SETINDIA

MAY 2022

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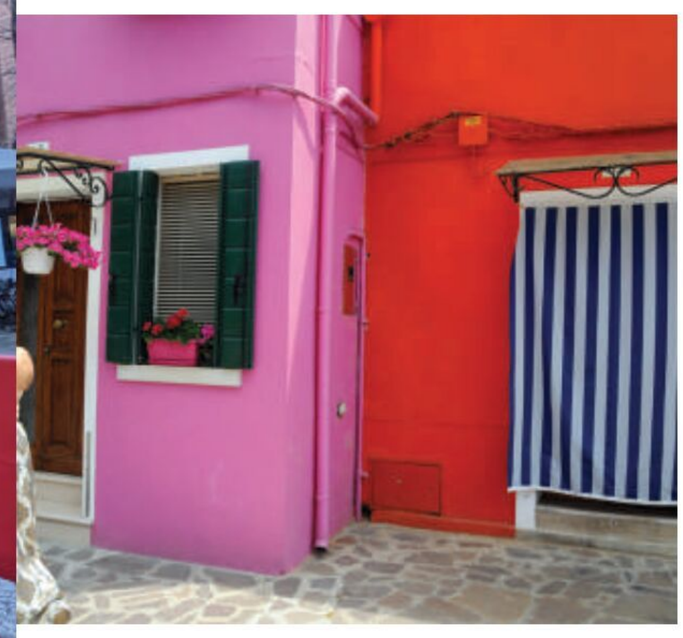

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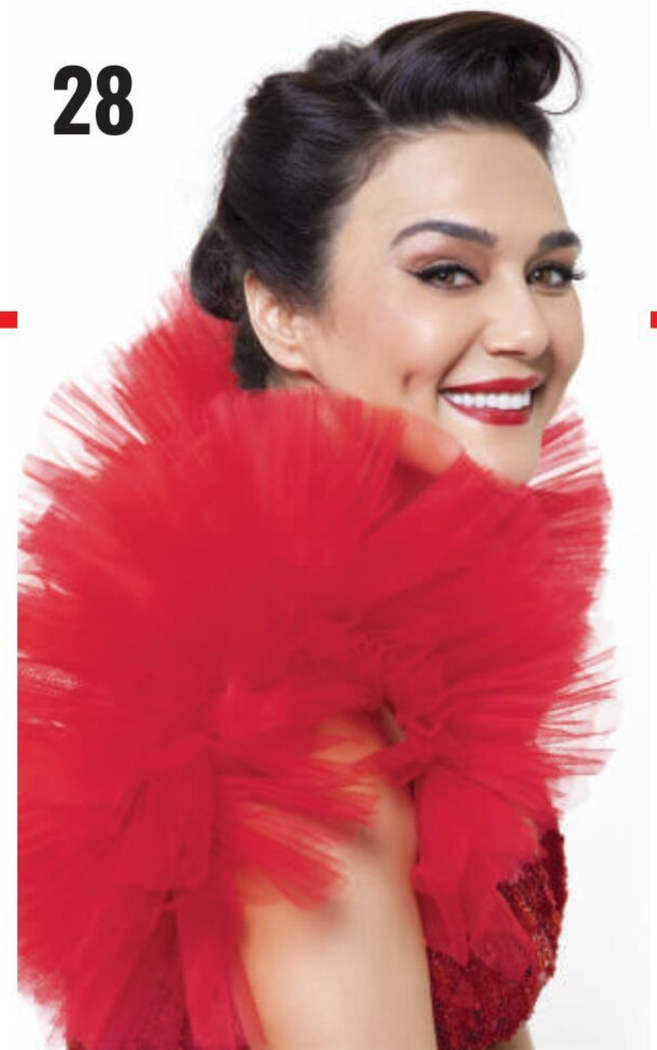


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EMPOWERING SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN GLOBALLY
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BEYOND LIMITS

SEEMA KUMAR, FOUNDER

Rearing and Resurrection

April showers bring May flowers (and Mother's Day), and this year the blooms are particularly welcome. For the first time in the past two years, the daffodils, lilacs, tulips, and wisteria bring new meaning and real hope that maybe — just maybe — we are at the tail end of the pandemic.

While the CDC, the EU, and the WHO all are assessing the latest epidemiology data, and the FDA and other authorities consider vaccinating babies, we have moved on and learned to accept and adapt in the face of the pandemic. Given confusing information, we decide when we want to top up our antibodies with a booster. Now that we have an option, we also decide when we want to wear a mask and when we should not. Some of us have done away with masks; others are still wearing them, especially when we feel unsafe. In fact, many of us have come to find security in masks. While they were meant for COVID, they have also kept us safe from the cold, flu, lewd stares, and our unkempt, unmade faces (devoid of make up). And, oh, by the way, it sure takes the edge away from the stench of airplane bathrooms, train station restrooms and the streets of New York.

Of course, the opposite is also true. One reason to take off the mask, especially when you are safe in your garden, is to breathe in and enjoy the fragrance of blooming May flowers. The colors of spring bring us joy and remind us all that life can bring. For those of us in the US, it reminds us of Mother's Day. Every day should be Mother's Day, some say – and



PHOTO CREDIT: SHRAVYA KAG

I agree. I don't mind a reminder to do something extra special that reminds me of my mother and how much she meant to me. Nor do I mind being appreciated by my son and my husband, and being serenaded with love and affection. Let's face it, with busy lives and schedules I (along with my husband and son) need a reminder to appreciate me. And then, being taken out to a garden brunch replete with French toasts, mimosas and thoughtful gifts is welcome.

But beyond the material, there is the meaningful.

Many of us South Asian women are mothers who have grown up in a culture that worships mothers. That said, many cannot be "mothers" as traditionally defined. Adoption, surrogacy, and other ways to experience the joys of motherhood has broadened the old definition.

Our cover star, Preity Zinta, chose surrogacy as an option. She is most known as a superstar who starred with the likes of Shah Rukh Khan, but her best role to date – and one she is apparently enjoying the most – is that of being a mother, changing her babies' diapers – while relishing learning how to cope with the job. Like many, she doesn't need a lesson in love — just in feeding and dealing with diapers. I hope you enjoy our interview with her – and all of the other great stories in this issue, including our interview with Chitra Divakaruni on her new book, "The Last Queen," our teens' takes on the world, and our recommendations for Mother's Day gifts. May May bring you the pleasure of the many fragrances of life.

Happy Mother's Day!

Utkarshnini Vaishishtha attending the Berlinale in Germany

The Long Road to Vindication

It took 10 years for Utkarshini Vashishtha's work to reach the screens. But when it did, it was a sensation

ABHIJIT MASIH

Utkarshini Vashishtha is one of a few female screenwriters in India whose film has grossed over Rs 100 crores (over $13 million), the gold standard of Bollywood. Her work on "Gangubai Khathiawadi" has helped see it become one of the most successful Bollywood film after the pandemic.

The film is also receiving rave reviews for the performance of Alia Bhatt as the titular character.

'Gangubai Kathiawadi' is another of the long list of women-centric films made by filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali, who has a legacy of making films based on strong female characters. His latest offering was in the works for 10 years, but kept taking a back seat to other projects, such as "Ramleela," "Bajirao Mastani" and "Padmaavat."

Vashishtha, a veteran of the television world in India and the Middle East, was working on a television reality show in India after finishing film school in New York when she was introduced to Bhansali, a judge on the show. Though she was part of the production team, she dreamed of

PHOTO CREDIT: UTKARSHINI VASHISHTHA



Utkarshini at a promotional function of the film Gangubai Kathiawadi with Alia Bhatt and Sanjay Leela Bhansali

getting into scriptwriting. Bhansali got wind of her plans and gave her "Mafia Queens of Mumbai," a book by Hussain Zaidi, and asked her to read the story of Gangubai in it.

"I read the whole book in a couple of hours and went back to him," she recalls. "He told me to take three days, write 10 scenes, and come back." Once he saw what she had come up with, Bhansali asked her to finish the whole screenplay in less than a month. But the production hit a snag and he decided to go ahead with the Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh starrer "Ramleela" instead.

Bhansali asked her to work as an associate director on "Ramleela." He felt it was important for a writer to be on set when their words are being translated into spoken dialogue. Vashishtha recalls him telling her, "You get to see exactly how an actor interprets your scene, how the director interprets it and you have the whole department in motion. You can't just sit in



"I WENT TO THE SET BUT HE DOESN'T LIKE ANYBODY TO TAKE PICTURES ON THE SET AND THEN HE HAS THE WHOLE SET COVERED WITH THIS HUGE TARPAULIN. THE SET RESEMBLES A GIANT IGLOO"



Utkarshini with her mentor and guide, Sanjay Leela Bhansali

a room and imagine this is how your film is going to be." The advice was perhaps instrumental in how the young screenplay writer visualized and wrote the scenes for "Gangubai..."

While "Gangubai Kathiawadi" marinated for nearly 10 years, Vashishtha wrote the screenplay and dialogues for "Sarabjit," the story of an Indian prisoner in a Pakistani prison. The film had Aishwarya Rai Bachchan in a lead role.

A Sanjay Leela Bhansali film is always shrouded in mystery till its release. No photography is allowed on the set, even by cast and crew.

"I went to the set but he doesn't like anybody to take pictures on the set and then he has the whole set covered with this huge tarpaulin. The set resembles a giant igloo," she says.

For any writer, recognition comes only after the film is released. Vashishtha talks about the long wait for that moment.

"That's the thing with our work on 'Gangubai Kathiawadi' started 10 years ago. Then suddenly it is made and launched. Then, for everybody else, it's current," Vashishtha says. She says it is difficult to to do justice while discussing her ongoing projects.

"That's the thing with writers," she says. "I can tell you all my projects, but you would know nothing about them."

After the Bhansali film wrapped up, Vashishtha set up base in Los Angeles. She is working on an international series that she is really excited to talk about.

"It is fabulous, and I absolutely love it," she says. "It's an immigrant tale – the issues faced by men all over the world. It's a very global tale, not just a South Asian one. I've lived on five different continents, so I've used all those experiences. The production details for the series are being worked out with a producer already onboard and will be announced soon."

That will take some time. So Vashishtha will just have to wait for her name to be associated to another piece of riveting content.

THE TALES OF SAMIRA AHMED AND HER REVOLUTIONARY GIRLS

PRATIKA YASHASWI

Reading Samira Ahmed, you would expect her to be someone who's always been a published writer, as if she'd tumbled out of the womb creating historic and phenomenal characters and storylines. But it turns out, she published her first book at 46, after a long and rewarding career involving teaching high school English, working for non-profits and even fighting for equitable funding in NY's public schools as a lobbyist. "Love, Hate, & Other Filters" was an instant bestseller.

She is the first South Asian Muslim woman to voice Kamala Khan, Marvel's first Muslim superheroine. Like Ms. Marvel, her signature characters have always been revolutionary girls. Her "revolutionary girls," as she calls them, represent an archetype of strength, insight and compassion, are usually Muslim and often Indian American.

"Revolutionary girls don't necessarily take up arms," says Ahmed. "...sometimes the revolutionary girl is just taking control when others are falling



"WITH MY NOVELS, I OFTEN FIRST WRITE A SHORT STORY — WHAT I CALL A TREATMENT — THAT INCORPORATES THE SEEDS OF THE PLOT IDEA I HAVE. I WRITE A VIGNETTE THAT HELPS ME EXPLORE THREE KEY ELEMENTS THAT ARE STARTING POINTS TO ALL MY WORK: A CHARACTER, A CONFLICT, A QUESTION"

down. And sometimes it means standing up for yourself when others want to muffle you."

Her latest young adult novel, "Hollow Fires" (on sale May 10, 2022; ages 12+), taps into the current and timely conversation about racism and its dangers and the terrible costs of misinformation. A topic so delicate and polarizing blooms fully through an innovative storyline and lyrical prose.

Congratulations on your new book! Almost everything you've published since you began writing has received immense popularity and near-instant success. What do you think your readers and critics love about your novels?

Thank you so much! Every novel is a dialogue between the reader and the writer and I'm so interested in that experience. Stories are about connection, about our interrelatedness as human beings. When I read a book, what first pulls me in is the character and their voice — how in many ways, they're like me — a regular person often facing an unexpected or extraordinary circumstance. I want my readers to feel those connections to my characters and also to the experience of reading itself… to briefly visit a world not their own and to experience it through a new or different lens. And it's that very act that broadens your world view. I hope my readers feel those connections — to the character, to the story, and to themselves.

Tell us about yourself. What was it like growing up? How does your work as a high school teacher and lobbyist influence your writing today?

I grew up as the only desi and only Muslim in my school. We were the first Indians to move to our little town in the Chicago suburbs! I definitely had an "outsider" experience in many ways, but at the same time, I really enjoyed my high school experience and was really involved in school activities. But I always wanted to leave that small town in search of bigger places and experiences. My work as a lobbyist was directly linked to education — trying to ensure fair funding for public schools in New York. Through both those experiences, I had the good fortune to meet so many inspiring young people who were finding their voices, their politics. As a writer, I have the privilege of bringing the promise, challenges, and ferocity of youth to life.

What's your writing process like when writing your novels? Is it different from when you're working on someone else's fleshed-out character?

Working on my novels is quite different from working on comics and I love both! Both start with a seed of an idea. With my novels, I often first write a short story — what I call a treatment — that incorporates the seeds of the plot idea I have. I write a vignette that helps me explore three key elements that are starting points to all my work: a character, a conflict, a question. Though writing a Ms.

Marvel script is wholly different than writing a novel, I still approach Kamala's story with those things in mind. Her character is well established and getting her voice just right is critical as I start to draft the script — that element of her character defines her world view, her approach to every conflict. Working in comics is a much more collaborative process than when you're writing the first draft of a book and, honestly, I love both!

How did you come to be the first South Asian Muslim writer to bring a voice to Marvel's premiere Muslim superhero? What's it been like?

Being the first South Asian Muslim to write Ms. Marvel has truly been an honor and a joy. Ms. Marvel means so much to so many people (me included!) and I wanted to do right by her character and all the readers who love her.

I remember when I saw the very first Ms. Marvel cover and it was just so iconic. I remember thinking how excited I would've been as a young reader to see a hero that looked like me and how amazing the series was going to be for kids who had never seen themselves written that way.

Kamala is a regular girl with an extraordinary job. She has friends and family who are important in her life. She's not perfect, but she tries so hard to be good. She's also funny. Ultimately, I think that's what so many people love about her. It's what I love about her. Every child deserves to see themselves as a hero on the page — and Ms. Marvel has given that to so many kids. It's a privilege to be a part of that.

What draws you to YA fiction? Some of the themes you cover, like the chilling racism-fueled murder in "Hollow Fires" can be extremely challenging to talk about even for adults. How do you do it?

I love writing for young adults because it's such an interesting, complex space to write in. When you're a teen, you occupy this interstitial space between childhood and adulthood. You're on the cusp of a new world — one that you have a hand in building for yourself. It's both exciting and terrifying. I call it the realm of possibility—but it can be a fraught experience. So often — too often — young people are forced to find their courage, to grapple with painful situations because of circumstances that are beyond their control — because of choices the adults around them have made. Just turn on the news and you can see so many examples of this. Often old men decide to wage wars, and they send our young people to fight in them. I'm interested in exploring that — in unpacking moments in childhood when life is shattered. Nothing can really prepare you for that moment and yet our children are faced with that every day. I try to write about these themes honestly and with compassion and candor because our young people deserve it. Adults who believe our kids can't handle these discussion are allowing their own discomfort to guide them and, frankly, they are grossly underestimating the intelligence of young people.

Tell us about your revolutionary girls. It's a defining character in almost everything you've written. Why is this theme so close to your heart?

