95 Mask Distribution Drive and
Hand Sanitizers Distribution Drive
in Hyderabad,
we are now planning to get
a few **Oxygen Concentrators**
on behalf of **Covid Task Force**.

This is to help those in need as there is a huge requirement.
Requesting all to pitch in.

Together let's save lives 🙏

An image of a white oxygen concentrator device inside a blue shield, symbolizing protection and health.

Ajuli Tulsyan
Founder, Covid Task Force
Contact:
+917702800012
(GPay/PayTM on the same number)





VIBRANT 

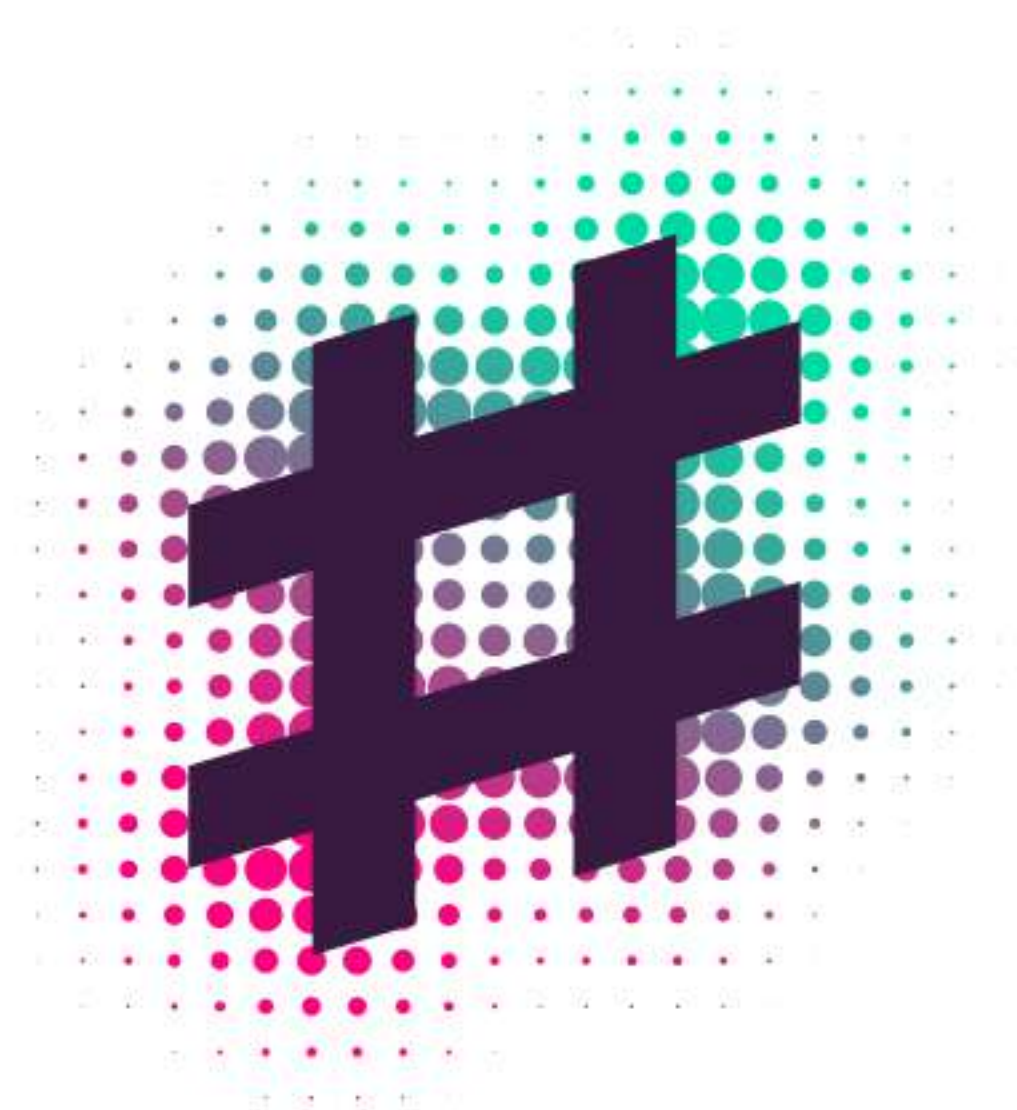


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h a s h t a g

TRAVEL



Looking for a short getaway or planning a long stay away from the city life? **NIKITA BISWAS** and **ABHISHEK DUBEY** share their recent experience at **NAGGAR'S HIMALAYAN SEREE HOMESTAY**. Read on to find out what makes this place the best decision of their travelling careers...

Home away from home: HIMALAYAN SEREE HOMESTAY

As a couple, we love travelling and exploring quaint places across the country. One such exploration led us to Naggar Himalayan Seree, a homestay tucked away at a stone's throw from Manali. Nearing the end of our stay at Jibhi, we were on the lookout for a new destination; we stumbled upon this homestay. The price, the location and the picturesque property had us convinced in a heartbeat.

LOCATION:

Himalayan Seree Homestay, Naggar, Kullu district, Himachal Pradesh

COST FOR TWO:

- 1bhk – Rs 2500/day
- 2bhk – Rs 5000/day
- 3bhk – Rs 6500/day

They also consider discounts for monthly stays

Having left Jibhi early afternoon, we boarded the government bus to Kullu, via Banjar. From Kullu, a bus takes you to Naggar. By 5 PM, we had reached Naggar, the small town in the district of Kullu. While the journey was long, it was worth our time. Bus journeys along the Himalayas are some of the most scenic routes in the country. A cool breeze blowing past the windows, the river Beas

flowing swiftly and huge deodar trees welcoming you with their branches wide open is truly a sight to behold.

We were received at the depot by 'Sheru baba', the owner of the homestay, who offered us coffee to warm up, before taking us to the homestay in his white gypsy. Our first stop was at the general store, where we bought essentials and fresh veggies to cook with. The charm of the homestay lies in how independently they allow the guests to stay. The homestay has provisions for a kitchen, where guests cook their own meals with the local produce.

Reaching the homestay, however, was a hike. From the parking spot, it is an uphill climb. While a test of our endurance and strength, we realised the best view comes from the hardest climb. The mountaintops were covered with snow, and we could see the Beas River flow through the valley. We found ourselves surrounded by lush greenery, from the snow-peaked Himalayan ranges to large trees of plum, apple, and deodar. All this, set against the backdrop of the illustrious Pir Panjal Range. The property also has a very friendly Himalayan dog on-site, by the name of Sultan. We of course made fast friends!





Our stay lasted for two weeks, and we grew to share a great camaraderie with everyone we interacted with. The house itself became a home. It is with this ideology that Sheru *baba* began this venture – the house belongs to whoever stays in it. It is thus their responsibility to keep the house tidy and clean. The homestay also provides yoga lessons at an additional cost, for those looking to unwind with some exercise. The yoga room in the property is an added place for relaxing the mind and chilling out.