I have had the good fortune of meeting so many brilliant, inspiring young women. Girls who are facing tough choices and difficult circumstances in a world where institutionalized racism and sexism are pervasive. And yet, I see them finding their voices, their power, even when the odds are against them. When I use the term "revolutionary girl," I don't just mean heroes like Ms. Marvel who are empowered by terrigen mist. So much of Ms. Marvel's heroism comes from the fact that she is a young woman, growing up, trying to do good — that's who she was even before she became a hero. Sometimes revolutionary acts can be "quieter" like in "Love Hate & Other Filters," where my protagonist, Maya, has to find the courage to speak her truth, to define her future for herself. Other times, like with Internment, it can me fighting against the system for your freedom. Still other times, as in "Hollow Fires," it can mean doing what Safiya does — uncovering difficult truths, speaking the truth when people are trying to muffle her voice, even threatening her because someone has to find the courage to act and she decides it might as well be her. I love exploring all the nuance, the complexity of the stories of revolutionary girls.

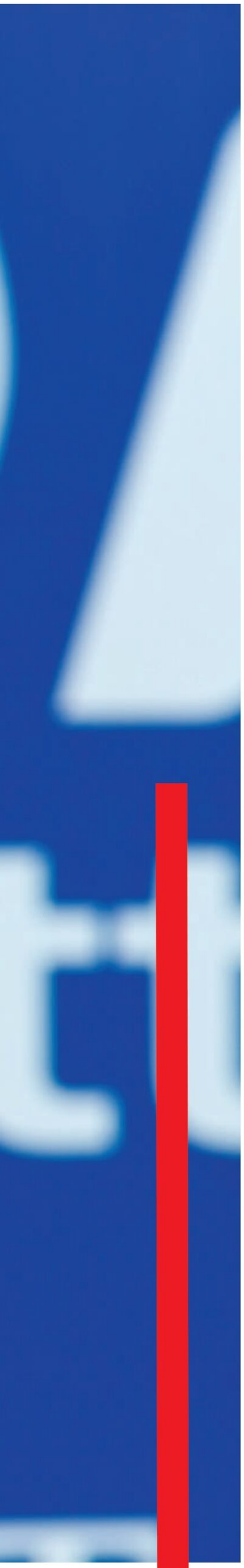
Any interesting projects coming up for you in the near future?

Yes! "Hollow Fires" releases in May and so does my final issue of the "Ms. Marvel Beyond the Limit" miniseries with a collection of the five issues hitting shelves in June. I also have the sequel to my middle-grade fantasy hitting shelves this fall. "Amira & Hamza: The Quest for the Ring of Power" was such a joy to write. It's a thrilling adventure with two bickering siblings taking on one very scary jinn. I'm also working on an anthology called "Magic Has No Borders," a collection of young adult science fiction/fantasy stories written by South Asian diaspora writers that I'm co-editing with Sona Charaipotra, [which will be] out in summer 2023. I've been busy — in the best kind of way!



PHOTO CREDIT: MAI GROVES

Tennis player Sania Mirza prepares to return a serve during Round 2 of the PTT Pattaya Open 2012 on February 9, 2012 at Dusit Thani Hotel in Pattaya, Thailand



ADVANTAGE SANIA

The tennis legend put India on the map before announcing her retirement this year

SWARNENDU BISWAS

"'Game, set, match,' the chair umpire called. The match was over. They have won but that was not all... She saw her partner Martina Hingis running towards her to congratulate the new number one women's doubles player in the world. Martina was smiling radiantly with her right forefinger up showing the No. 1 sign. Martina came and hugged her.

"Her entire tennis career flashed before her. She struggled to come to terms with the momentous reality. Injuries and surgeries; autorickshaw rides in the early mornings to reach the court...thrill of winning, disappointment of losing...all swam before her eyes. As if she was seeing her own movie in the court." (Courtesy: Ace Against Odds by Imran Mirza, Sania Mirza and Shivani Gupta).

She went on to become the most successful woman tennis player in India. The inspiring story of Sania Mirza could encourage generations of aspiring tennis players in cricket-obsessed India.



Sania Mirza reacts after losing a point during Round 2 of the PTT Pattaya Open 2012 on February 9, 2012 at Dusit Thani Hotel in Pattaya, Thailand

She went on to become the most successful woman tennis player in India. The inspiring story of Sania Mirza could encourage generations of aspiring tennis players in cricket-obsessed India.

INDIA'S TENNIS SUPERSTAR

She has won six Grand Slam titles in her career – three in the doubles and three in mixed doubles. No other female India tennis player has won even one. The highest-ranked female tennis player from India in the singles (she became world No. 27 in mid-2007) and of the former doubles world No.1 in the Women's Tennis Association rankings, is legacy to her talent, years of sacrifice, uncommon determination, and perseverance.

SWEATS AND TEARS

"When I began my journey in tennis in 1992, there were very few hard courts in Hyderabad and I played on cow-dung courts, which were unique to India. Financing my career for almost a decade-and-a-half until I was able to earn a living from

AN ABUNDANCE OF AWARDS

Some prestigious awards Sania has won:

Arjuna Award (2004)

Officially known as Arjuna Awards for Outstanding Performance in Sports and Games, it is the second-highest sporting honor of India.

Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award (2015)

Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award, formerly known as the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award in Sports and Games, it is the highest sporting honor of India.

Padma Shri (2006)

Padma Shri is India's fourth-highest civilian award.

Padma Bhushan (2016)

Padma Bhushan is India's third-highest civilian award.

TRIUMPHS AT THE ASIAN GAMES

- Bronze in the Mixed Doubles (with Leander Paes) at the 2002 Asian Games, in Busan, South Korea.
- Gold in the Mixed Doubles (again with Leander Paes) at the 2006 Asian Games, held in Doha, Qatar.
- Silver in the Singles at the 2006 Asian Games, held in Doha, Qatar.
- Silver in the Team Event at the 2006 Asian Games, held in Doha, Qatar.
- Silver in the Mixed Doubles (pairing with Vishnu Vardhan) at the 2010 Asian Games, held in Guangzhou, China.
- Bronze in the Singles at the 2010 Asian Games, held in Guangzhou, China.
- Gold in the Mixed Doubles (pairing with Saketh Myneni) at the 2014 Asian Games, held in Incheon, South Korea.
- Bronze in the Women's Doubles (pairing with Prarthana Thombare) at the 2014 Asian Games, held in Incheon, South Korea.

prize money was perhaps the biggest challenge for my family," Sania said. On top of that she had to bear the murmurs from extended family and friends about how Sania would get too dark playing in the sun, which would make her difficult to get her married off.

Her family's unwavering support helped Sania to deal with the impediments.

Imran Mirza, Sania's father, mentor and her coach (he used to play tennis in his young days), said, "Almost 30 years ago, my wife and I devoted our efforts towards helping Sania become an international level tennis player. Over the years, I have worked as her coach, trainer, mentor, guide, philosopher, financial controller, travel agent, advertising agent. Together with my wife, we have gone on to do everything that was ever needed to help Sania achieve success at the highest level of the game."

EARLY PROMISE

Born on November 15, 1986 in Mumbai, Sania, the elder of two sisters, began playing tennis at the age of six.

"I think she was about 7 years old when I realized that Sania has a special talent for tennis," Imran said. "We encouraged her and she kept improving. When she first played Junior Wimbledon in 2001, we thought she had a chance to become a professional tennis player and decided to focus on that."

Imran still coaches Sania, though over the years she has had stints with international coaches like Bob Brett, Tony Roche and Sven Groeneveld from whom Imran also learned.

According to Sania, her first major international triumph was when she won the Girls' Doubles title at Wimbledon in 2003. However, in 2002, she shared a bronze in the Asian Games in mixed doubles, where she partnered with Leander Paes.

MOTIVATION AND GROOMING

"When Sania broke onto the international scene on the strength of a world-class forehand, she had several technical weaknesses," Imran said. "Her backhand was 'iffy,' her first serve was inconsistent, her second serve was weak, her volleys were poor, and her physical fitness needed work. These were all the areas we needed to work on and quickly, in the full glare of the spotlight." Imran motivated Sania by not being carried away by wins or losses.

"Giving her best shot has been my focus," he said. "I always wore dark glasses when I was on court during her matches so that my eyes never gave away even if I felt disappointed. I was positive and wins and losses were treated on par. I would use losses to help her learn from them and never treated them as major setbacks. This took away the pressure of winning from her and she always stayed calm during the critical moments in matches."

GRAND SLAM WINNINGS

Sania's six Grand Slam titles includes the Women's Doubles in Wimbledon and the US Open in 2015; the Women's Doubles in the Australian Open in 2016 (all three with Martina Hingis); the Mixed Doubles in the Australian Open in 2009 (with Mahesh Bhupathi); the Mixed Doubles in the French Open in 2012 (again with Bhupathi); and the Mixed Doubles in the US Open in 2014 (with Bruno Soares). In all, she reached Grand Slam finals four times in the women's doubles and seven times in the mixed doubles.



PHOTO CREDIT: PAUL COWAN

Sania Mirza playing in the first round of the Qatar Open ATP tournament, February 26, 2007.

HIGHS AND LOWS

I asked Sania what were the three most momentous occasions in her long career. She had trouble pinpointing them.

Then she said: "Becoming Doubles World No.1 in WTA rankings in 2015, winning the Wimbledon Women's Doubles title in 2015, triumphing at the prestigious Year end Championships in 2014 and 2015, winning 14 medals for India in Asian Games, Commonwealth Games and Afro-Asian Games and representing India at four Olympic Games would be high on my list of glorious moments of my career," she conveyed.

As for the nadir, Sania said, "The lowest point was when Rohan Bopanna and I lost narrowly to the US team and missed the opportunity to win a medal for India in the Rio Olympics."

DOUBLES AND SINGLES

From her success in the doubles, which outshines her run in the singles in terms of statistics, a casual observer could conclude her strength lay in the doubles. But that would not be accurate.

She played singles and doubles for 10 years as a professional, starting off in 2002, and went on to become World No. 27 in the singles in mid-2007.

Sania explained: "I had beaten several Grand Slam champions, like Martina Hingis (twice), Marion Bartoli (twice), Svetlana Kuznetsova, Victoria Azarenka, Li Na, etc. However, I suffered major injuries and needed three surgeries – on both my knees and my right wrist – because of which I had to give up singles in 2012 and focus on doubles to extend my career."

FAVORITE PARTNERS

It was no surprise that Sania named Martina Hingis as her most favorite women's doubles partner.

"Mahesh (Bhupathi) is my favorite mixed doubles partner." Cara Black, with whom Sania had some great women's doubles wins, is another favorite.

In August 2016, Sania and Martina Hingis announced their decision to split as a team while citing their last few under-par performances.

Asked the reason for the split, Sania observed, "Every doubles' combination in tennis has a shelf life. We dominated women's doubles in the world for a year-and-a-half as a team (San-Tina), and when we were unable to maintain the high

standards we had set for ourselves, we mutually decided to play with different partners."

THE ACADEMY OF POTENTIAL

Sania recently announced her retirement, stating that 2022 would be her last season in competitive tennis.

"I hope to complete the year and try to get to the best possible ranking I can before I call it quits on my career," she said. However, she will continue to prepare future tennis players for India at the Sania Mirza Tennis Academy, which was founded in 2014.

"The goal of Sania Mirza Tennis Academy is obviously to provide world class facility and guidance for the next generation of tennis players from our country," she said. Recently, Prarthana Thombare from SMTA became the 22nd tennis player to represent India at the Olympics. SMTA has also produced several other junior boys and girls who earned national rankings. Sania tempers her high hopes for tennis in India with pragmatism. "I have been around for around two decades but we have still not managed to produce another women's player who can represent India regularly at the Grand Slams," she said "We have a few talented girls but tennis is very competitive and a truly global sport. It is not going to be easy for us to produce a top-level women's tennis player in the near future."

Success Stories with WTA

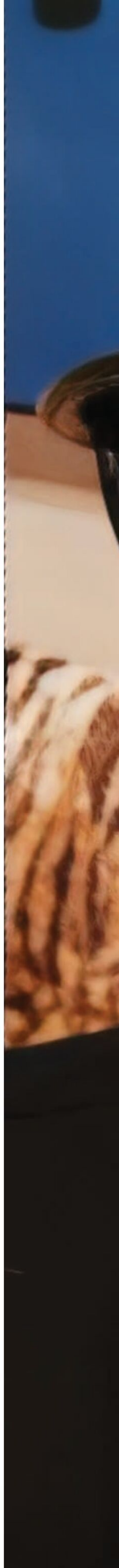
- Won the WTA Doubles Finals in 2014 along with Cara Black)
- Won the WTA Doubles Finals in 2015 along with Martina Hingis)
- Reigned for 91 weeks as the top-ranked player in the WTA doubles rankings.
- She is among the two Indian female tennis players to win a WTA title (the other being Ankita Rana), and the only female Indian tennis player to reach the top 100 in the singles rankings.

"BECOMING DOUBLES WORLD NO.1 IN WTA RANKINGS IN 2015, WINNING THE WIMBLEDON WOMEN'S DOUBLES TITLE IN 2015, TRIUMPHING AT THE PRESTIGIOUS YEAR END CHAMPIONSHIPS IN 2014 AND 2015, WINNING 14 MEDALS FOR INDIA IN ASIAN GAMES, COMMONWEALTH GAMES AND AFRO-ASIAN GAMES AND REPRESENTING INDIA AT FOUR OLYMPIC GAMES WOULD BE HIGH ON MY LIST OF GLORIOUS MOMENTS OF MY CAREER"

GOING AGAINST THE FLOW

The multifaceted Seema Azharuddin on what energizes her to succeed in so many fields

ABHIJIT MASIH



Seema Azharuddin deftly dons many hats. An actor, producer, journalist, philanthropist and soon to be an author, she is also president of the Jaldhaara Foundation, which provides safe drinking water to school children and local communities in Telangana and across India.

Active in politics since her university days in India, she has kept those skills alive, her connections spanning administrations both in the US and India. Azharuddin was the spokesperson for the Indian diaspora for the presidency of Joe Biden. She has had an interesting journey and she shared it with SEEMA from her home in Maryland about her journey which started in a small town in Bihar, India.

Seema Azharuddin dons multiple hats- actor, writer, producer, journalist and philanthropist



Seema with her first Playbill



Jaldhaara Foundation

From a sari boutique in Kolkata to having your candidate in the White House, you've had an incredible journey. What would you consider your greatest achievement?

I often think that it is necessary to have an appetite to achieve. Whether it is the company you keep or the professional community you are working with, or surrounding yourself with a wider intellectual aura, what needs to happen is the stimulation within that impacts the desired outcomes. Achievements happen when you can define your desired outcomes. I believe that achievement is related to success but the impact of success varies considerably from person to person. Having said this, my achievements have not seen their greatest point yet, but I have a good feeling I will mature in the art of giving. I'm getting there. I can say I have had quite a journey so far establishing life on my own. My challenges and enduring early breakthroughs in life helped with a great outcome in building self-confidence. I do consider this an achievement in that it made me very empowered.

You are now a force to reckon with. But when you are young, it takes a trigger to activate that energy. Did you experience something similar? Did an incident transform you?

When I was young my triggers were my very active hormones. I kid you not, my memories of those years keep me smiling always. Power, in my very gender-inclusive days, was both hard to feel and execute for many young women my age some 40 years ago. It is the triggers that awaken you. You have to acknowledge them to bring action to undesirable situations. I do recall a bus trip to college from home in India. I was 17 years old, sitting by the window seat and fell asleep. I felt that nasty touch – fondling by the passenger next to me. I slapped him hard and screamed at him. I got the bus to stop and had him thrown out! I did not cry and have a good sense even now, as I recall, of the power unleashed in me. The trigger was the disgust I felt of being or being seen as vulnerable enough to be preyed upon.

What got you to turn your focus to safe water solutions and the Jaldhaara



Jaldhaara Foundation provides water for schools

"THE JALDHAARA FOUNDATION DELIVERS CLEAN DRINKING WATER AND EDUCATES PEOPLE ABOUT WASH VERY AGGRESSIVELY. SO FAR, WE HAVE IMPACTED OVER 250,000 DIRECT BENEFICIARIES. OVER 6.2 MILLION PEOPLE HAVE ACCESS TO SAFE CLEAN WATER AT AN AFFORDABLE PRICE"

foundation?

The Jaldhaara Foundation was established in 2011 and headquartered in Hyderabad. I came on board late last year. It was a poignant moment for me to take on the mantle as president of the Jaldhaara Foundation, which stands strong in its resolution to provide clean and safe drinking water, and educate people about water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in both India's urban slums and deep rural areas.

For those of us in philanthropy, it is a calling. No gain, lots of pain, but happiness all the way! The underprivileged and underserved deserve every human help possible for it is about the fundamental right for equal opportunity. I chose to be with the WASH sector in India, primarily for the cause of a fundamental right that continues to be in need of being righted.

Tell us a little about the foundation's work and the regions it is focusing on?

The Jaldhaara Foundation delivers clean drinking water



Seema supports the Biden presidency

“IT WAS AT A FUNDRAISING EVENT IN VIRGINIA THAT I FIRST MET JOE BIDEN, THE THEN VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. HE SEEMED SUCH A NICE GUY. I DID TELL HIM I WOULD CAMPAIGN FOR HIM IN INDIAN COMMUNITIES AND GOT A GENTLE PAT ON THE BACK”

and educates people about WASH very aggressively. So far, we have impacted over 250,000 direct beneficiaries. Over 6.2 million people have access to safe clean water at an affordable price.

Our ‘Water for Schools program” now covers 90 schools and has impacted over 30, 000 children.

Our focus has been in several states, including Maharashtra, New Delhi, Karnataka, and Haryana, but we are headquartered in Hyderabad, making Telangana and Andhra Pradesh key focus areas. The other region we are actively pursuing work is the northeast of India.

You have worked both in India and the US. What are the challenges common to both for a not-for-profit?

The common challenges have not changed over the years. The same key areas – sustainability, retaining and engaging donors, finding the right volunteers, and organizing internal and external processes. Be it in India or the United States, the corporate donor structure is expected to make all strategic decisions with the organizational mission in mind. Most work done by not-for-profit organizations revolve around developing strategic partnerships to enhance outreach. There is great effort needed to initiate engagement with donors. That can be exhausting as grants are long in coming, most times. It’s a tough job but a very gratifying one. You have to champion a cause because you believe in it, and that is what will bring change.

You deftly manage various roles – actor, producer, journalist, activist… Which of them is the most meaningful?

In all of these roles I have there is a common element: expression. Theater is, perhaps, the greatest platform of expression for an actor. I have loved theater all my life and always wanted to be an actress. In my early days it was taboo to send me to film school. Instead, I studied history and political science, and had a brush with politics. That’s where my parents hoped I would lead. Instead, years later, I opened my own production house! We perform to the great classics of world literature and commercial films.

I pursued my roles with love and care. Over time writing has become very meaningful because it allows you to be truthful to your ideas and thoughts without the fear of criticism. It’s a great sense of freedom one gets in being a true writer. A quote I love by Ayn Rand, “Freedom (n.) To ask nothing. To expect nothing. To depend on nothing.”

You’ve said that you’re an expressionist using these various platforms. What is the one common message



Seema at a Jaldhaara Foundation facility in India

you try to propagate on them?

The message is to express yourself, truthfully. Come as you are. Show who you are. Somebody said it quite simply this way, "Be yourself. Accept yourself. Value yourself. Forgive yourself. Bless yourself. Express yourself. Trust yourself. Love yourself. Empower yourself." This is how I feel a message should come through when you want to bring about change. "When patterns are broken, new worlds emerge." So true are the words of Tuli Kuferberg.

How did you get involved in the Biden campaign?

I have long been a Democrat at heart. It goes back to the glory days of Camelot, JFK and his legacy. I have been a volunteer spokesperson for the Democrats since the days of Clinton. It was at a fundraising event in Virginia that I first met Joe Biden, the then vice president of the United States. He seemed such a nice guy. I did tell him I would campaign for him in Indian communities and got a gentle pat on the back. Soon after that I began to speak up and to feel the need to be part of America getting back its dignity from the tongue of Trump.

What would your advice be for women who perhaps are restricted by the chains of tradition, expectation, or religion, to follow possibly unconventional passions?

Let me quote what two women have said.

Coco Chanel: "Don't go banging on a wall expecting it to turn into a door."Seema Azharuddin: "Lead, don't plead"

Restrictions are self-imposed! No woman must be in chains. Can't imagine this can be true even today. Yes, respect for tradition, culture etc. can be, and to some extent should be, practiced, but only if it helps to make situations better – and only if she wants to do so. We should continue to educate our underprivileged women (I pray we get rid of that word, "underprivileged," at some point) and let them bloom in ways equal to men. Being a woman should be your super achievement, not your deepest fear.

Coco Chanel: "A woman should be two things: Who and what she wants"

Seema Azharuddin: "Don't debate strength with a man. In you, he can see it, feel it, Ouch!"

What are the other things that interest you? I understand you are involved in Broadway as well. Tell us about the things that you do for yourself?

I am very interested in people, cultures, food, the art of communication, writing, empowering women, and being involved in the art of giving, but its theater that gets me all charged up. The opportunity to play a role and live it to the fullest on the grand stage is the ultimate way one can speak on and express oneself. Yes, we brought Broadway to India soon after I launched my production house, Kartaal Productions, in 2010 and played to full houses for three days straight with "A Streetcar Named Desire."

When I saw my first "Playbill" in print, I cried. It is a moment that will stay with me forever.

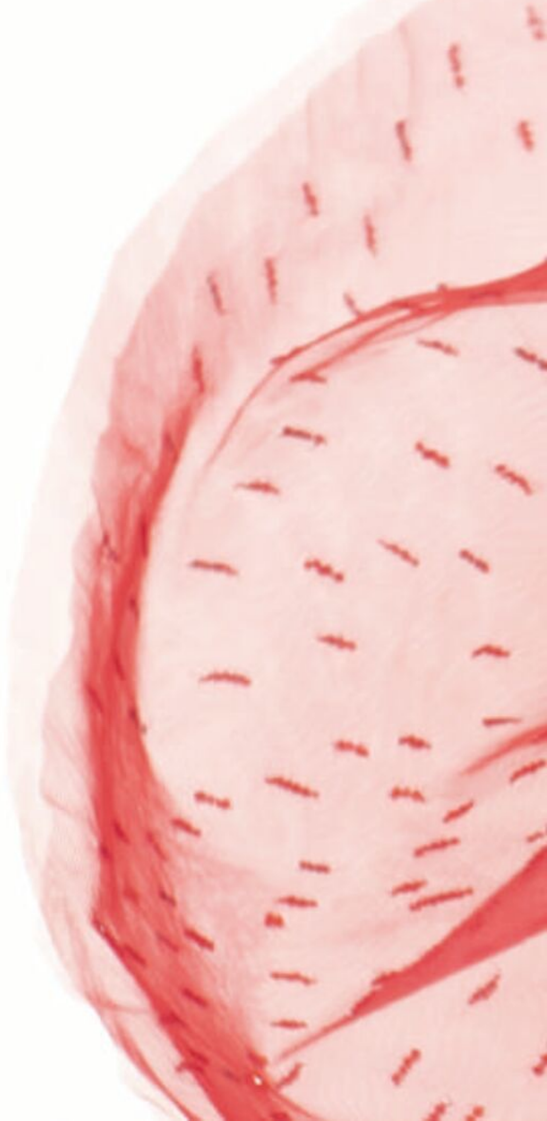
MAMMA MIA!

Preity Zinta Goodenough's constant quest to conquer new summits

ABHIJIT MASIH

It was a hot summer afternoon and the Zinta family was on a hike up the tallest peak near Aurangabad in India. Barely in her teens, the young daughter considered abandoning the ascent due to the difficult terrain. She dropped her bottle of water to indicate she was giving up. Her father, a military man, commanded her to pick up the bottle, fix her gear, walk up and finish the climb. Once she made it on top he told her "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger. You should learn to fight and stand firm for your reasons."

Seeking new summits to conquer comes naturally to Preity Zinta. It is, in fact, in her Rajput blood, something which was instilled by her father, with whom she spent very little time in her life. She held on to every lesson he taught her for much longer;



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she held on to it the tighter because of her memories of him. Her father, an Indian army officer, died when she was just 14.

Zinta has been scaling some lofty heights ever since and sets her target higher once she has triumphed over one.

She has recently undertaken the journey to motherhood. She and her husband, whom she married in 2016, welcomed their twins through surrogacy late last year. Zinta broke the news on her social media platforms on Thanksgiving.

As a new father myself, we exchanged a few notes about our astonishment about the number of diapers used up each day. She has always been known for her cheerful personality but the joy of motherhood had her squealing about her twin reasons of bliss, and the change they have brought to her life.

"Well, it's been great, not changed my life but turned my life upside down," Zinta says. "I'm somebody who's always on the move, and really quick and in and out. And suddenly everything has come to a stop."

The world is yet to see the twins, though Zinta has teased us with glimpses of them on her social media. Her mother was with her to help initially, but is now back in India, which must be tough when you have two infants to take care of as a first-time mother. However, she says she is up to the job.

"It's amazing," she says. "It's wonderful. The first couple of months were kind of scary; we had to go a lot to the hospital to the NICU and stuff. But, it was great because we actually learned how to take care of the babies from the nurses. Once they came home, it was my mom who was here. So that was great."

Both the babies – Jai and Gia – have reached the age they start recognizing faces and smiling at the new parents. This has made it all worthwhile – the wait, the longing and the initial incompetence that every new parent is guilty of.

"It was a lot of work and we couldn't understand what was happening," Zinta admits. "There was a lot of nervousness, to be honest, because I didn't know why the babies were crying. So I would go, okay, nappy check. Oh, it's the nappy. Oh, she's

PREITY'S MUST-WATCH FILMS

Dil Se – 1998

Though it was not her first film, "Dil Se" was her first film released in theaters. Seldom does luck favor a debutante so that she is paired opposite Shah Rukh Khan in her very first film. The film earned her the Filmfare Award for Best Female Debut.

Kya Kehna – 2000

The first film is always special, and "Kya Kehna" was the film that Zinta signed. The film dealt with the subject of teenage pregnancy and single parenting. The film star cast included Saif Ali Khan, who played the abandoning boyfriend.

Dil Chahta Hai – 2001

The film that perhaps changed the way scripts were written in Bollywood. The directorial debut of Farhan Akhtar, it had a stellar cast, which included Amir Khan and Saif Ali Khan and Zinta. The film received rave reviews for its accurate portrayal of urban Indian youth.

Kal Ho Na Ho – 2003

Shak Rukh Khan and Zinta make this Dharma Production film, directed by Karan Johar, a must-watch, and one of the best films of the 2000s. The film won Zinta the Filmfare Best Actor award for her portrayal of a simple beauty who falls in love with a man with a fatal heart condition.

Veer Zaara – 2004

One of the best movies ever, and one of closest to Zinta's heart, it is a love story based on characters on opposite sides of the India-Pakistan border. The film had Zinta play a Pakistani girl opposite a dashing Indian Air Force officer played by Shah Rukh Khan.

Lakshya – 2004

The year saw another memorable film directed by Farhan Akhtar with Hrithik Roshan and Zinta in the lead. The movie had a great mix of romance, patriotism and drama. The well-written screenplay by Javed Akhtar and impressive performances by Zinta and Roshan makes it one of the most entertaining coming-of-age films.

Salaam Namaste – 2005

Produced by Yash Raj Films, the film set in Australia revolves around a couple in a live-in relationship who struggle with an unexpected pregnancy. The film cast included Saif Ali Khan opposite Zinta. It was role somewhat mirroring her own personality – that of a strong-headed woman standing up for herself.

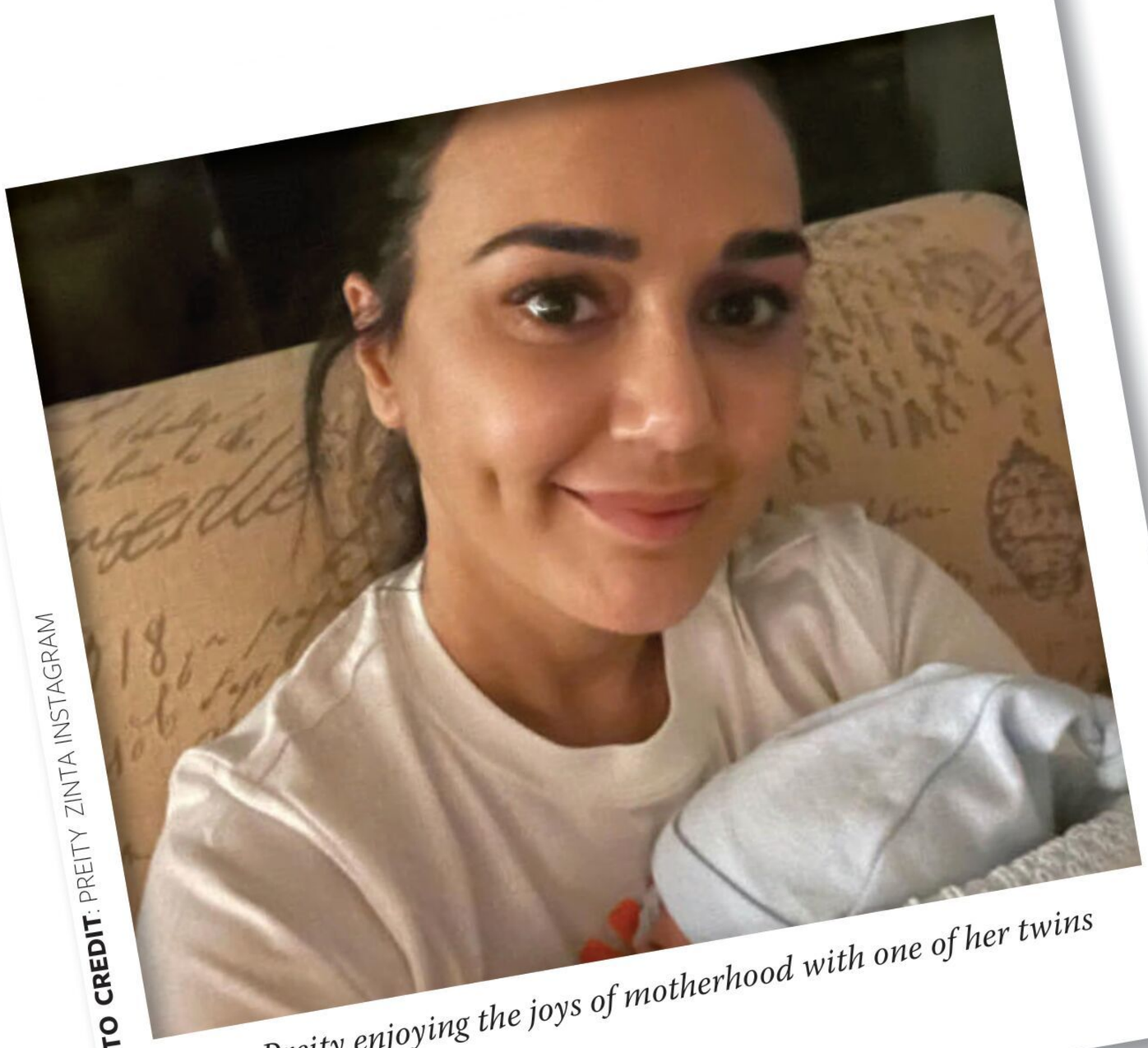


PHOTO CREDIT: PREITY ZINTA INSTAGRAM

Preity enjoying the joys of motherhood with one of her twins



PHOTO CREDIT: PREITY ZINTA INSTAGRAM

The Goodenough twins seem to be following cricket closely from now itself

still crying. Why is she crying? So going through all that is the worst thing, to be honest. Besides that, it's been wonderful, and I spent most of my days cleaning bottles and sterilizing them."