AMENITIES:

- Long stays
- Short stays
- Yoga therapy
- Fully equipped kitchen
- Free WiFi

What we loved the most out of our stay was the warmth and hospitality we were greeted with. Some of our best memories lie in the conversations we shared with the locals and Sheru *baba*, who all went out of their way to make us feel at home and comfortable in their humble abode.

About the place, Sheru *baba* had this to say: “For us, this place is above and beyond us. We have put across hard work and love to make this place. We expect our visitors to respect the idea of isolation when they visit this place. We even organize Yoga sessions for our guests on demand. Our living is simple, and we try to keep the place intact. Come here enjoy the beauty and find a soulful connection with nature.”

“It is more important to come here and enjoy the beautiful view rather than just being busy hustling around.”

HIGHLIGHTS:

There are a few rules at this homestay, that add to its charm. The guest has to clean their stay, cooking their food, and respect the privacy and tranquillity the location provides. The concept behind this place is to live away from the stresses of a bustling city, while not losing one’s independence. A yoga attic makes this place dear to the many who are looking to find some soulful connection away from the hustle.

EXPLORE THE AREA:

- Hike to the 600-year-old Naggar Castle.
- Visit the International Roerich Memorial.
- Multiple treks are available as this place is surrounded and the host will be happy to help you with the plan.
- Manali is just 30 minutes away.
- Jana Waterfall is a great driving experience and also awaits great food by the waterfall.



HOW TO GET THERE:

BUS: You can take a bus either from Delhi or Chandigarh to Manali. The bus has two routes – a stop at Patlikuhal, before Manali or the second stop that takes you directly to the Naggar bus stop.

TAXI: Although expensive, a direct taxi from Chandigarh to Naggar or Patlikuhal can be taken.

FLIGHT: You can take a bus from Bhuntar airport to Patlikuhal via Kullu, or to Naggar. A direct taxi from the airport to the property can be taken as well.



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me abundantly*

pure abundance,



*I love & approve
of myself!*

pure love,

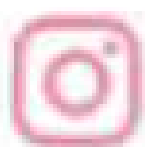
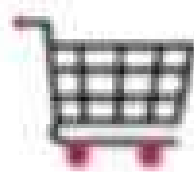


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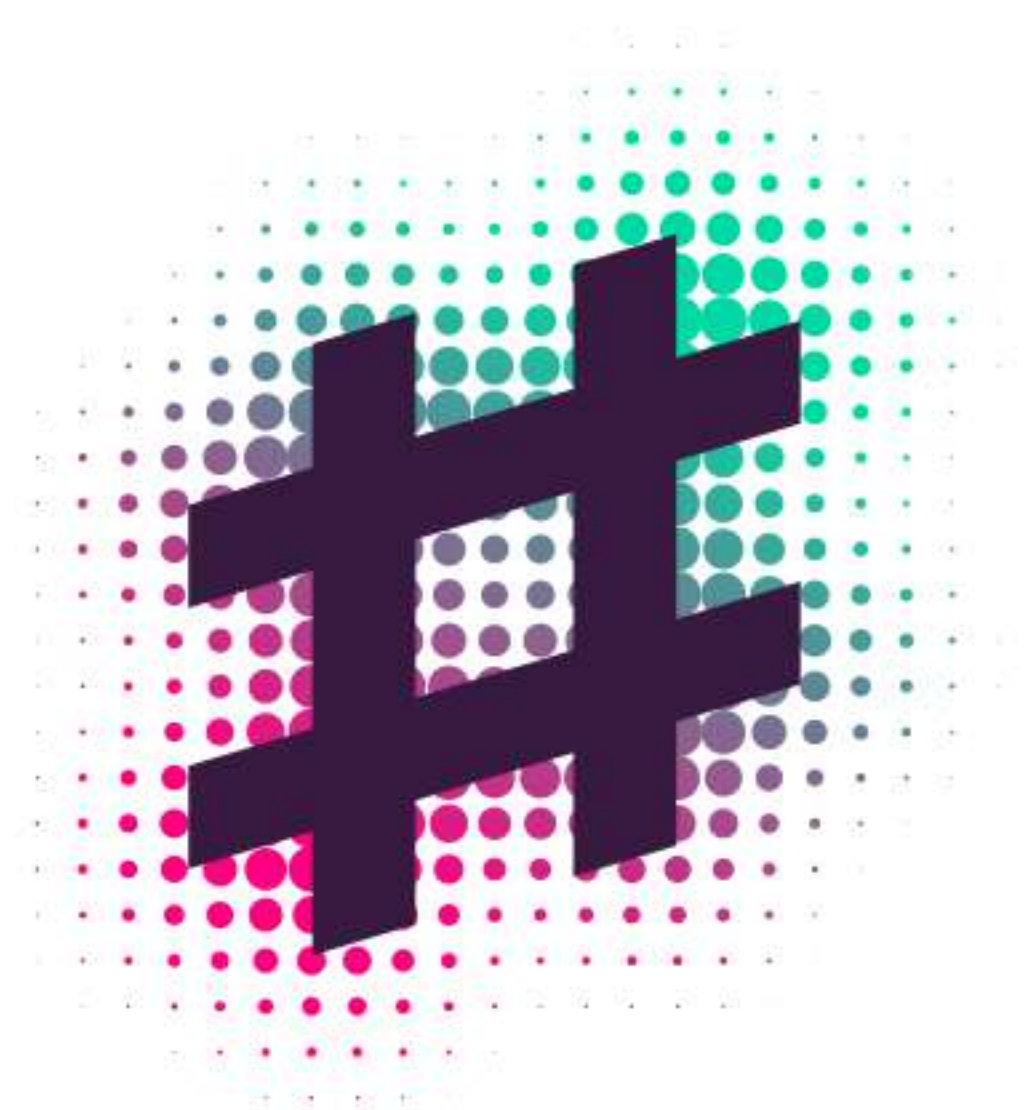


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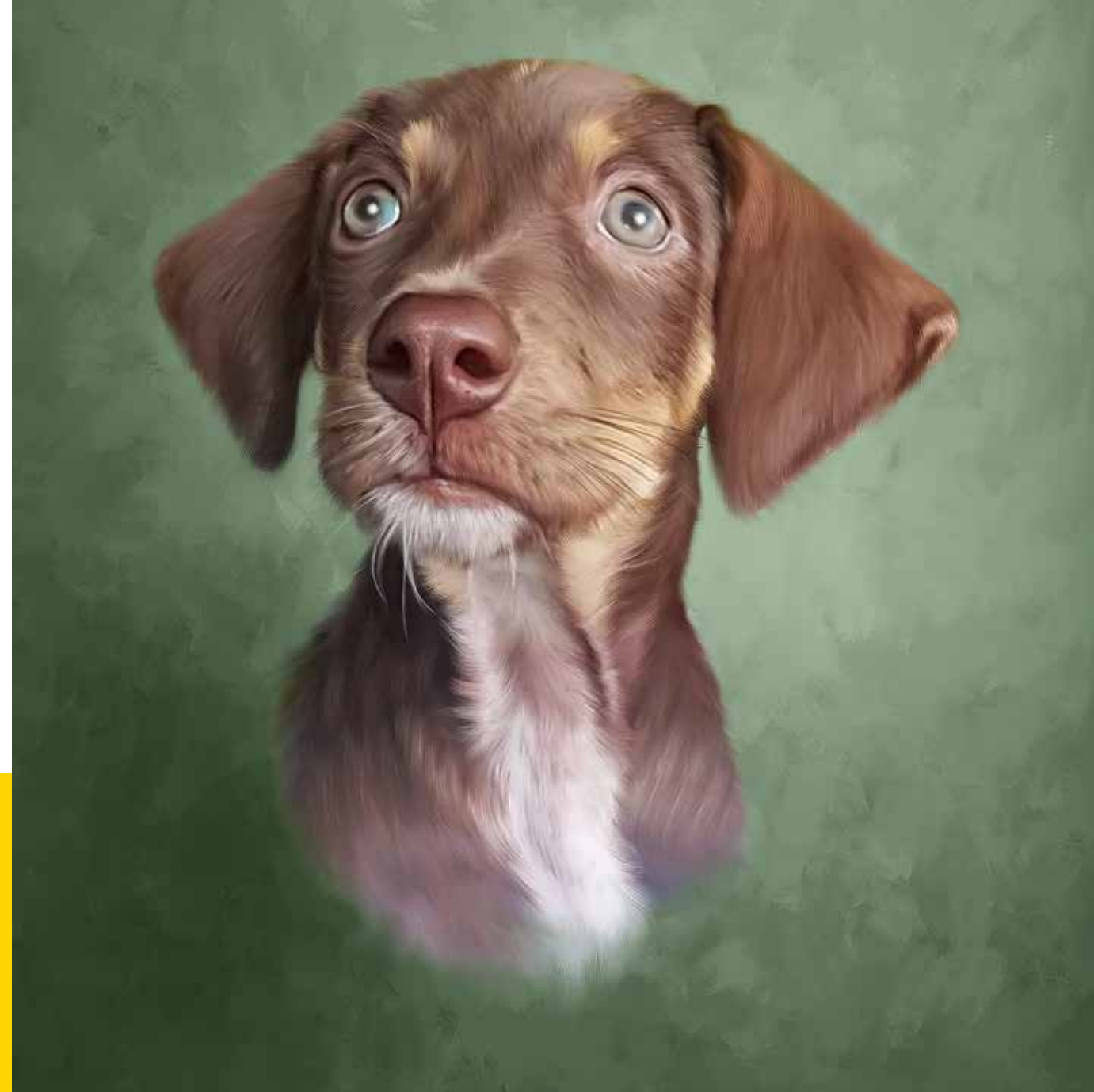
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PETS

Pawfect

Portraits

Pets are the one constant solace in many of our lives. For pet parents everywhere, their bond with their animal companions means the world to them. At **Pawstro**, you can have a digital portrait of your pet hand-drawn to capture the essence of this bond. **Arushi Dusaj** takes us through the innovative process.



Are you a pet lover? We all love our pets unconditionally, right? Why wouldn't we, they are the best things that have happened to us! Pampering one's pets is like a ritual for every pet lover. If you are looking at doing something special for your pet, look no further!

Pawstro finds their passion in creating pet portraits that will immortalise the bond you share. For many, pets become a part of the family, and the deep emotional bond shared is unparalleled. They stand by our side through thick and thin, and we want to share everything with them. We find comfort in pets like nowhere else. Pawstro aims to help pet owners all around cherish these good memories and the love you have for your furry companion.

If a picture speaks a thousand words, then these exclusively portraits by Pawstro echo all the different stories you share with your beloved pet. They provide a variety of services, and their custom-made high-resolution digital portraits can be printed on frames, mugs, mobile phone cases, pillow covers, t-shirts or any other surfaces that you'd like. They're made by experienced artists from India and are available with a transparent background or with a colourful background at affordable rates.



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Here are some steps that you can follow that can help you get customized portraits for your pets.

STEP 1

Pick a picture

Choose your favourite picture of your pet from your mobile and upload it in the 'File Upload' button on the 'Order Now Page'. You can check out the image guidelines for tips. If the image is not of the required resolution or has other issues, they might write to you asking for alternate options.

STEP 2

Place your order

Choose the most suitable options from a variety of background options and sizes available. Click on the 'Place Order' button after checking all the details.

STEP 3

Get ready to grab the portrait

The wait is finally over! The digital copy of the order is sent to you within 48 hours, after which you can approve or suggest changes if you feel the need. Once the picture is finalized, it will be mailed to you in high resolution. You can then get it printed with from a printer near you.