Zinta begins work on a film soon and will be heading back to India, so she wants to make the most of the time with her kids before she gets back to work.

"Now I can see them smile and stuff like that and it's amazing. I really want to spend as much time as I can. I love it," she says.

Zinta may be ecstatic being a mother now, but was she prepared for it? Did it all pan out as expected?

"To be very honest, I'm just coping with this right now," she says. "I mean, I read books and everything, but it's nothing like practical experience. There's no time to think if something really drastic happens. I have this friend who comes and helps me out – Mr. Google."

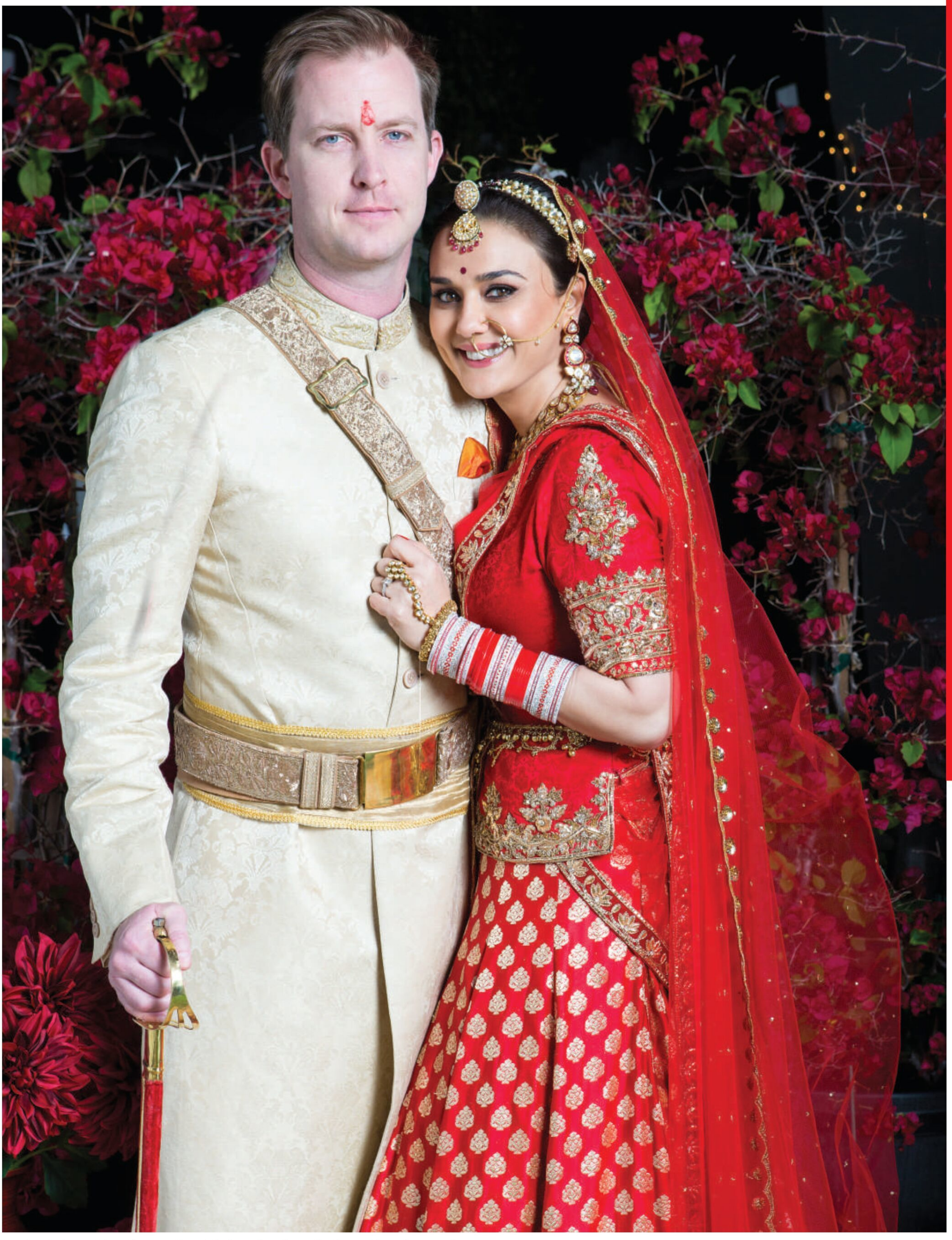
Being a mom has made her realize the importance of a mother and perhaps the true worth of her own mother – and the sacrifices she has had to make.

"I think the whole essence of being a mother is that you forget what you need, and what you want; it's about taking care of them," Zinta says. "It's powerful and selfless. And I feel so ashamed sometimes for the way I treated my mother. Sometimes I just didn't care. I was like, 'Mom, I don't want to make anything. Why are you here?' And now I'm like, 'Oh my god, Mom, I love you. Thank you.'"

Like, most parents, Zinta would rate holding her firstborns for the first time as the best moment of her life.

"I was tearing," she says. "I felt like the most extraordinary thing in the world. It was beautiful. There's no way to describe that feeling especially when they are so little and vulnerable and you want to protect them and love them. You only realize how good it is when you become a parent yourself."

The Goodenough couple is happy that they chose to opt for surrogacy. Zinta's advice to women, who want to achieve their



Preity Zinta Goodenough with her husband Gene Goodenough





PHOTO CREDIT: PREITY ZINTA INSTAGRAM

Preity with her bundle of joy. Even countless diapers and burp cloths can't wipe that smile off

"I THINK PLANNING IS VERY, VERY IMPORTANT. AND I WOULD TELL WOMEN, IF YOU REALLY WANT TO HAVE CAREERS AND BE OUT THERE AND COMPETE AND WORK HARD, THEN I THINK YOU SHOULD DEFINITELY GO FOR IT, BANK YOUR EGGS EARLY IN YOUR LIFE AND HAVE THAT FREEDOM TO DO WHAT YOU WANT. YOU HAVE TO PLAN FOR IT."

professional goals first before they think of becoming a mother, is chart a careful course.

She says, "I think planning is very, very important. And I would tell women, if you really want to have careers and be out there and compete and work hard, then I think you should definitely go for it, bank your eggs early in your life and have that freedom to do what you want. You have to plan for it."

While studying English and criminal psychology in Shimla – a hill station in northern India, Zinta had no idea that she would end up in Mumbai and be one of the most successful actors of her time. She spoke to SEEMA from her home in LA, while she had some respite from changing diapers and sanitizing feeding bottles, of her 4-month-old twins.

The conversation had to be veered off the subject of babies and diapers as we steered it towards her career and the early days of her life. She relives the circumstances which took her from the hill station to Mumbai, where her professional journey to stardom began.

She recalls, "I didn't even know I could ever be an actor. I lost my dad in an accident, and at some point, my choice

was either to get married, or just run out and try to make my own life. In our families, you get married really early. I was studying and then I got to go to Bombay [now Mumbai] for a trip with a girlfriend of mine and when there I was like, Oh! my God, I'm gonna live here."

Though she had a conservative family, her dad was very progressive and had always told her not to be dependent on a father or a husband like most Indian women. She remembers what her father expected of her.

"He always told me, I don't want you to be like that. I want you to be financially independent. That always stuck with me," Zinta says.

It seems most of the major decisions of her life have in some way been influenced by her Dad. To be financially independent, so as not to lean on a man, was a lesson he taught her even though his family was very conservative. To get away from the conformist environment, she reached Bombay with no set plan for the future.

"Are your legs waxed," was the first call for a job that Zinta received while in Bombay. A friend's brother who used to work for an ad agency needed a "leg model" urgently. Bizarre as it may sound, after extracting a promise that he would not show her face, only her legs, Zinta went for her first ad shoot in Bombay. It must have been a drastic change from a protected life at home, with two brothers, one of whom joined the military as well, to navigate the big bad city that never sleeps. Zinta shares how she got through those initial days in Bombay:

"I think the best part when you're really young, you think you can achieve everything in the world. I have a very positive outlook, that I can do it but it was very, very tough. Because we were used to being very cocooned and living a very different lifestyle and always had family around us, we never did anything on our own. So from there to come to Mumbai was amazing and scary, because I had to do everything on my own."

From the commercial showing just her legs for a clothing brand (for which she was paid Rs. 5,000) she moved up to bagging modeling gigs for major companies like Hindustan Lever. Another friend wrote the commercial for Perk, a popular chocolate bar, with her in mind, and asked her to audition for it. The current commercial for the same bar, has the latest Bollywood heartthrob, Alia Bhatt. Thus began the journey of Preity Zinta into the world of entertainment.

But the commercial which gave her the most exposure and perhaps helped her put a wedge into the doorway to Hindi films was for the popular soap brand, Liril.

The journey from 30-second TV commercials to 70 mm feature films was quick. Soon after she was signed up for her first film, "Kya Kehna." The cast of the film included Saif Ali Khan and Chandrachur Singh, and had a story highlighting a bold subject for the time: teenage pregnancy. Though the film was the first for Zinta, the stars aligned for her to have a bigger and a better launch pad. Her debut film as an adult was with a top director and the Badshah of Bollywood himself. Mani Ratnam's "Dil Se," released in 1998, had Shah Rukh Khan in the lead. The film was a perfect vehicle to for the new star.

What followed was a film career that not just had mega hits at the box office, but in which the actor garnered rave reviews for her effortless portrayal of characters that others would not have dared to take on. Zinta played a surrogate mother in "Chori Chori Chupke Chupke," the single mother in the aformentioned "Kya Kehna" or someone in a live-in relationship who gets pregnant in "Salaam Namaste."

Zinta explains the rationale behind such bold choices

ADVICE TO SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN

- There is no shortcut to success. You have to work really, really, really hard.
- If you're a parent, and you're working, you really have to focus on having quality time at home. Because you wouldn't have the luxury of time in general at home
- I think this is the best time for women in the world, and I would love and it's beautiful to see women support each other and be positive and it's not going to be easy. It's never easy.
- Positivity is something that is so important. I would like for them to be thinking of themselves. Without that you're not you and cannot make others happy around you.
- The fact that you're a woman; you're the center of the family. So it's important to focus on yourself be positive.
- No dream is ever too big to dream. If you can dream it, it is possible.
- So, you know one of my favorite quotes is – Don't tell me that sky's the limit when you have footprints on the moon.



that could have probably spelled the end for her had the films not worked.

She says, “I don’t know if it was doom. I just wanted to do stories that were exciting. I knew, I wasn’t the typical heroine who could do those extravagant dance numbers and stuff. I’ve never done dance classes in my life. As for my characters, I accepted the ones I would feel comfortable doing, because if I wore something crazy or I did something mad, I always look back thinking about my family. I told myself I don’t want to be involved with anybody I work with. I just want this to be very professional. And I’m going to work really hard.”

The realization that she had become an actor and that it was her job now sank in when she was shooting on location in Rajasthan for “Soldier.” She had requested the producer that she be given a few days off for her final examinations. Once on location and as the exam date neared, the producer told her why did she need to continue with her education.

“You’re an actor now,” he said.

Strongheaded as she is, she did go for the examinations – against the producer’s wishes. However becoming an actor was not easy. She was an outsider in the film industry. With no godfather to push her case, she put her head

down and followed what her dad taught her to do: soldier on. She talks about the grueling work schedule she had from the very first film.

"I worked 18 hour days, and I worked once for a 36-hour nonstop shift," Zinta says. "If you can get somebody to look at you and say, 'You should be grateful you're here.' And I was."

The hard work led her to be one of the first actresses to have had the privilege of working with the three Khans – Shah Rukh, Salman and Aamir – and also being a Yash Chopra film heroine. The latter, an Indian film industry badge of honor, has gone to an impressive list of recipients, including Rekha, Sridevi, Madhuri Dixit and Kajol.

But the accolades and the awards did not deter Zinta from keeping on improving her craft. Even after numerous box-office hits, she still felt the need to join an acting class to learn the dialect and mannerisms of a Punjabi woman for "Heroes," in which she was paired with Salman Khan.

Holding the top spot and to be considered for all the coveted projects of the big production houses is hard in Bollywood, particularly for female actors. Successful leading ladies have a small window in which to showcase their talents. The industry worships the rising sun, but only till the next star is launched – in most cases the offspring of a former star, somebody from within the industry.

Zinta feels that things have changed for the better.

"Today, it's probably the best market," she says. "Earlier, that was very difficult for a female actor to survive. Today, the market is so different. I would say as long as the content is good, you can really do some great work here and be there at the top for sure. For me, my journey was very different after my first film became a big hit. I realized that I'm becoming an actor, it's my job now. So it was as uncluttered as that."



Zinta's journey included a string of unforgettable cinematic gems, many of which had her romantically paired with Shah Rukh Khan. When asked about her most cherished role and the most memorable film, she replies without skipping a beat, "It cannot just be one, because the first is always the first. For me, my first really was something for me because it was very intense. Second, "Veer Zaara" for sure. Because working with Shah Rukh was just a dream. It was beautiful and I loved it."

Many friendships in movie town are built on the shifting sands of box-office results and can change any given Friday.

Zinta agrees.

"Definitely, for me not so much, but definitely yes," she says. "Because you're working with those people, meeting them every day. If you're not working you're in meetings with them every day. Where I'm concerned, it was different."

Zinta considers herself fortunate in having made friendships that have stood the test of time. She recently posted a picture of Hrithik Roshan, who was on the same flight as her and who helped her with her twins on their first long haul to India. She has managed to hold on to the friendships within the film industry – which is rare. The equations and relations perhaps didn't alter also because she remained in the spotlight, moving from one national craze, Bollywood, to another – cricket.

"I always wanted to do business at some point in my life," Zinta says, explaining how she got involved in the Indian Premiere League, and

"I TOLD MYSELF I DON'T WANT TO BE INVOLVED WITH ANYBODY I WORK WITH. I JUST WANT THIS TO BE VERY PROFESSIONAL. AND I'M GOING TO WORK REALLY HARD"

ended up being one of the youngest team owners of the multi-billion-dollar cricket franchise. Zinta was introduced to the lucrative business proposal by Lalit Modi, the man responsible for bringing the shorter format of the game to India. She wanted to focus only on the business – and films took a back seat for her. She also was not getting as many interesting roles. She talks about the shift.

"It was a conscious effort," Zinta says. "I went to all my producers and directors and I met them one by one. And I said, 'Listen, I love you, thank you for supporting me. But there are many awful movies right now and I'm getting into business. I actually moved away because you can't do two things at the same time, especially not [as] an actor.'"

Punjab Kings (previously called Kings XI Punjab), the team Zinta co-owns, has not won the championship since its inception in 2008, though it reached the semifinals of the tournament in its inaugural year. The team has undergone some drastic changes this year, and won against better teams such as the Kolkata Knight Riders, incidentally owned by her good friend Shah Rukh Khan.

The last few months have been really hectic for the team owner, as she tries to manage the auction of players remotely, while taking care of a growing team at home.

"I've been there every single year," Zinta says. "This year was the big auction. It was super hectic for me because it was 10 or 12 nights of government auctions or discussions, board meetings… There were just so many things. And it was all happening on Zoom. That was tough."

In India, films and cricket produce the biggest celebrities, and outstanding performances attract god-like reverence. Zinta describes from experience the reason for the cult status of these celebrities.

"Everybody who comes here has a high amount of skill," she says. "Having said that, if I compared films and cricket, both are team sports. In cricket, there will be a star, but you will have a lot of supporting stars as well. Everybody cannot be a star. And movies are about working as a team because what you see on film is a very small percentage, or a small image, of what's really happening behind the scenes. There's like so many people, sometimes hundreds of people, behind the camera working. The same is true of cricket. You have to [be] able to hold your nose and perform at the right time."

Whether in films or cricket she does not flinch in the face of adversity. When the film industry was threatened by the underworld and many big actors retracted their statements in court under duress, she was the only one who testified that she received an extortion threat from the mafia. Another incident that showed her mettle was when she called out the alleged abuse and assault on her by Ness Wadia, co-owner of her cricket team and her former boyfriend.

She talks about the source for her strength.

"Since I was a kid, my father always taught us to be fighters," Zinta says. "To learn to fight and stand for whatever reason. Those were a few things that kind of taught me to stand for what I do, and fight for it. Sometimes, you stand for the right thing, sometimes not. That's what life teaches you as you grow up, and as you learn." With such big shoes to fill, the rating of the husband as a father is high on the Zinta scale. She met Gene Goodenough, a senior executive in a renewable energy development company, on one of her trips to the US while she was having trouble parking her car. He was out for a run, offered help and was handed the key to the car for him to park it himself. Besides his three-point parking skills, Zinta rates him high for his parenting skills as well. She gushes, "He's such a good father. He's very sweet. He's very involved. And he's great, which is so nice to see. He lost his dad when he was very little. He didn't have a dad so it's great for me to see him happy and being the dad."

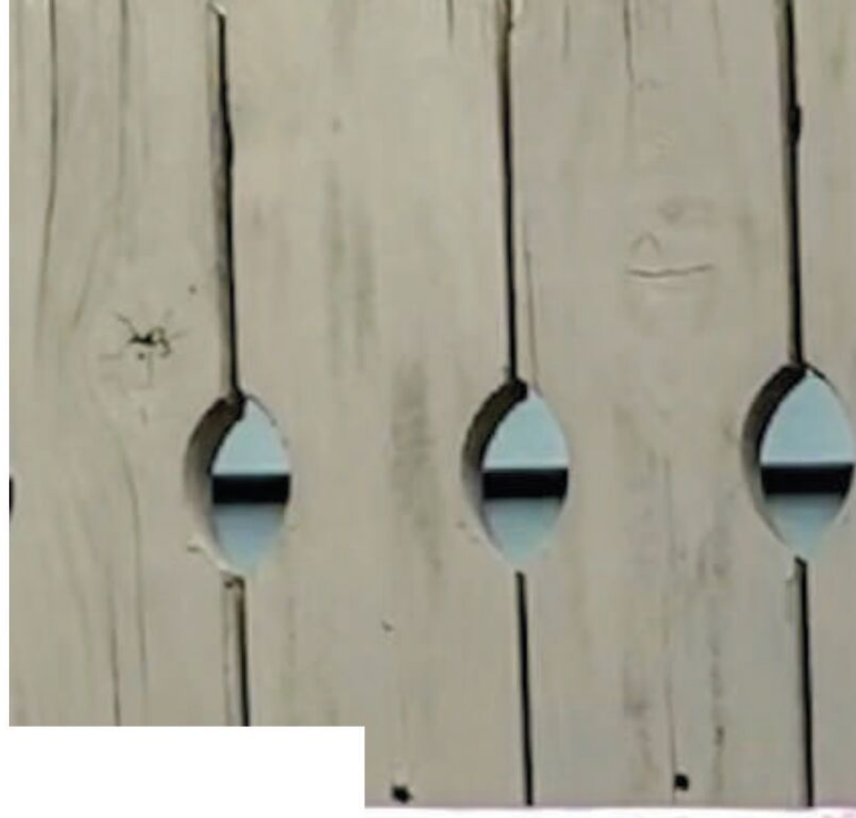
Not one to be swept off her feet like in the movies, Zinta took her time to say yes to Goodenough. To move for love, leaving behind films and business must have been a big decision.

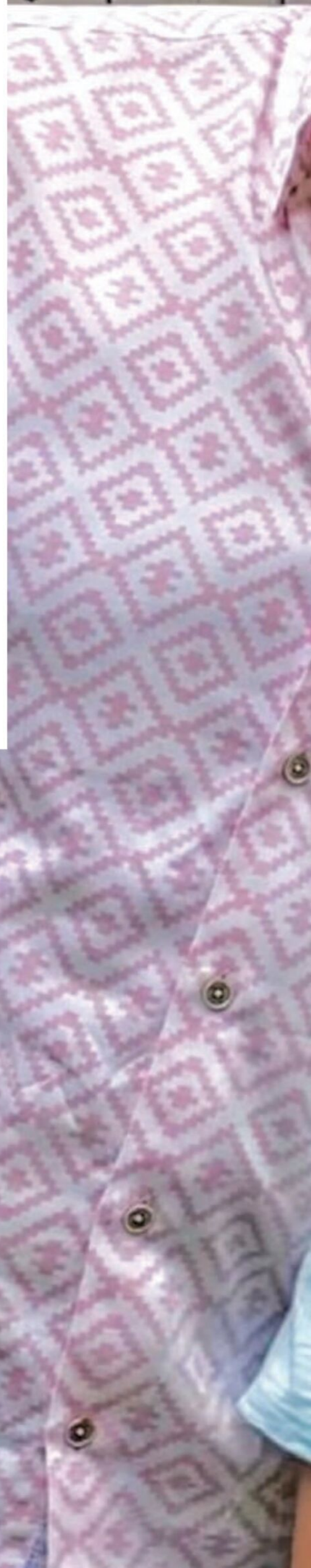
"I didn't know he was the one, to be honest, when we first met. He just was a really nice and decent guy," she says. "I didn't think we would ever meet again, the way we met. But definitely I didn't think he was the one at that point, because I don't believe I've ever been in a situation where I've looked at someone and said, 'Oh!' Like in a movie. I don't know about other women, but it's never happened to me."

RAISING A STAR

Mother and daughter tell us about life as a child actor. Warning: spoilers ahead!

PRATIKA YASHASWI





Samsara Yett with her parents







As Samsara Yett's character greets Kristen Bell's for the first time in the satirical production, "The Woman in the House Across the Street From the Girl in the Window," she puts on a big, beautiful, disarming smile, one that effectively camouflages her real intentions. As the story continues, she plays the sweet little girl next door until she finally reveals herself in the last episode to be the who in the whodunnit. And then comes a fight scene. It's impressive when you learn that Samsara is all of 9, playing a double role and then a cold-blooded killer of grown adults.

"The Woman..." is a satire that mocks the often formulaic and clichéd tropes in several popular bestselling crime thrillers, so it's not immediately funny unless one has seen others with the tropes it includes — not really children's reading. Yet, Samsara's delivery was spot on, and her acting prowess drew praise from costars and crew alike.

But Samsara's largely unfazed by it.

"When you're a kid actor, you don't know what you're doing, and you don't always understand the story," she says. "When I act, I try to be natural. I act like I'm just talking, and pretend there are no cameras around. My job is to do what the character would do. Someday, I'll watch the shows and get it."

Underneath it all, she's a pretty ordinary kid, though. Born to biracial parents (She's has Tamil and Eastern European Jewish roots) living in New Jersey, she loves school, writing songs and stories, singing, playing the ukulele, and drawing.

Like any other young girl, she makes TikTok videos with her friends, and loves her cat.

But behind every child artist is a devoted set of parents watching over her budding career as they ensure a grounded upbringing. And Samsara's mother, Amudha Rajendran, is a champion of both. We managed to get both Samsara and her mother to spare a little time to share their experiences of stardom and motherhood in the tinselled life of a child actress.

Tell us a bit about yourself.

I'm a South Indian born in Puducherry and brought up in Queens. I'm a liberal. I used to work in many different fields: teaching, fundraising, editing, and writing. Now I try to help Samsara in her life as an artist who is just beginning!

What goes into raising a biracial kid?

I try to make sure my daughter understands her place in the world. Samsara is taught about both cultures. She has strong Dravidian roots. My mom comes from a village called Papi Setti Palli near Chittoor in AP, and it's Samsara's favorite place on Earth. She loves her extended family. And we will see that she goes to India and learns about her identity throughout her life. Her dad makes sure she is participating in Jewish culture. Not all mixed kids feel understood or accepted, but my child loves her life.

How did Samsara's first-ever modeling or acting assignment come about?

She was a beautiful baby. People would always suggest she model or act. We waited until she was verbal enough to have an opinion. When Samsara was three and a half, we thought she was old enough to start modeling. Samsara has a great modeling portfolio. She was so professional: punctual and able to listen and follow directions. When she was 5, she started doing commercials as well. Around age 7, she started auditioning for film/TV jobs. Samsara has had four jobs so far. She is job-hunting now, so hopefully, there will be work.

Samsara's performance has received many compliments from people she's worked with. What's it like raising a child so visible to the public eye?

If you don't make anything of it, life just goes on. No one in our lives focuses on Samsara's work life. We only talk about it through the lens of labor. Samsara is a kid who works. She does a great job balancing work with everything else. Her life is safe and ordinary.

Some special things happen, and they remind you that life



Mother and daughter: Amudha Rajendran (left) and Samsara Yett (right)

is unusual in some ways. I have a public IG account for Samsara. It's been a wonderful thing in our lives! So many people reach out to tell us about their mixed kids! They see their kids in Samsara. Also, so many girls around the world don't have social media access. They have to sneak onto IG. They always reach out and tell us how much they love Samsara's freedom-filled life. They really identify with her and wish her well. I always encourage them to find freedom, even if it means disrupting whatever cultural framework impedes them. You can love your culture without being hostage to rules limiting your potential or joy.

Are you happy with the roles Samsara's been given so far?

Amudha: The acting world is very white. Sometimes there is diversity in the cast. But crews are very white still. I think things are improving. There is more work for nonwhite actors. And more demand for equality and representation. We all deserve to see ourselves on the stage. Samsara is mixed. This allows her to audition for some Caucasian roles in addition to South Asian roles. But these days, people want a specific look or origin. So Samsara is often not white enough, or brown enough! So her best hope may be jobs that have no ethnic qualifications — they're called open ethnicity jobs. I think Samsara is Indian enough. I'm hoping for Indian roles!

There are some amazing books out there now, books with strong heroines that are full of the wonder of South Asian culture. I hope they make those books into movies, so Samsara can audition! My goal is to make sure her characters have agency and a story. I don't want her just to be a passive young relative.

What are some things about parenting a young child actress that people often get wrong?

It doesn't matter how your kid lives. Kids should be decent, ethical humans. I want to raise a Mahatma. People think working kids are entitled or vapid, but they're often the opposite. Life is more complex; there's more to juggle. And you can't be awful and excel. You need patience, endurance, and humility.

How do you and your partner share responsibilities in parenting and managing Samsara's career and life?

Samsara's dad helps edit audition videos. He helps with big decisions. But he stays out of it otherwise. Samsara and I spend time making videos on my iPhone in a quiet room. That's the bulk of it unless she's working. She auditions while she works, too.

As a mother, how do you maintain Samsara's balance between "normalcy" and life as a child star?

I make sure she is practicing empathy. We don't glamorize work. Samsara understands how hard I work to help her. I teach her that film or tv can be quality or garbage. Ideally, one is entertained or educated by what they watch. Also, the way one looks, age, and size should not define them. Your inner self and your particular qualities matter most. But it's Samsara who educates me. She values regular life, and she's so grounded!

Questions for Samsara Yett
What are auditions like?

Before Covid, my mom and I would take the train to Manhattan and go to different studios to audition for commercials. Sometimes, there would be a film or TV job. But mostly, just commercials. I see the same kids over and over, so it's like having little playdates. These days we don't go anywhere, so we're taping videos at home. So unless I do modeling go see, I don't see other kids too much!

What was it like, playing the evil, cold-blooded killer?

It was so much fun! It's more fun to be a tricky character. In my real life, people always say how nice I am. So being a villain is like being the opposite of me.

Every actor has their preparation, the things they do to really get into a role. What was yours for "The Woman in the House Across..."?

I learned my lines, I played sweet and kept my secrets. And I stunt-trained on the ground and underwater. But I can play anyone and then go home to my cat. I'm never confused about who I am.

I've read that you've said that you're a pretty "ordinary" kid.

We are lucky. Regular school, regular friends, and time with family. Nothing fancy. I do take meetings and tape auditions. But that's work. Even if something comes out on TV, and people notice, nothing really changes. People say: congratulations, keep going. Then things go back to normal.





Amudha Rajendran with her daughter Samsara Yett on a recent trip to India



Samsara Yett at Taj Mahal on a recent trip to Agra, India.

What's everyday life like? What are the things you like to do?

I love to cook, garden, and do art. My cat is my love. And I have great friends. My friends come over, we play for hours. We play Roblox, or do TikTok videos. I don't have any social media access. So I use my friends' TikTok. We climb trees, and play games we make up. My house always has extra kids!

Are acting and modeling things you want to continue doing as you get older?

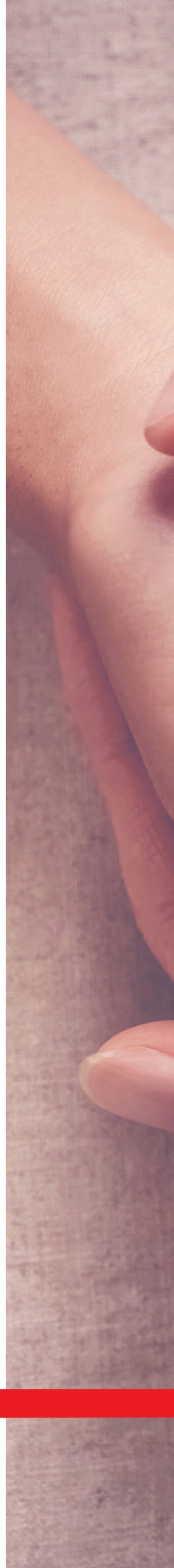
I don't know. I write songs. They are good. So I need to make time for that. And I might want to study architecture or go to law school. Modeling will stop once I become a teen. Because I won't be tall enough to be an adult model. Which is fine. I started modeling because I like to work and earn. It's the best paying job for kids if you work regularly!

What's the best part about being onscreen?

When you work, you have to concentrate even though there are so many people and so much stuff around you: wires, cameras, props. So it's kind of like being in a video game. You pretend you're not surrounded by people and machines. That's the most interesting part!

Keep up with Samsara on Instagram.

IT'S ALL IN THE FAMILY



RASHMI GOPAL RAO

Families are like branches on a tree. We grow in different directions, but our roots remain as one – Anonymous

Family is not just an important part of your life but it is, in fact, everything. A compass that guides us, a protective life jacket in a storm, and a safe haven, family is an eternal, strong and secure bond. The love, warmth and guidance it provides is priceless and stays with you forever. There are high notes as well as low ones in one's family, too, but in the end, you end up with a beautiful song! To celebrate this truly special social institution, the United Nations has designated May 15 as the International Day of Families.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES

In the 1980s that the United Nations shifted its focus to families and the challenges they face. In 1993, the General





Assembly passed a resolution agreeing to celebrate 15-May as the day dedicated to the family system which is integral to a happy and healthy society. First celebrated in 1994, the UN uses this day to highlight key issues affecting families and develop solutions to address these issues. Each year workshops, seminars and activities are organized around a theme making individuals realize the value and importance of families and communities.

Several factors, including social, economic and demographic ones, have affected family structures and their dynamics. It is not an understatement to say that COVID-19 has had a drastic effect on families with illnesses, job losses, tragedies and adjustments galore. Days such as these helps one reflect on the positives and look back with gratitude for having a home and family to come back to and cherish happy memories and good times.

FAMILY DYNAMICS: COMPLEX AND FRAGILE

Given our hectic lifestyles and busy schedules, family relationships can get complicated. Often, multiple generations live together, worsening differences of opinion and conflicts of ideas. Several factors contribute to family dynamicsm including the nature of people living together, communication between them, hierarchies and specific issues such as illnesses, whether mental or physical, and trauma of any kind. While differences are common, it is key to work around them to allow for open communication and resolution of conflicts. This is imperative as healthy family dynamics go a long way in nurturing healthy relationships and affects one's behavior and well-being in a positive way.

Further, with more families shrinking in size with the increase in nuclear and single parent families, the importance of bonding, sharing and being there for one another can hardly be overemphasized. Cohesion, warmth, friendship and a sense of belonging is key for individuals to be socially and emotionally secure. This leads to the development of positive personalities, which augurs well not only for individual families but for society, too.