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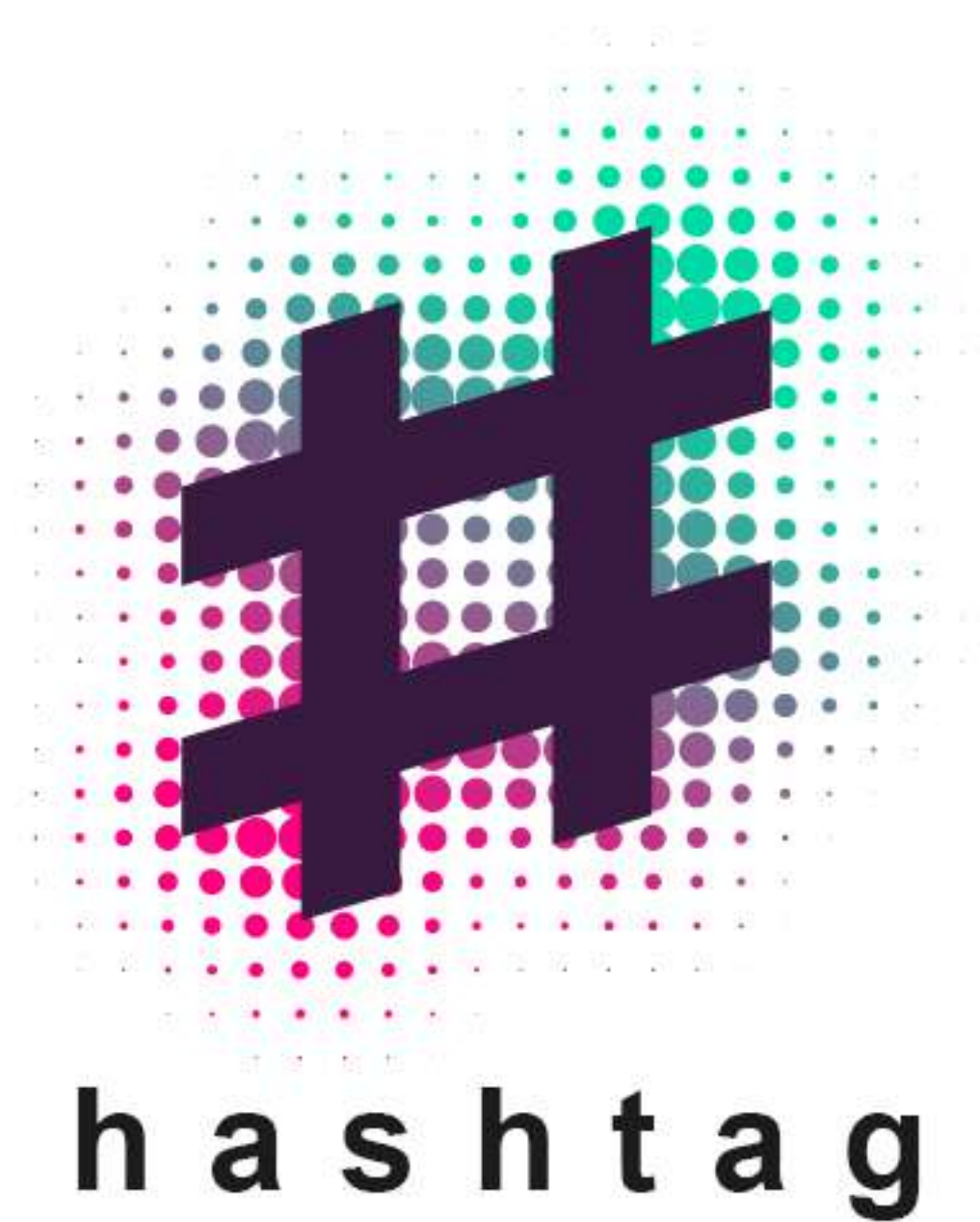


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"I just want to do films I'm passionate about"

HARSHVARDHAN KAPOOR

HARSHVARDHAN KAPOOR may come across as a serious young lad, owing to his oeuvre of roles. Stardom and fame are indeed significant factors for any actor to be known amongst their audience and fans. Needless to state then, that Harshvardhan too wishes to attain such stardom and fame – in an organic manner.

His most recent role saw him starring in the Netflix anthology series *Ray*, created by Sayantan Mukherjee. The series, directed by Srijit Mukherji, Vasan Bala and Abhishek Chaubey, and produced by Ajit Andhare, has been gaining steam, with reviews being favourable. Based on the short stories of Satyajit Ray, the mini-story *Spotlight* features our man of the hour Harshvardhan in the lead role. The actor takes some time out from his busy schedule to speak to **LIPIKA VARMA** for **Hashtag India**. Here are some details, straight from the horse's mouth...

On Ray

What inspired you as an actor to work on Netflix's anthology on *Ray*, specifically *Spotlight*? Did your father Anil Kapoor have anything to say on the choice?

We were both excited that I was going to work with Vasan Bala. He is a fantastic director. He [dad] lets me make my own choices. The opportunity to work with a talented director was the first thing that drove me to do the film. Also, the intriguing script, so it all started from there.

How do you look at remakes/adaptations of classic short stories from Satyajit Ray?

Firstly, it's not an adaptation. We can say it is loosely inspired, that would be the right terminology to be used. The directors have taken loose inspiration from the short stories and made them their own. This is courageous and something which Mr Ray would have wanted to see himself. We have managed to do [this] successfully. We are lucky and we have done something quite cool and different.



Do you agree Satyajit Ray is an institution?

There is so much to learn. And with this anthology that has come to me, I would like to go back and look at his work and experience it with a fresh perspective.

Your look in the series is that of a divine look which also is freshness personified, like a mixture of celebrity ego & religious beliefs. Any thoughts?

Divine is kind of more symbolic for inner confidence that we radiate outward which becomes the spotlight. It's supposed to

"I just want to do films I'm passionate about."



On stardom: “When people have very conventional expectations from you, but you chose differently, it will take time to make a mark.”

Your debut was with *Mirzya*, directed by Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra. How do you look at your journey so far?

After *Mirzya* was released, the film didn't do well. I always knew the kind of films I wanted to do and the journey I wanted to take on was indeed unconventional. When people have very conventional expectations from you, but you chose differently, it will take time to make a mark. But with *AK vs AK*, *Bhavesh Joshi*, and *Spotlight*, that's happened over a year or so. I'm grateful and looking forward to my next.

Your choice of films is unconventional, unlike the new rising actors who prefer choosing commercial films. What do you have to say?

It's my taste and sensibilities. It comes from what I consumed at a younger age when my mind was impressionable. My choices of *AK vs AK*, *Bhavesh Joshi*, and *Spotlight* are the reflections of the films that I would like to watch. I just want to do films I'm passionate about.

look more metaphoric and symbolic in that way. I think the film makes interesting points about our obsession in terms of religion, and how certain sections of our people are blindly following religion. How we are obsessed with celebrity culture. People are swayed by it. The film has an opinion on these things, but it is not heavy-handed and serious. It's very entertaining – bizarre and funny that it's trying to make these interesting points.

So is Harshvardhan religious-minded?

I'm not religious-minded at all. I believe in a higher power. I believe in being a good person doing good deeds.

The journey so far...

You come across as a confident and intense actor. How do you entertain yourself...or are looks are deceptive?

I have a tough time disconnecting from my roles. Not just the roles. *Spotlight* has come out; a lot of people have liked it. I want to disconnect myself and get back to my normal routine. I want to have fun and enjoy life. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has made it more difficult to enjoy life and there is no outlet for us. Normally, whenever a film gets a positive review and a lot of people like it, you go out, meet friends, have a drink, and celebrate with the industry etc. But all of that has been taken away from all of us. I have another film, a thriller that I have [almost] completed, which I must dub and finish. After that, I'm looking forward to travelling. I would like to be working on my craft without the pressure of an upcoming project. I have been shooting back-to-back - *AK vs AK*, *Spotlight*, and the thriller, which we shot in winter. Everything was happening simultaneously while the pandemic was happening too. I also got a new house for myself. A lot has happened in these 8 to 10 months – I need to unwind.

You starred alongside dad Anil Kapoor in *AK vs AK*, which is one of the most talked-about films.

AK vs AK...to tell you the truth, I didn't talk to the media much. I am not very outgoing and didn't have many public events because I was playing a version of me. People started believing that is how I am, but I am not like that. Yes, the response was amazing, much more than I expected. When I was shooting, I just thought it was small scenes and didn't even think critics would think about it and mention it.