SMALL STEPS, BIG IMPACT

While challenges and problems within families are common, it is important to note that small steps in the right direction can foster cheerful vibes. Spending time with one another within the family should be considered as a true blessing as it is an opportunity to communicate, speak your heart out and strengthen bonds. Make a conscious effort to take time off from your daily chores and spend some time with your parents and children. Initiate a conversation on simple things like how did their day go while sharing a picture of your own day. Open the channels of communication to connect on a personal level.

Being empathetic and sharing household tasks as well as responsibilities is a great way to bring family members together. Helping your child with his/her homework or project, assisting your spouse in prepping a meal, accompanying your mother on her visit to the dentist, or driving your dad to the club, are just some ways to bond.

Set time once or twice a month to engage in fun activities, such as picnics, indoor games etc., wherein all family members can get together. Plan activities where children can interact with their grandparents, share their stories and engage positively. Spending time together enhances camaraderie, fosters a sense of respect, love and compassion for each other. Finally, if you feel overwhelmed by work pressure or other factors, or feel anxiety when handling some situations, do not hesitate to take professional help.

Still, remember that it is important to hold family members close, for it is with them that you laugh, celebrate, dream and love together.

THE LONELY BATTLE AGAINST DEPRESSION

The stigma against therapy revictimizes Indian American dealing with it

AVANI LAROIA

Meena sat mortified as the EMT wheeled her through the hospital into the emergency room. The knot in the pit in her stomach continued to grow, even when the nurse drew the curtains around her to block her from view. She waited silently in the cold, sterile space for someone to explain what was going on.

"How did this happen?" Meena kept asking herself. In the moment, she did not realize that no single incident had landed her in the hospital but rather years of ignoring her mental illnesses.

Meena had always thrown herself into whatever was happening around her. When she started at Wellesley College, Mass. in 2001, she quickly became an active part of campus life. At the same time, she was struggling with extreme bouts of depression and anxiety, coupled with an inability to come to terms with her sexuality.

"I was doing all of these very public things, and then behind the scenes, I just hated myself," she said.

She despised herself for falling victim to a mental illness. Needing to punish herself for her lack of willpower, she felt there was only one thing she could control: her eating habits.

Meena began starving herself, and soon, her 5'6" frame weighed a mere 105 pounds. Finally, during her junior year at Wellesley College, Meena's girlfriend insisted that she visit the campus mental health center to seek help for her anxiety attacks and eating disorder.

That's how Meena ended up in the hospital room, surrounded by doctors, scared into silence, and finally staring her depression in the face.

Only Meena can remember the shame and fear she felt at having to acknowledge her depression, but Indian Americans across the country will relate. Depression, anxiety, and other mental illnesses remain taboo among many in the population. Members of the community who cannot practice self-control to deal with their mental illnesses in private are seen as weak. This attitude can fill people like Meena with guilt about humiliating their family, which in turn prevents them from seeking help. While there are limited studies about mental illnesses in the Indian diaspora, a study published in the Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health found that only 40% of U.S.-born and 23% of foreign-born Asian Americans diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder used mental health services. Yet even the few who do decide to seek help confront many obstacles.

That is why, when Meena eventually called her parents from the hospital and they immediately decided to drive over to see her, she was petrified.

As soon as she saw her mother, Meena knew her fears were valid. It was obvious that her mother had been fretting about the implications of her daughter's hospital visit during the five-hour drive from their suburb of Cedar Knolls, N.J., to Wellesley College. She demanded answers from Meena: What did Meena's illness mean for her marriage prospects? How would it affect the rest of the family? The only question she never asked was how she and Meena's father could help their daughter through her depression.

This reaction was exactly what Meena had expected and dreaded. She knew her mother loved her immensely, but she also knew that her mother cared deeply about her family's reputation. A depressed child would tarnish the image her mother was trying to uphold.

Jyothsna Bhat, a South Asian clinical psychologist in Newtown, Pa., studies the desire to maintain the family name and reputation among Indian Americans. She explained that upholding a favorable reputation is of utmost importance to Indian American families because it dictates the future success of its members in marriage, careers, social status, and societal recognition. As a previous SEEMA article explained, members of the community bury and ignore illnesses like depression, often until they reach a breaking point, to preserve the name.

Chowdhary argues that the value put on family reputation is also a result of India's collectivist culture.

"In a collective culture, you're expected to do what everybody else is doing, but in individualistic cultures, there's some bandwidth and room to talk about your problems," Chowdhary said. Families solve their troubles themselves and view seeking external help, no matter how necessary, as betraying and humiliating the family unit.

Although Meena was worried about the effect her depression would have on her whole family, she was most concerned about what it would do to her younger brother. Having grown up in an immigrant household with parents who had to work long hours, Meena, who is five years older than her brother, often felt like his third parent. She knew that if the news about her depression spread in their community, she was putting his future at risk. She could not stand to ruin her brother's future, so Meena chose to stay silent.

This dynamic is not unique to her family. The eldest child in Indian American households adopts many responsibilities from a young age, said Sudha Wadhwani, a staff psychologist at Montclair State University who works with immigrant populations. Chowdhary refers to this demographic as "parentified children." They typically



have trouble putting themselves over others. If they choose to work on their mental illnesses, the decision comes with a lot of internal conflict and guilt about abandoning the needs of their younger siblings.

Like Meena, Anjali*, a 26-year-old Indian American whose parents immigrated to the United States when she was a child, felt this weight of being an older sibling and its resulting mental health effects. Anjali, too, stepped into the role of caretaker while her parents worked long days, as well as when she and her brother were sent back to see relatives in India over their summer holidays.

"I felt like I was like a babysitter and a protector for my brother from a very young age," Anjali said. "For a long time, I was a very angry child," she added, saying she blamed her parents for forcing her to grow up too quickly. The role of protector also included shielding her younger brother from their parents' volatile relationship. Despite being on the brink of divorce several times, they never seriously considered ending their marriage or seeking professional help. Instead, Anjali stepped in when their fights became too overheated. "I have been a relationship counselor for my parents since I was 14 years old," Anjali said.

At the onset of COVID, and after a heated discussion with her boyfriend, Anjali decided to enter therapy to help her manage her low-grade depression. Like many people her age, she had moved home during the pandemic, and she knew she would be sucked back into the pattern of putting her family's needs above her own if she did not seek help.

However, she first had to face her own biases, which were more ingrained than she had imagined. Unexplored biases are common among Indians who have grown up in the United States with

traditional parents, said Sruthi Swami, Assistant Professor of Psychology at California State University, Fresno. While they want to be progressive, they often hold preconceived notions about therapy and those who seek it out because of their parent's views.

Anjali had been a vocal advocate for therapy since her early days in college. However, when her boyfriend suggested that she could benefit from it, she realized her faith in the practice only extended so far. "My entire self-identity and self-worth were defined by my academic ability," Anjali said. For her, the idea of needing support meant she was no longer a success but a failure.

For Meena, therapy was an exclusively American concept. "It was always like, "these Americans don't know how to handle things," and so they all go to psychologists, and they get drugs," she said.

When Meena was admitted to the psychiatric ward by her college health department, her image of those who needed therapy terrified her. Had she become one of those people? Meena could not accept that possibility and, therefore, could not accept therapy.

Meena pushed through her college years without therapy but was eventually drawn back to it at twenty-three. During her time at Wellesley College, she had started dating a transgender man whom she knew her Indian American family would have difficulty accepting. She needed help deciding whether she should stay with him or honor her family's values. While Meena was guarded at first because of her college experience, she eventually realized she held a misconstrued image of those with mental illnesses. However, she did not tell her family about this realization or that she was in therapy for years.

Meena is now talking with her mother about intergenerational trauma, mental illnesses, and how therapy can break unhealthy patterns. Anjali also initiated similar conversations with her mother.

Anjali and Meena are now trying to break the taboos against depression and therapy in their families and communities. They are determined to prevent future generations from feeling the same level of fear, uncertainty, and loneliness they did. As Meena said, "when we stigmatize mental health, we ultimately stigmatize ourselves."

*Meena and Anjali requested we use pseudonyms to protect their families' privacy.



ALL ABOUT NON-FUNGIBLE TOKENS



A description of the new digital token – for the uninitiated

SARAH KAPADIA



The term “non-fungible token” refers to a token that is not fungible or is unique and cannot be replaced. Non-fungible is an economic word that can be used to objects like furniture, music files, and computers. Because of their unique features, some goods cannot be substituted by other items.

NFTs are digital tokens that may be used to indicate ownership of one-of-a-kind goods. They enable us to tokenize items such as artwork, valuables, and even real estate. They can only have one official owner at a time, and they’re protected by the Ethereum blockchain, which means no one can change the ownership record or create a new NFT.

As a representation of digital or non-digital assets, an NFT is created from digital items. An NFT might, for example, represent:

Art in the Digital Age:

- GIFs
- Collectibles
- Music
- Videos

Item from the Real World:

- Deeds to a vehicle
- Tickets to a live event in the real world
- Invoices that have been tokenized
- Documents of legal significance
- Signatures

There are a plethora of new possibilities to explore!

Here are a few of the top NFT's of all time:

- **Jack Dorsey's first tweet**

In 2021, Jack Dorsey, the CEO of Twitter and Square, sold his first tweet as a non-fungible token for more than $2.9 million. Dorsey initially made the tweet on March 21, 2006, with the phrase "just putting up my twttr."

- **Axie Infinity:**

Sky Mavis, a Vietnamese gaming studio, created Axie Infinity, an NFT-based game. The game contains its own environment, which includes a variety of Axies, which are little creatures. Axies may be bred, raised, traded, and battled with other players or teams in this game. The game's game-play loop is likewise comparable to that of the Pokemon franchise. This game has grown so much through NFT's that to enter you need to spend at least 200 dollars on each little creature compared to only paying 10 dollars a few years ago.

- **Bored Ape Yatch Club**

The Bored Ape Yacht Club (BAYC), a popular collection of 10,000 individual bored apes produced by Yuga Labs, has earned more than $1 billion in total sales, with celebrities flocking to the NFTs bandwagon. The milestone was reached just a few days into the new year, according to CryptoSlam.

- **CryptoPunks**

In the form of an NFT, a CryptoPunk is a 24x24 pixel, 8-bit-style unique avatar. In 2017, software engineers Matt Hall and John Watkinson undertook an experiment that resulted in their product. The two sought to build a software application that could generate hundreds of different avatars. A total of 10,000 avatars were created as a result of the program.

Music has recently been included in the NFT world. Non-fungible tokens swept the industry last year. Hundreds of singers and musicians, including youthful multi-hyphenate artists like Grimes and iconic bands like the Rolling Stones, were drawn to the new technology. Some of these artists have made millions of dollars by selling tokenized copies of their tunes, digital art, or bundles of virtual and real-world products.

Then there's the tendency of the entertainment sector becoming more democratic. Emerging fan-fueled equity crowd funding is one of the most visible forms of it. It's essentially music investing for the people. Imagine investing in a kickstarter campaign for your favorite musician and receiving a share of the proceeds instead of goods or concert tickets. It works well for famous musicians with a multimillion fan base, exactly as NFTs, allowing them to generate funds for songs and albums with a single social media post.

Web3 is a catch-all phrase for a collection of diverse concepts aimed at cutting out the huge middlemen on the internet. Navigating the web in this new era no longer entails signing up for Facebook, Google, or Twitter. Think about it like this: Web1 represents a baby just starting to understand concepts and develop the basic systems. Web1 consisted of only the internet. But then as we become teenagers there are significant changes. Web1 becomes Web2 and implements the ideas of social media. Finally, you mature into a responsible adult. Web2 is on the verge of transforming into Web3, with the basic premise of being decentralized, rather than being controlled by governments and corporations, as the internet is now. To some way, tied to the concept of the "metaverse."

Facebook recently changed its name to Meta and stated that its first aim will be to create the "metaverse," a digital future in which everyone lives, interacts, and collaborates in virtual reality.

"Robust interoperability" is one of the company's declared principles, which means that customers may effortlessly move their accounts or avatars from site to site or service to service rather than having to log in to separate accounts managed by different corporations every time they visit a new site.

That is also one of Web3's ideals.

Here are some of my favorite NFTs:

1. Adam Bomb Squad -The Hundreds' Adam Bomb Squad is an NFT project that includes 25,000 unique bomb combinations and accompanying backgrounds from our history over the last two decades. The Adam Bomb Squad NFTs are now available to purchase. I found their idea extremely innovative and alluring. The bombs present for auctioning are super artistic and cute! Buying their NFT also comes with a lot of perks such as early access to The Hundreds drops and Free ABS-exclusive Adam Bomb Squad T-shirt.
2. Holders of Crypto Baristas get caffeinated perks for life at all future cafe spaces. Crypto Barista holders (Caffeine Club) will be in charge of 15% of all funds, which will be used in the coffee industry. Season 2 deals will be available to current Crypto Barista holders first, before the general public.

Satvic Recipes for Spring



PRATIKA YASHASWI



An old way of eating is gaining popularity among Indians. Taking a cue from Lord Krishna's expostulations in the Hindu religious text, the Bhagavad Gita, its promises are great. Yoga teachers and alternative medicine practitioners claim that it can improve mental and physical health, boost immunity and promote longevity.

"The foods that promote longevity, virtue, strength, health, happiness, and joy are juicy, smooth, substantial, and nutritious. Persons in the mode of goodness like such foods. (Bhagavad Gita 17:8)

"Food that enhances longevity, mind, strength, health, happiness and joy, that which is juicy, oily, stable and pleasant, is dear to one who is satvic."

— Bhagavad Gita

It follows a rigid set of rules and regulations that even strictly vegetarian grandmothers can find a little restrictive—but many of its followers are younger millennials. There are scores of people who swear that it has changed lives, led to jaw-dropping weight loss, and singlehandedly reversed diseases like diabetes, psoriasis, and thyroid disorders in just months.

While much of this evidence is anecdotal, satvic eating is light on the stomach. It promotes whole, fresh, seasonal, nutrient-dense, and fiber-rich foods, forbids fried foods, stimulants like caffeine, and white sugar — all great rules to follow. When followed diligently, it truly brings out the flavors and vibrance of vegetables — if only one is alright with skipping meat.

The rules go further than that. Food falls into three categories based on how it's cooked and eaten and its effect on the body: satvic, rajasic, and tamasic. There are also specific food combinations and eating timings that make something good or bad. One must begin eating only after sunrise and finish meals before sunset.

Satvic food is believed to be pure and promotes everything good for mental and physical health. Rajasic food is overly stimulating, often overspiced, and believed to cause pain and disease. Tamasic foods are often fried or undercooked and believed to increase laziness. Animal protein falls into the last category. Even milk is not recommended unless it comes from a humanely treated cow.

Onions and garlic are barred because they are pungent and fall in the rajasic category. Similarly, other healthful vegetables like broccoli, radishes, mushrooms, and peppers are banned as they are considered overly stimulating.

While Ayurveda promotes a balanced form of eating that incorporates all three categories based on what the body's needs are, satvic principles insist only on foods that promote sattva, or spiritual purity. It's why it's so popular during Navratri and other days of religious significance.

There is some disagreement about what foods are rajasic and tamasic and what are not. For instance, some practitioners insist that the only Satvic lentil is the mung bean and all else is rajasic. This way, it can get very restrictive, but it doesn't have to be. The best way to learn what is best for your diet is to speak with a yoga practitioner or a nutritionist.

A popular way of following the satvic diet for healing purposes is described in the Satvic Movement YouTube channel and The Satvic Food Book by Subah Jain.

We've simplified satvic eating through four delightful recipes for spring. They can take you through from a simple smoothie breakfast to a light early evening dinner. Even if you're not ready to go satvic, why not try it for just a couple of days? The discipline just might be worth it.