You have preferred performing oriented roles...thus do you feel stardom has not yet happened to you?

That's an interesting point. I just try to do my best while performing any character. I'm as attracted to stardom; the idea of stardom is very exciting...it comes along with the money and the fame ...that are the perks of stardom. I think everybody has a different list of priorities. It all depends on how much you prioritize your creative, artistic integrity. Are you more particular and conscious about things and work that excite you more or are you ready to compromise over something that catapults you overnight? I'm more excited about the process of making and doing these films in a country where a lot of younger actors are doing a lot of mainstream films. I managed to be true to myself. I feel that's an interesting way to live your life.

Fame and the future

How important is fame to Harshvardhan?

Fame is important to me, not at the cost of creatively having the ability to do what I want. Creatively having the freedom over money and fame is priceless to me. I am hoping for fame, but it should happen organically, rather than me consciously trying to make an effort to achieve it...in this way, it will be long lasting. Do it on your terms. Over time I was supposed to do that Friday Night success. But films *AK vs AK*, *Bhavesh Joshi*, and *Spotlight* are films when you will look back you will feel these films have stood the test of time.

Having learned writing from Los Angeles do you agree writing has helped you choose productive cinema and characters?

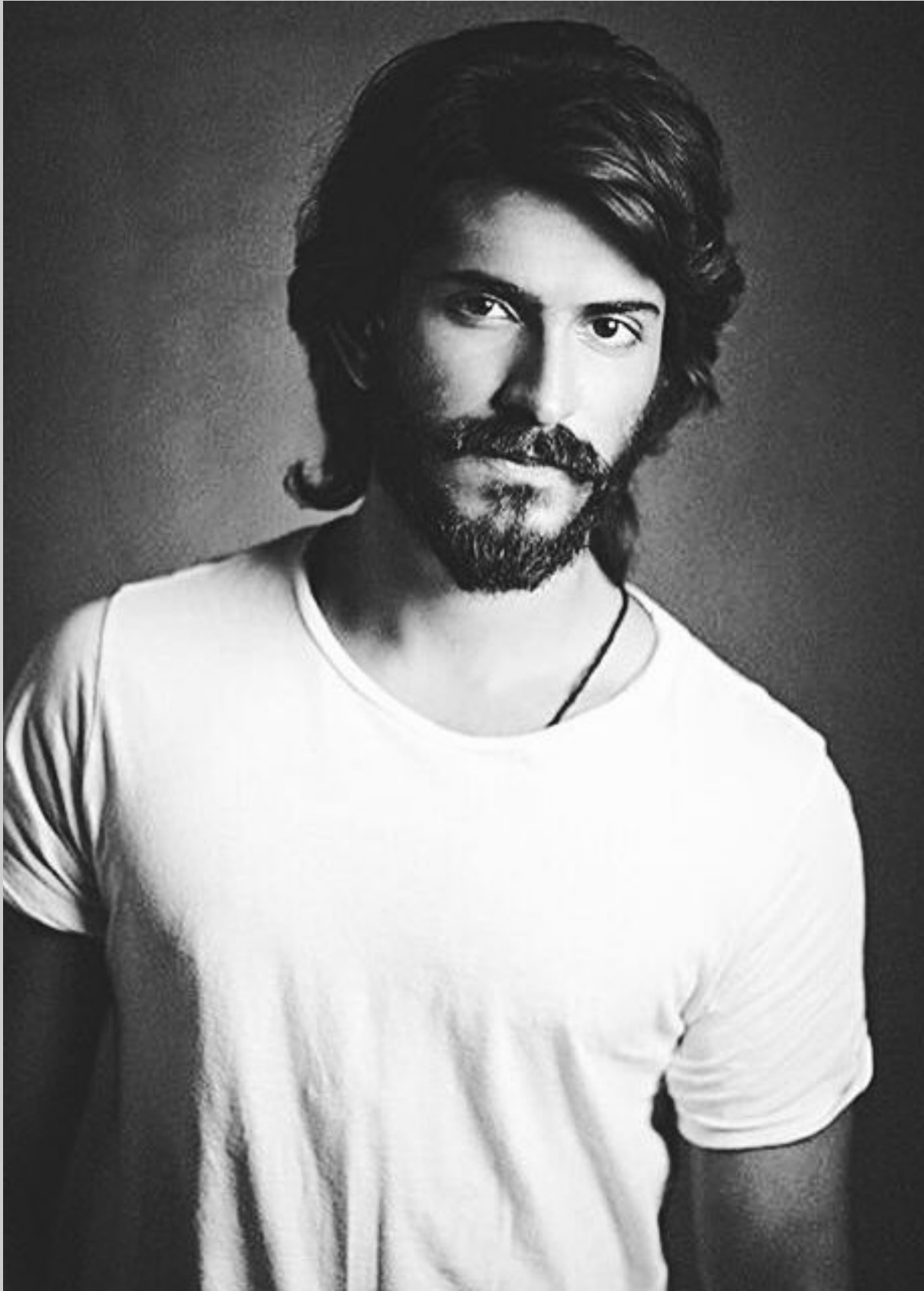
Yes, I studied writing in Los Angeles. My attraction to cinema started when I was 15/16. As a teenager, my father had these VHS collections before there were DVDs. I would come back from school and watch films. During my later teens –17/ 18 years old – every day I would watch one film. And then when I went to college to study films it continued. I always had a knack for and enjoyed writing. I wanted to get a formal education in it. I see myself as an actor now. But I don't see myself as an actor forever. I want to see myself doing other spheres of filmmaking, like writing and production. Still educating myself but still, have one eye on those spheres of filmmaking.



The impact of Spotlight: “I think the film makes interesting points about our obsession in terms of religion, and how certain sections of our people are blindly following religion. How we are obsessed with celebrity culture. People are swayed by it.”

Before embarking onto the big screen, we were told you were busy penning some scripts?

At some point in time definitely, I will focus on that. I don't know which genre I will begin with. All I know is that it's going to be personal before I move on to do a full-on feature-length film. I will try and make some home movies...get some filmmaking equipment with some friends. I will try to make art for some personal consumption that you don't have to show the world. Also, hone my skills and just make personal things for myself. It will be an amalgamation of visual and music, something very personal. I also want to save some money for equipment making home videos every day. Hopefully, that time comes.



Future films

It's a thriller, which was shot and complete. We shot it in December, January, and February. We have some patchwork and dubbing left. I cannot disclose much about it. All that I can reveal in this, it is a thriller. Dad [Anil Kapoor] and I are working together. Talks are on about a romantic comedy which is going to be set in Goa with certain people. Another director is set in Delhi that we are in discussion with. A couple of film talks are on with certain directors. But the thriller is ready.

Abinav Bindra biopic is also happening but currently, it's in the writing stage. Yes, there have been some inputs from my end in the writing but I'm not overlooking the process myself at the moment. Will be involved sooner or later.

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“It’s been a process of self-grooming and self-learning for me.”

Ritu Varma

In a freewheeling chat with **LIPIKA VARMA** for **Hashtag India**, Tollywood actor **RITU VARMA** talks about her personal life, being an outsider, belonging to an educationist family, and yet getting a strong foothold in the Tollywood industry, her parents, her professional life and more...

Tollywood actor Ritu Varma is well known for her work in Telugu and Tamil films. Born and bred in Hyderabad, she is fluent in Telugu. However, being a North Indian, she also dubs her Telugu films in her voice, which is a rarely found quality. Her exuberant performance in the Telugu short film *Anukokunda* brought recognition for this petite beauty. After Varma’s role as the female lead in the Telugu film *Pelli Choopulu*, a romantic comedy starring Vijay Deverakonda, there has been no looking back for Ritu. With a slew of films lined up – *Tuck Jadish* with Nani for release, ongoing shooting for *Varudu Kaavalenu*, and *Oke Oka Jeevitham* with Sharwanand being in post-production, Varma is certainly with her hands full. She takes some time to reflect on her journey so far...

On her personal life and family –

I live in Hyderabad. I’m a North Indian but was born and raised in Hyderabad. I do speak good Telugu and I dub for my films, but my mother tongue is Hindi. My dad is from Madhya Pradesh. My family is from Bhopal. My mom’s family has always been in Hyderabad. I’m a total Hyderabadi.



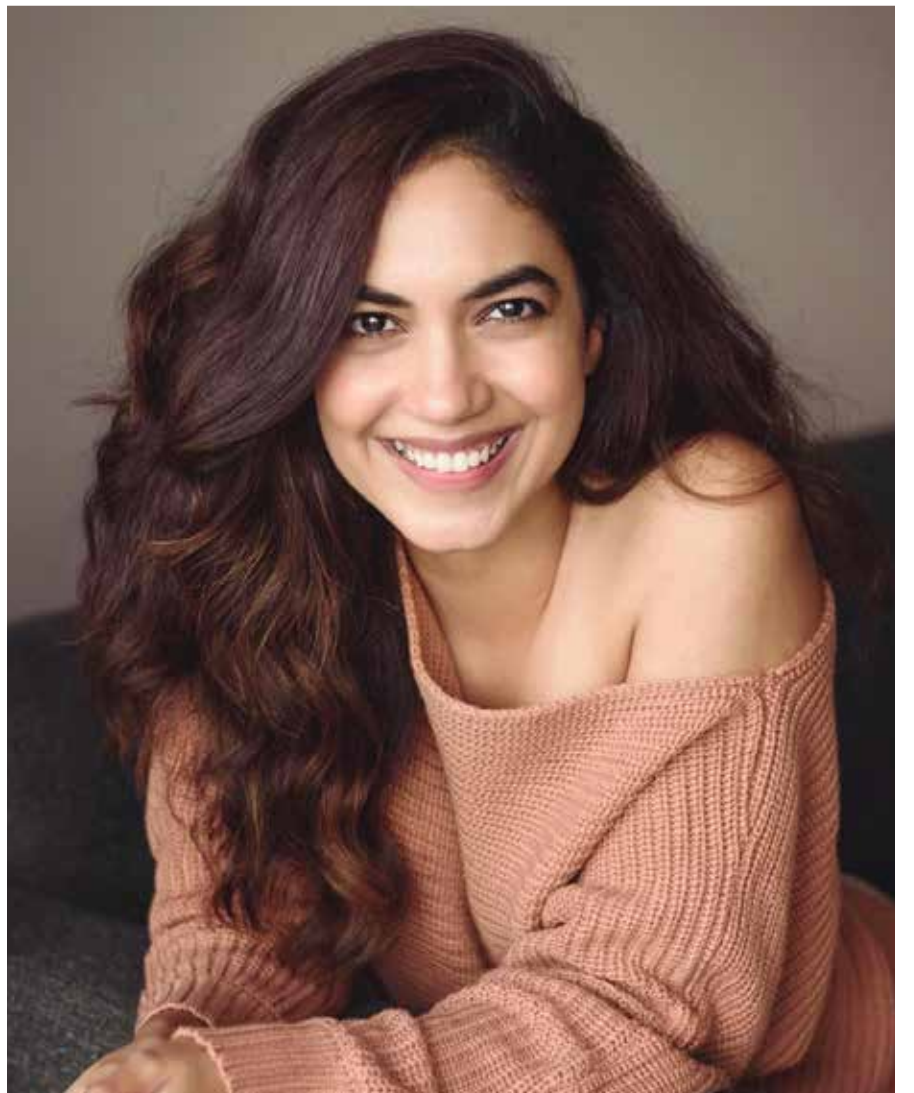
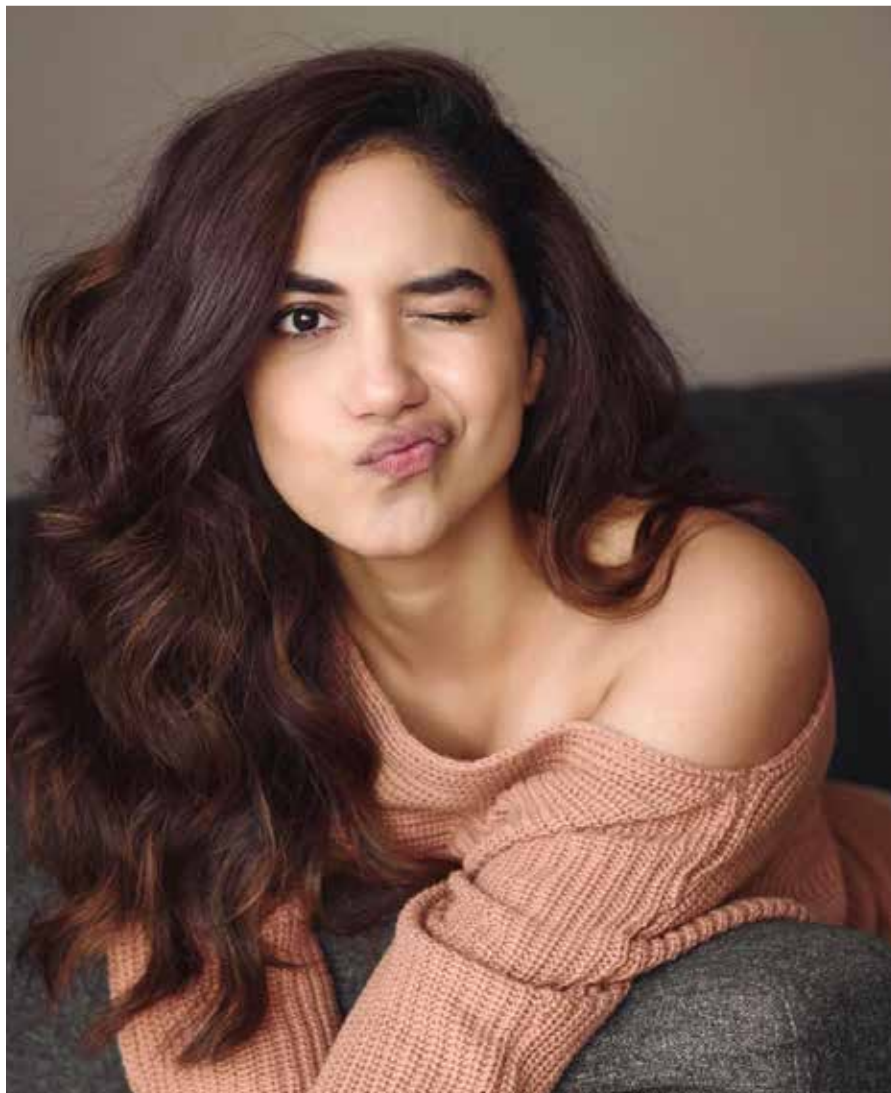
“Getting into acting was not a career choice for me. It happened accidentally.”