PHOTO CREDIT: SATVIC MOVEMENT

CHOCO CRUNCH BREAKFAST BOWL (Satvic Movement)

INGREDIENTS (Serves 2)

- 1/2 cup of coconut milk
- 1.5 cups of coconut cream
- 3 frozen bananas
- 1 tablespoon cacao
- 1 coin ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon of cinnamon
- a pinch of salt

FOR THE TOPPINGS

Banana, cacao nibs, chopped almonds, and chia seeds.

DIRECTIONS

Simply blend the ingredients above, and add the toppings for presentation.



PHOTO CREDIT: THE SATVIC FOOD BOOK BY SUBAH JAIN



SPINACH CHEELAS (The Satvic Food Book)

INGREDIENTS:

Cheelas (Makes 8-10)

- 1 cup green split moong dal
- 1 teaspoon rock salt
- 1 small green chili, chopped
- 2 cups spinach purée

For the Filling (combine in a bowl or a plate):

- 4 carrots, thickly grated
- 4 tomatoes, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup grated coconut
- 1/2 cup coriander, chopped
- 1 teaspoon rock salt

METHOD

1. Combine the soaked moong dal, salt, and chili in a blender and blend until smooth. Transfer the mixture to a bowl.
2. Add the spinach puree to the mixture and stir well.
3. Heat a pan, sprinkle a little water on it and wipe it off gently using a muslin cloth.
4. Pour a ladle full of the batter on it and spread it in a circular motion to make a thin circle. Cook on a medium flame till it turns brownish-green in color.
5. Once the cheela is done, fold the filling into the cheela and serve with a Satvic chutney.

ASPARAGUS CREAM OF RICE SOUP (www.joyfulbelly.com)



INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup asparagus
- 1 cup basmati rice
- 1/4 tsp black pepper (not strictly Satvic, optional)
- 1 inch ginger
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 tbsp sunflower oil

METHOD

1. Grind the rice into powder or use cream of rice.
2. Add the rice to 5c water and bring to a boil.
3. Add the other ingredients. Stir frequently to prevent the rice from sticking to the bottom.
4. Cook about 15-20 min until the asparagus and rice are tender.



PHOTO CREDIT: UNSPLASH

SPRING GREENS WITH KALE AND CABBAGE (www.banyanbotanicals.com)

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 head of a small or medium cabbage, shredded
- 1 bunch kale, chopped
- 2 leeks, chopped
- 3-4 teaspoons avocado oil or cow ghee
- 1 teaspoon whole cumin seeds
- 2 teaspoons whole mustard seeds
- 2 teaspoons turmeric powder
- Mineral salt, to taste
- Sesame seeds to garnish

METHOD

1. Warm the oil or ghee in a large cooking vessel over medium heat. Add in the whole cumin seeds and mustard seeds. Allow them to start sputtering.
2. Toss in the chopped leek and sauté until it is nice and soft. Add the cabbage and kale.
3. Cook down both of these until they are soft as well. Remove from heat.
4. Sprinkle the turmeric powder and salt on top. Mix really well so that all the veggies are coated.
5. Finally, sprinkle in the sesame seeds.

The entire island of Burano is crisscrossed by canals and spectacularly colourful architecture.

AN ISLAND DABBED WITH PAINTS AND LEGENDS

Steep yourself in the seductive charm of Burano in Italy

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY SUGATO MUKHERJEE

18+

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME-

the biggest Internet portal, providing you various content: brand new books, trending movies, fresh magazines, hot games, recent software, latest music releases.

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I board the Vaporetto from San Zaccaria near St. Mark's square. The large, express ferry slices its way through the placid waters of Canal Grande, spread like a gigantic, semi-transparent aluminum sheet in the morning sun. Majestic mansions and medieval cathedrals, with their ornate facades, flank the shoreline.

I am in Venice, and after three days of wandering through its warren of alleyways, feeding the pigeons in the expansive Piazza San Marco, exploring some of the smaller canals that veer their way into the quaint, less-touristy neighborhoods and hopping over endless cafes for the perfect cup of joe or a fine glass of Italian Chardonnay, I decided to break free of the enduring allure of Venezia in favor of the seductive charm of Burano – Italy's rainbow island.

Italy is dotted with its fair share of incredibly beautiful islands, but Burano is the most prismatic of them all with the kaleidoscopic facades of dainty, medieval houses lining the shores of this small island. Legend has it that the vibrant colors made it easier for the fishermen to find their way home amid the dense fog that enveloped the lagoon when they were returning with their day's catch. The rainbow palette was synchronized in a way so they could distinguish their own house from that of their neighbors. In fact, laws are still in place whereby the residents of Burano need to adhere to a prefixed color scheme when they repaint their houses, so that no house sticks out as an eyesore in a color-coded neighborhood. A thriving tourism scene can well be the underlying reason for this, but it has definitely helped retain the island its fairy tale charm with its intense palette.

It is midweek and I have started out pretty early from Venice. So Burano's waterfront streets are relatively quiet when I arrive. A quiet stroll along the banks of the canals feels like walking on a canvas splurged in a symphony of hues that provide harmonious contrasts in the glistening reflections on the calm canal waters strewn with fishing boats.

After a few minutes of leisurely walking, I step into the town square. This is the famed Piazza Baldassare Galuppi, named after a celebrated 18th-century Venetian composer, whose statue stands erected in the middle of the expansive plaza, where the chief attraction is the San Martino Church. The rather plain exterior belies the fact that this 16th-century Roman Catholic Church houses a fascinating legend and an exquisite painting that narrates it within its dark interiors. The story goes that a huge sarcophagus containing the remains of three saints washed ashore on the banks of Burano. The gigantic stone coffin was brought to the church by the children of Burano with the divine intervention of the three saints themselves. The sarcophagus now lies protected inside the church and a 17th-century painting inside the church illustrates the miracle. Legend has it that the three



Wrapped in medieval legends, Burano retains a fairytale charm for the traveler who drops on its shores



From ochre to ocean blue, and from red to rosy pink, the neighborhoods run an entire gamut of colors

guardian saints also intervened to save Burano from the devastating plague outbreak in 1670.

My next pit stop is Museo del Merletto, just a few steps from the San Martino Church. Located inside the historic palace of Podestà of Torcello perched right on Piazza Baldassare Galuppi, the Lace Museum is hosted inside a former Lace School. The exhibition downstairs traces the origins of lace-making and how the craft spread through parts of Europe. The four rooms upstairs display an extensive collection of glamorous and sophisticated lacework samples in tiered cases. The piece de resistance is an exquisite bridal veil and a christening dress. An assortment of books, paintings and journals showcase the evolution of the craft from the 16th to 20th century, and one of the rooms operates as the workstation for local lacemakers. No ladies are at work though, I find only empty seats under old photographs of the Lacemaking School that operated here till 1970.

I come out of the museum into the sun-kissed Galuppi Square, which is now teeming with tourists. Wedging past the pop-up souvenir stalls, I find my way through the cobbled lanes and quaint wooden bridges to a restaurant on the banks of the green canal. It is an idyllic setting hemmed by a multihued mélange of square-shaped houses, local children wheezing past on their bicycles and a motley group of elderly women laughing and chatting in front of a door, painted in fluorescent pink. A scrumptious lunch follows where the highlight is risotto di go: a traditional Venetian delicacy invented in the 1500s by the fishermen of Burano. The broth in which the rice is cooked and creamed gets its flavorful notes from goby, a typical fish of the Venice lagoon.

It's now time to leave this paradisiacal island. I take a leisurely walk back to the verdant meadow adjacent to the ferry station, where the sculpture of a young woman in distress bears brilliant testament to the creative genius of Remigio Barbaro, the world-renowned 20th-century sculptor, who lived in Burano. From here, I take a boat ride to Murano, an island famous for its glassblowing tradition. But that is another story.



A walk through the warren of alleyways gives intimate glimpses of local life in Burano

MUSEUM MUSINGS

With over 35,000 museums in the United States, there is never a dull moment for a traveler

BINDU GOPAL RAO

If you like to see a city under the lens of art, culture, history and food, the best way would be to visit a museum. And if you are in America, you will never be disappointed with the variety of museums. We list seven of the must-see museums in the USA here.



NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART – WASHINGTON D.C.

Started in 1937, this is a space dedicated to European and American art and is located near Capitol Hill. The space was donated by patron Paul Mellon, the art coming from his personal collection. You can see the works of artists like Toulouse-Lautrec, Monet and Dégas among more than 2,600 works. If you seek to learn more about European paintings, Italian Renaissance paintings and the works of masters of Florentine and Venetian art, this is the place to go. The best part is that it is free to visitors. Washington has some world-class museums, such as the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the National Gallery of Art, the National Museum of African American History and Culture, and the National Museum of Natural History, among many others.

Closest Airport: Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport
Did you know: This city is home to the oldest continually operating botanical gardens.



PHOTO CREDIT: ANTON_IVANOV



MUSEUM OF ICE CREAM – NEW YORK

This museum is sure to trigger the childhood memories in you. A space that reimagines the way we experience and love ice cream, the Museum of Ice Cream allows you to savor sweet treats as you walk through the many interactive galleries here. There is also a giant sprinkle pool where you can slide, splash, and play as you satisfy your inner child looking at installations sure to trigger a multi-sensory experience. You must slide down an epic three-story slide and take a celestial ride on a pink museum subway. Follow the buzzing sound to see the giant Queen Beehive. The extremely Instagram-able museum is going to keep your camera trigger-happy too. Do not miss the Statue of Liberty, Empire State Building, Brooklyn Bridge and Central Park when in New York.

Closest Airport: JFK Airport
Did you know: New York Is the birthplace of LGBTQ+ rights in the US.



MUTTER MUSEUM – PHILADELPHIA

This medical museum has an impressive and extensive collections of anatomical artifacts, medical instruments and more. A place to understand the limitations and strengths of the human body, you can even see the preserved remains of famous people in American history, including Albert Einstein's brain. The museum has a series of ongoing exhibitions, and very recently launched its own podcast, "My Favorite Malady," as well. When here do visit the Liberty Bell Center, Independence Hall and Philadelphia Museum of Art as well.

Closest Airport: Philadelphia International Airport
Did you know: Philadelphia is the first World Heritage City in the United States.

JAZZ MUSEUM – NEW ORLEANS

The birthplace of jazz, New Orleans has this fantastic museum dedicated to all things jazz. It celebrates the history of the musical form through interactive exhibits, musical performances, and more.

You can see five rotating exhibits, understand the history of famous jazz musicians, and see a fine collection of jazz-related paintings and photography.

In a city that is great to walk and explore, check the French Quarter, with the infamous Bourbon Street, the trendy Warehouse District, and the posh Garden District when you are here.

Closest Airport: Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport
Did you know: The oldest continuously active cathedral in the United States, St. Louis Cathedral is in New Orleans.



PHOTO CREDIT: EQROY

US OLYMPIC & PARALYMPIC MUSEUM – COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO

This museum honors the athletes and ideals of the Olympic and Paralympic Games in its 60,000-square-foot facility. The 12 interactive galleries celebrate the achievements of the US Olympians and Paralympians. The Team USA athletes were consulted while this space was being put together. Said to be the most accessible museum ever, the physical, digital, and virtual experiences are aimed to encourage people to find and fulfill their Olympic-sized dreams. Visit Pikes Peak, Garden of the Gods, Cheyenne Mountain Zoo and Will Rogers Shrine Of The Sun, and check the sights of North Cheyenne Cañon Park when you are here.

Closest Airport: Denver International Airport
Did you know: Colorado is home to the world's largest natural hot springs swimming pool.





KENNEDY SPACE CENTER – FLORIDA

Located on Merritt Island in Central Florida, about an hour east of Orlando, this is NASA's primary launch center. This is where human space flights and famous space shuttles have flown their final missions. Popular with visitors, the Kennedy Space Center will offer an experience of what it is like to be an astronaut on the Shuttle Launch Experience flight simulator. You can also go on a mission control tour, train with an astronaut in the family Astronaut Training Experience (ATX) program or even dine with an astronaut. When in Florida, do visit Walt Disney World and Universal Studios Orlando.

Closest Airport: Orlando International Airport

Did you know: Florida is home to 7700 plus lakes.





NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSIC – NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

The National Museum of African American Music (NMAAM) is the only museum dedicated to music genres created and influenced by African Americans. The stage costumes, instruments, sheet music, recording equipment and photographs here are all an ode to the music of African Americans. Spread over 56000 square foot, the museum preserves and celebrates over 50 music genres and styles created and inspired by African Americans. There are artifacts, objects, memorabilia, and clothing in this state-of-the-art space and each of the museum galleries is designed to share a different narrative and a unique perspective on African American music and history. When in Nashville, do not miss the Country Music Hall of Fame and Music Row.

Closest Airport: Nashville International Airport

Did you know: Nashville's Centennial Park is home to the only replica of the Greek Parthenon.

GIFTS AND GRATITUDE

This Mother's Day, the SEEMA team handpicks a wide range of gifts for moms

1

Overnight Oil Elixir by Khalm Skincare

This soothing serum works as a collagen booster, hydrates skin and reduces the appearance of fine lines and scars. It's also power packed with oud essential oil, vitamin C and avocado oil making it a truly indulgent all-in-one skin care product for mom.

https://khalmskincare.com/products/overnight-oil-elixir



2

Earring by LOVA by VL
These gold-and-pearl earrings are great for lunches, brunches and formal dinners. They are a perfect way to add a subtle elegance to an outfit and would look great with a blouse, jacket or gown.

https://lovabyvl.com/collections/best-sellers-1/products/golden-white-pearls



3

Tovala Steam Oven
It's time to upgrade mom's oven! Steam ovens use steam instead of hot air to cook food, which cuts down on cook time and preserves nutrients.

https://www.amazon.com/Tovala-Gen-Multi-Mode-Programmable-Stainless/dp/B07K85LXBK/



4

Personalized Framed Wall Art for Mom

A perfect and personalized Mother's Day gift from daughters with customizable print options.

https://www.etsy.com/listing/963591699/personalized-framed-wall-art-for-mom





5

Handwriting Bracelet

Talk about a truly "personalized" Mother's Day gift from her very thoughtful daughter. This bracelet features your actual handwriting, and you can customize it to say just about whatever you please.

https://www.etsy.com/listing/209384686/handwriting-bracelet-custom-actual

6

One Minute Saree

For a busy young mom, One Minute Saree gives convenience and takes the mystery out of how to wear a sari. Wrap and wear sari make the tradition, the elegance, and the sheer joy of wearing a sari.

https://oneminutesaree.com/



7



SEEMA Magazine

With inspiring stories, power-packed issues and a South Asian focus, SEEMA is the magazine of choice for mothers.

https://www.seema.com

“SHE JUST SPOKE TO ME TO WRITE HER STORY. AND I DID”

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni discusses The Last Queen, her new book about Indian freedom fighter Maharani Jindan

ABHIJIT MASIH

ALL PHOTOS CREDIT: CHITRA BANNERJEE DIVAKARUNI

Author Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni with copies of her latest book The Last Queen

In her latest work, Chitra Divakaruni has lifted Maharani Jindan, an Indian freedom fighter from relative obscurity to international fame.

Divakaruni – an author, poet and a professor of writing at the University of Houston – has won many accolades, including an American Book Award. Among Divakaruni's book-to-screen adaptations have been "Sister of My Heart" and the 2005 movie, "The Mistress Of Spices," co-scripted by director Gurinder Chadha and starring Aishwarya Rai and Dylan McDermott.

Chitra Divakaruni's latest novel, "The Last Queen," published by William Morrow/HarperCollins, will be out in the US, May 10. There have been talks of a movie script as the book went on to win some early awards: the Best Fiction 2022 Award from the Times of India AUTHER Awards, and Best Book 2022 Award from the International Association of Working Women. It is long-listed for the Dublin Literary Award and the Publishing Next Fiction Award.

The book is about Jindan, a commoner who became the last reigning queen of India's Sikh empire. Based on true-life events, Divakaruni describes Jindan's rise from the daughter of a royal kennel keeper to a powerful monarch. Relying on a first-person narrative, Divakaruni divides the life of the fierce queen into four parts: girl, bride, queen, and rebel.

Divakaruni spoke to SEEMA from her home in Houston about her work.

Why did you choose to write about Maharani Jindan?

The heroine of "The Last Queen" is Maharani Jindan Kaur, the wife of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who many people have heard about, because much has been written about him. But very little has been written about her. I came across her just by chance, I was going to give a talk at a literary festival in Kolkata. I saw a projected image on the screen – a painting of Maharani Jindan. I could see that this is a woman who had been through a lot in life. Something about that painting just called to me. I was, like, I have to write her story. Her story is so worth telling. It was so inspiring for me, because of all the things that she fought against how she never gave up. She was a great freedom fighter. She fought against the British until her last breath. Yet, we don't know much about her. She was widowed early in life. And she fought against her own nobles to keep control of the kingdom so that her young son would not lose it, so that he would not be taken away from the throne. So there's a lot of interesting things in her life. Plus, it's a great love story. She just spoke to me to write her story. And I did.

In "The Last Queen," you've highlighted the ruthlessness and the egocentricity of the British. Was that intentional?

Well, Jindan's story cannot be separated from the story of how the British cheated Indians and India. One of the things I really learned during researching is that the same problem that was a problem for India during the colonial era remains a problem probably for all countries. How did a handful of British people win over this huge Indian subcontinent? It's because they pitted people against each other, because there was so much infighting. That is how, from the inside, they weakened the kingdoms. It happened over and over and over. So the political lesson of Maharani Jindan is that if a country or a community cannot stay together, if there's infighting, then people will take advantage of that and that will lead to its downfall. So I really wanted to bring up her personal heroism, but also the tragedy of India at that time. My hope is that we read history, we look at history, we identify with characters. That helps us to lead better lives today.

From writing about mythological characters in the past to a historical female character in "The Last Queen," are your intentions to get people to learn from the past so that they don't repeat its mistakes?

When I started writing "The Last Queen," I really wanted to showcase Maharani Jindan, because she is so unfairly forgotten by history. People remember her husband, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, people remember her son,

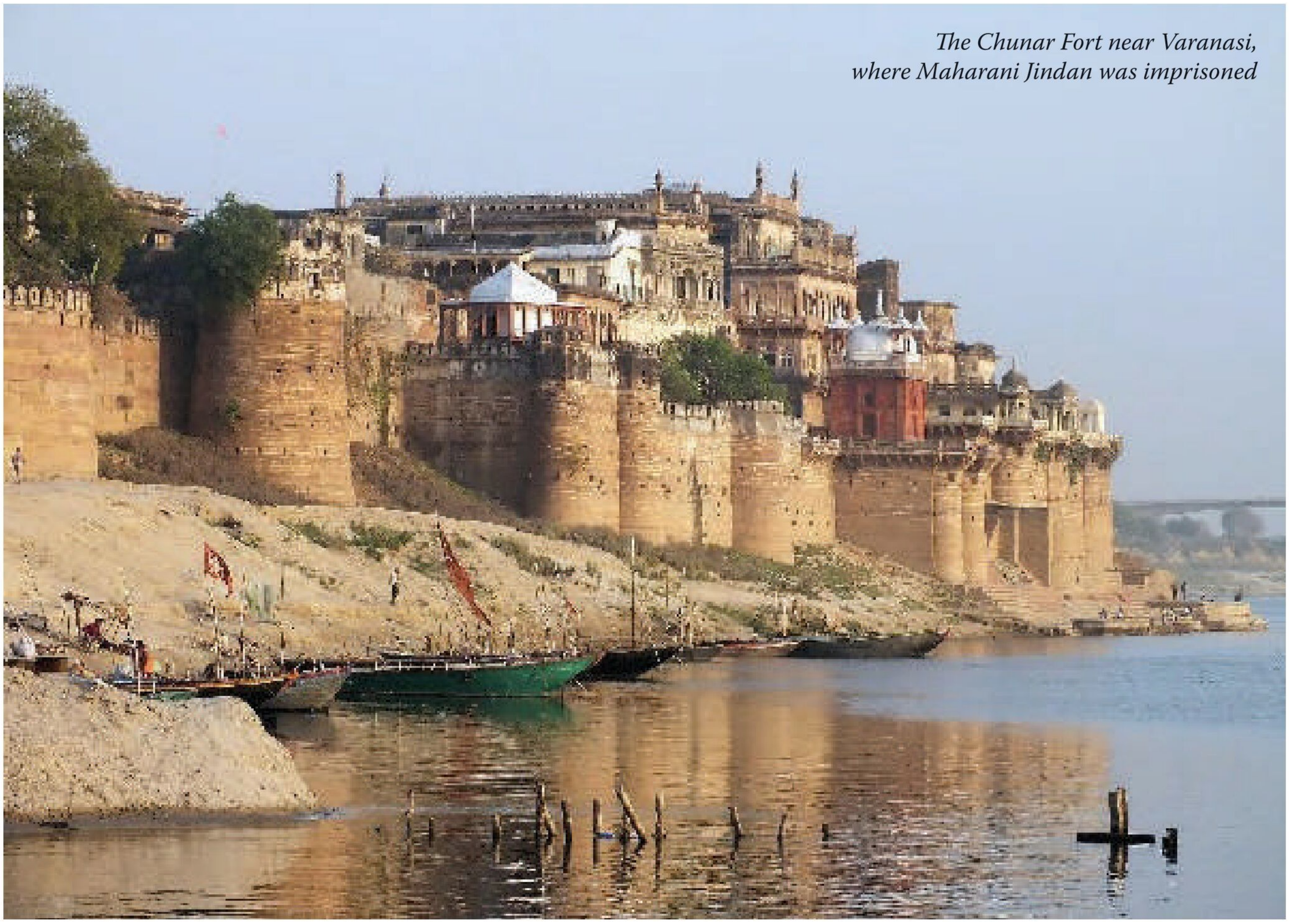


The painting that inspired the author to write about Maharani Jindan Kaur

"I REALLY WANTED TO SHOWCASE MAHARANI JINDAN, BECAUSE SHE IS SO UNFAIRLY FORGOTTEN BY HISTORY. PEOPLE REMEMBER HER HUSBAND, MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH, PEOPLE REMEMBER HER SON"



The writer at her desk



The Chunar Fort near Varanasi, where Maharani Jindan was imprisoned

Maharaja Duleep Singh, because he's the one that the British took the kingdom away from, and also took him away from India to live in England. They made sure he lost his culture, and pride in his culture. A lot of things have been written about him. But how did his mother feel? That we don't know as much about. So I wanted to. It seems to me that that is so true of many women. Many amazing inspiring women – we just seem to forget their stories. That's always been a project of mine – to put the woman in the center of the stage, to have us think about what amazing lives these women led and what are the things we can learn from them.

What were the challenges you encountered in doing research for "The Last Queen"?

It took me about three years. So I usually like to go to do a little bit of on-the-ground research. I like to go to places where important things have happened. And especially in this novel that was so important. For instance, she was imprisoned by the British in a very terrible prison fortress called the Chunnar Fort. I wanted to see it and get a feel for it. Then, for many years, she was separated from her son by the British. But when he grew up, he tricked them. And he came to India, and secretly arranged to meet with his mother in a hotel in Kolkata. I really want to go see that place. But with the pandemic, I realized none of this was going to happen. I really relied not only on old diaries, her letters, of course any history written at that time in newspaper entries. Most of all, I relied on old photographs and old paintings. Thank God for the internet, I was able to get hold of many old photographs and paintings. I think that really helped me get into that world.

Would you like someone like director Sanjay Leela Bhansali – who has brought many historical women to the silver screen – to immortalize Maharani Jindan on film?

Well, I don't want to speak too soon. But "The Last Queen," I'm very excited to say, has been optioned. I'm not allowed to say any more than that right now. But I'm very excited that we may be getting some exciting news soon. Fingers crossed for that. All of you who are reading, please do send good, good energy to "The Last Queen," because I think that would be great to see those times, those places, that are just so amazing. I myself would love to see that on screen.



FORECAST WITH **FARZANA**

Mar 21 - Apr 19



You find yourself quick to take action and dive right into a situation instead of thinking. Put on your brave face, let nothing faze you to move ahead against any challenge. You are highly driven, ambitious and action-oriented to manifest your goals. However, don't cut corners to get a job done. A big change is expected in your career and relationship therefore, now is the time to trust in yourself and your potential and take the next step to press forward. The breakthrough you seek is already on its way. Don't give up now. In money matters, be cautious. Do some research, but don't procrastinate. If you're looking for a new way to improve your health, start now.

Apr 20 - May 20

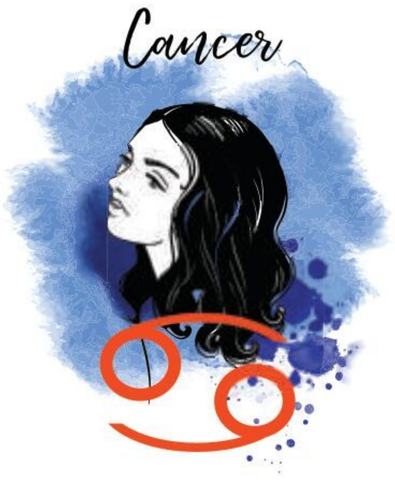
It's not the time to jump into action but to lay still and delve internally. Life is teaching you how to balance relationships and elevate your self-worth. For your dreams to take shape and change to happen, it's imperative for you to process old wounds. Tomorrow won't be different if you don't change something today. If you feel trapped in indecision, step back and objectively, reevaluate your job or career situation, relationships, and financial status. Walk away from the need to please others. What may seem like regressing may be just a reroute to get you to where you belong. Trust what you feel, not what you hear. Keep the faith, for what is yours cannot pass you by.

May 21 - Jun 20



If you are facing challenges you need to overcome, take a brainy and communicative approach and find a new way to do things. Embrace a new way of thinking, a new way of seeing, and your place in it by being intentional, and use all the tools that life is offering you. Heed warnings when they are given but also remember, don't let your emotions rule your decision. It may be a time in your career where you receive a raise, a promotion, or the option to work on a new project. Improved communication is the key for stronger, deeper relationships so express your true feelings and wants with your partner, unabashedly. It's time for less judgment, more compassion and understanding.

Jun 21 - Jul 22



You are beginning to realize your own power so there's no need to push. Let what's meant for you, come with ease. There is an upsurge in energy to explore new things or those long forgotten. It is a good time to start something creative, even if you have no idea what you want to do, jump right in. Any fears, are likely to be consigned to the trash. Doors are opening, or problems just fading away. Apply for jobs or placements or begin that new venture. If you're single and looking, expect to find somebody who you may fall head over heels for. Expect a new level of deep connection in any existing relationships. The world is your oyster so keep your eyes firmly on your goal and march ahead.

Jul 23 - Aug 22



The time you spent working towards a goal will soon be rewarded – in the form of a raise, promotion, business opportunity, or investment payoff. Choose loving, supportive circumstances and relationships. Surprises arrive in the way of gifts, money is returned that you forgot about, and offers of help and friendship make everything feel peachy. All that you ask, you receive. Be intentional about what you ask. Remind yourself to keep investing in your current situation, while working for the next big thing. Trust your intuition, and release outdated energies and relinquish worries. Spend time in gratitude for all you have – even when you think you don't have much, you have more than you realize.

Aug 23 - Sept 22



This is not a time to go against the grain, so sticking with a conservative approach or seeking counsel from elders may yield better

results. Do what is morally acceptable in matters of love and money. Steer clear of defying the status quo to resolve any messy issues at work. The month, indicates marriage or commitment so if you're in a committed relationship you might just be taking it to the next level. A spiritual guide or mentor may make an appearance in your life. Therefore, be not proud to seek support, if you're in need. Alternatively, your work may be appreciated by others and people may turn to you for advice.

Sept 23 - Oct 22



You find yourself taking a new turn to find a place where you belong. You may either find closure, or decide to move on. Disillusionment about certain aspects of your life may seem to isolate you. This distance is needed to refocus and move past your limitations. You may see it manifest as a career change, a new relationship, or the end of an old situation. Be good to yourself for your own well-being. Focus on budgeting and steer clear of any over ambitious investment plans. If you're well off, you might feel like something is missing. Emotions, may run high so keep your heart centered and follow your intuition. You may seek a mentor or delve deeper into spirituality.

Oct 23 - Nov 21



You might find work is defeating you at the moment, the long hours, difficult colleagues, or perhaps enough work to help you get by. Issues that cause you pain, discomfort and disruption even not closely concerned with you, may hurt. Be strong. It's temporary and shall pass. Let go of heavy emotions and keep putting the little victories, together. Reflect on everything you HAVE, focus on the larger goal and take initiative. In relationships, communication is key for peace and better understanding. Some relationships may fade to create space for new ones. Remind yourself, you have it within yourself to change your life. If the money situation feels crushing, make some cuts on luxuries. The time to reset is, now.

Nov 22 - Dec 21



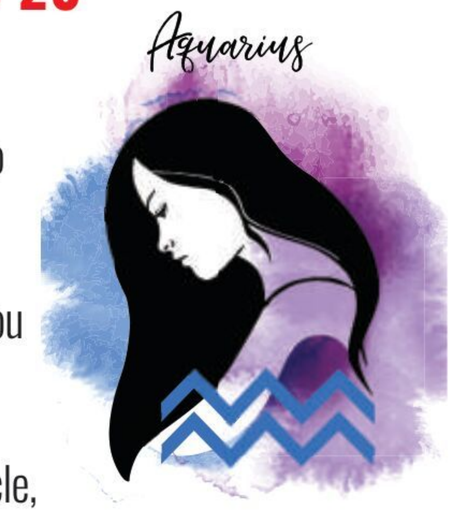
Light emanates from your personality so, dust off the grit and grime of the past. Your currency is your authenticity. Whatever you may be dealing with right, now you are likely to have an excellent outcome. A new job or project, maybe right around the corner. Your relationships inspire joy, your career seems fulfilling, and you may enjoy all the recognition, provided you let go and embrace the abundance coming your way with positivity. If you're currently single, it's time to step out there and let yourself shine. In a relationship, your partnership will possibly, blossom. This is not a time to be whiny, clingy, or needy in a relationship. Do keep a check on the ego and anger.

Dec 22 - Jan 19



Change is on its way and it's time to tighten the seatbelt and get ready to drive. You have what it takes to succeed, but you need to be proactive and engage your power in achieving what you have envisioned to create a fulfilling life. Use the momentum to place your projects and plans into action. Whether you're looking for love or wanting to bring your relationship to the next level. Have faith in yourself and your dreams. Welcome, new friends, ideas and learning. Be mindful of people with hidden agendas and the information you share with others. Independence, initiative and creative expression, are your strengths. Keep your stress low, and stay joyful.

Jan 20 – Feb 20



Stand up for what you believe in and ground yourself into a new reality. Make the day your own, achieve the goals you planned and should you come head-to-head with an obstacle, push through it.
Pay no attention to what the critics say. No statue has ever been erected to a critic. Make a commitment, and refuse to accept less than what is essentially right. For those who are single, change the paradigm and do things, differently. You can withstand any challenge, in an existing relationship as long as you're willing to work things out, together. You've got this. Your financial picture improves with a new source of income arriving.

Feb 21 – Mar 20



You may feel the weight on the work front but look for the silver lining. Perhaps using a skill, in a way you haven't in the past may help you get to the next level of mastery. Or add some variety and spice up your life for a happy work day. In the love area, make sure, your work isn't driving a wedge in your relationship. Your partner may require you to shoulder an equal share of responsibilities or demonstrate you care. Schedule some 'we' time for each other. Monetarily speaking, your cash flow is likely to be healthy and the financial assistance you are hoping to receive, may well be around the corner.

Farzana Suri is a Victory Coach who coaches people through their life's challenges to take the leap to victory, using the science of numerology.

For a personalised forecast, you may contact Farzana at **surifarzana@gmail.com** or visit her website **www.farzanasuri.com**



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