On relationships and dreams –

I would like to be single and focus on my career. There is a lot of time for love. If it happens it will probably happen. I have a good set of friends, love my family, and enjoy being on sets. I paint, sketch & read books. I’m a foodie so even when I’m travelling, I explore different cuisines. Maybe after a couple of years, I could do something in the food industry like opening a restaurant. I am not an expert in cooking but it’s like a stress buster for me. I like cuisines such as Thai, Japanese, Italian, and of course, Indian. Hopefully, I could start with a small cafe depending on how I feel after 4 years. As a person your taste changes; if I can afford I will do it apart from acting as it’s not a secure job.

Being an outsider, how easy/difficult was it for Ritu to sustain in the Tollywood industry?

I come from a family of educationists. My mother is a principal and also the founder of a school in Hyderabad. We have doctors and lawyers in our family. The acting was never something that came naturally to me. Initially, I had no idea; I was a big movie buff and loved watching films. Initially, it was very difficult as I didn’t know how the industry works. I didn’t understand the concept of having a manager. I have been brought up in a protected environment, so this industry was a bit of a shock. Whenever some people used a certain tone, it would shake me as I was very sensitive and naive



initially. It's been a process of self-grooming and self-learning for me. Now I know how to deal with certain things, how to ask for things if I deserve something. I don't let people cross lines with me at all. I'm a much more confident actor now.

Ritu Varma's filmy journey began accidentally –

Getting into acting was not a career choice for me. It happened accidentally. Having played the lead in the Telugu romantic-comedy *Pelli Choopulu* alongside Vijay Deverakonda, I then starred in a Telugu short film, *Anukokunda*. I started getting a lot of offers after this. Initially, I wasn't sure, so the first couple of films, I just did for fun... I wasn't sure whether this was the career for me. Working in films interested me. One thing led to another, and I started taking the craft seriously, getting a lot more passionate about acting. I'm so glad that I got the opportunity to work in *Pelli Choopulu*. This sort of changed my career altogether. It brought me recognition across the South Indian industry. Presently, I look at my journey as an exciting time. I have always made sure to explore and am fortunate to get a variety of roles.

Adding about not taking any acting classes or undergoing training, she asserts, "I haven't taken any training. Nothing beats the experience of doing one film after the other. Learning from the actor I worked with, that's what I have done. People call me a natural actor because of that. I haven't got any sort of training."

“Tuck Jagdish is a proper commercial family entertainer. This will help me reach a different set of the audience because so far, I have done urban films only.”

Being a Southern-Siren, Ritu Varma is hoping to strike the Bollywood industry soon –

I grew up watching Hindi films. I'm waiting for the right opportunity. I'm exploring Telugu and Tamil, but language is not a barrier. It's all about making good films. A lot of South and North technicians have always been exchanged. Change is always there and welcomed.

Adding further she asserts, "Working with Vijay Deverakonda and director Tharun Bhascker, it helped me reach a bigger audience and a lot of people took notice. In my journey of films that I wanted to be a part of, I got an opportunity to work with some big names I hadn't thought of – Gautham Menon, Dulquer Salman, and Vikram, whose works I have always followed and liked. My journey has been interesting. I'm sort of known to choose good scripts. I do feel a lot of pressure but I'm happy with my journey."

How was it working with Dulquer Salman?

I have great respect for him as an actor. I have great respect for the kind of work he has done. Working with him was very exciting for me. We are good friends now. I also like him as a person. He is extremely down to earth – coming from such a big family, he is still much grounded. I feel he is very easy to work with; he has no starry air. It's very important for you to like your co-actor.



How was it working with Nani? Do you all want Tuck Jagdish to release in theatres only?

Yes, that's what I have been told by the team as of now. We are looking for a theatrical release. It's a film that needs to be enjoyed on the big screen. The film is done on a huge scale with multiple actors in it. I think it's going to be a proper theatrical experience; we shot in a small town in real locations, like Rajahmundry. Probably, this film is not that OTT kind of a film. This has been my second collaboration with Nani. I played his fiancé in *Yevade Subramanyam*. The films are in great contrast. *Tuck Jagdish* is a proper commercial family entertainer. This will help me reach a different set of the audience because so far, I have done urban films only. It will take me to viewers, and people can see me in a new look; the character is also very different.

Elaborate on your role?

I play a village revenue officer. Whether or not I play a stern revenue officer, I can only say that it is different, I enjoyed doing it. This character will stand out; a lot of people have seen the released song and they have said that Nani and I look good together. We have received good reviews about the song, so there's a positive feeling. Now, I'm just waiting for the release. The team has been a fantastic passionate hard-working team with a great director and director of photography.

What to see her in next –

I am working on three films right now. *Tuck Jagdish* is a film with Nani, ready for release. It was supposed to release after the second lockdown but because of the second wave, it was postponed. The next film, *Varudu Kaavalenu*, features Naga Shaurya and me in the lead roles and is not yet been released. I have another bilingual (Tamil-Telegu) film coming up, *Oke Oka Jeevitham*, with Sharwanand.

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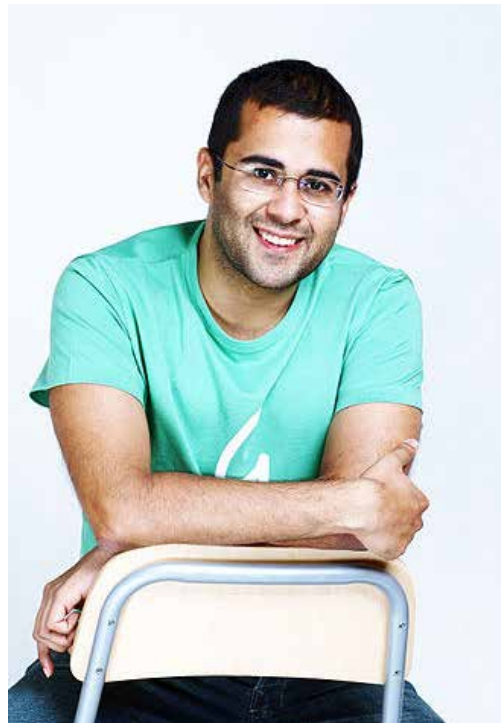
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India's most successful author keenly divides Twitterverse with his take on topics (much like his books) Hate him or love him, you can't ignore his views, even on social media!



Shobhaa De
@DeShobhaa

India's own Jackie Collins is quite a force on Twitter. Original and no holds barred, she might manage to rile people but isn't that itself a sign of success?



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One of the world's best-selling authors, Rowling's feed is a treasure to follow. With trivia about Harry Potter, upcoming releases, and her opinionated take on world affairs, she is not one to shy away from expressing her opinion.

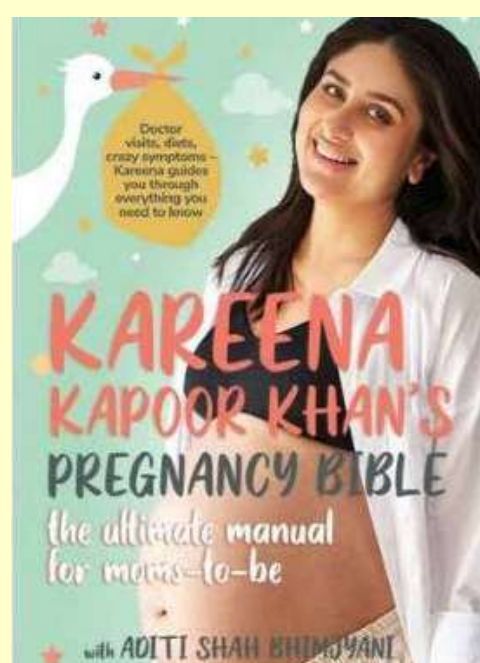


Devdutt Pattanaik
@devduttmyth

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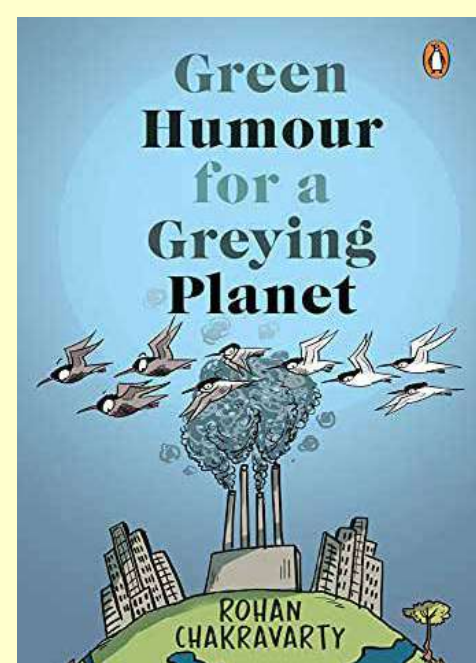
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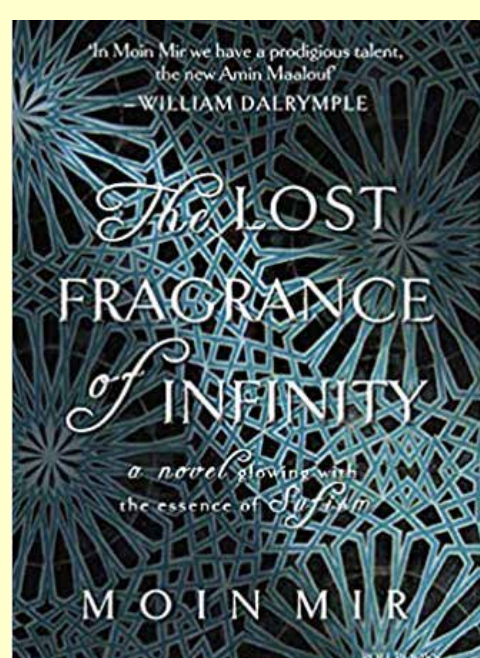
Kareena Kapoor Khan's Pregnancy Bible
by Kareena Kapoor Khan

In this handy manual, the Bollywood diva speaks about all things related to pregnancy, drawing insights from her personal experience – from her intense morning sickness to her crazy cravings for pepperoni pizza. Though the name has riled religious groups, this book holds your hand during one of the most intense experiences of life.



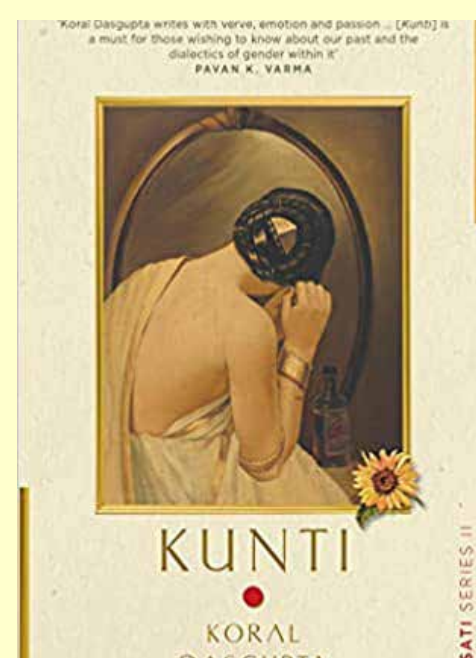
Green Humour for a Greying Planet
by Rohan Chakravarth

A curation of gag cartoons and comic strips based exclusively on wildlife and nature, this book is sure to provide its readers with some much-needed comic relief. Appealing to people across age groups, this powerfully uses satire to send across a message for change.



The Lost Fragrance of Infinity
by Moin Mir

A descendant of Hazrat Modud Chishti, one of the stalwart founders of the Chishti Sufi order, Moin Mir takes us on a journey into Sufism via a story set in the 18th century, spinning a tale of an unforgettable romantic and spiritual journey.



Kunti
by Koral Dasgupta

This book tells the story of Kunti, a matriarch in the *Mahabharata* and one of the *Pancha Satis*, from a childhood of scholarly pursuits to unwanted motherhood at adolescence, and a detached marriage to her ambitious love for the king of the *devas*.

Text: Mallik Thatipalli

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