

March, 2021

Espresso

Magazine

Grub Hub

Aromatic Thandai

Runway

Hues of Hampi

Fashion

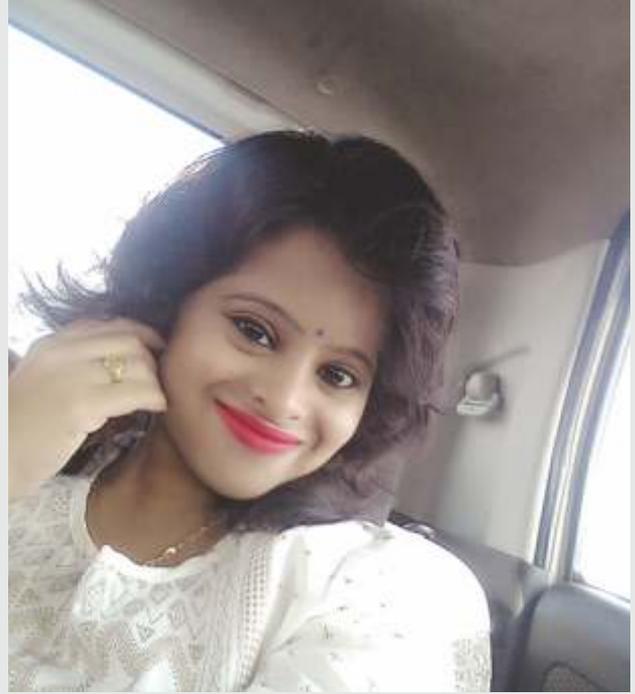
FDCI X Lakme
Fashion Week

Shahneaz
Musain

Queen of Ayurvedic Beauty



EDITOR'S LETTER



W “We realise the importance of our voice when we are silenced” Malala Yousafzai.

This month we celebrate the spirit of womanhood in all spheres of life. Today's women are the ones who encourage, empower and inspire us to be the one to decide our destiny. They are walking shoulder to shoulder with men in different areas of interest. To celebrate the strength and power of such women, we salute some high-flyer women whose stories inspire all of us. They always believe nothing is unthinkable if you have the will and resolution. Our cover story featured the Queen of Ayurvedic industry Shahnaz Husain, where she talks about what goes behind a successful woman entrepreneur and how she changed the definition of beauty. We also interacted with dynamic Ms. Neha Bajaj, Founder & Managing Editor, Scroll Mantra Pvt. Ltd, who shared her journey as an entrepreneur.

In our fashion special, we covered the first ever joint 'Phygital' edition of FDCI X Lakmé Fashion Week. This fashion week showcased a host of new, emerging talent, the biggest, and the established names from Delhi, Mumbai and other parts of the country that set an unparalleled benchmark in innovations, sustainability, and creativity.

We celebrate, salute and raise a toast to womanhood in the month of March.

Rituparna Sengupta Basu
Editor
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Aromatic Thandai

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Vogue and Trends Ruled Over The Runway

Nabanita Dutta

It has been a year since the Covid-19 pandemic reconstructs our lives. In the past year, everyone went on to say that a contagious virus would sound like a death knell for every industry. Even the fashion industry can't get rid of it. But recently concluded FDCI X Lakme Fashion Week proven all the equation wrong. In a six-day-long event (since March 16-21st), for the first time, the Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI) and Lakmé Fashion Week (LFW) came along together. The show has been a huge success in the industry so innovatively. The two of India's biggest fashion giant presents, that even a post dull traumatic situation can't hold us back. A Special 'drive-in' fashion week, like a fresh soothing boost to the industry as well as to the society.

Ace designer **Anamika Khanna** opened the show with her collection aptly called "Timeless the World". The collection was inspired by the many quick changing feelings and emotions that one goes through. From casual comfort wear to fashion luxury, Anamika kept nostalgia as well as tradition in mind as she paid homage to Indian heritage. It was also a creative merger of art and textiles as Anamika brought her versions of the fabrics that will create a trend during the coming season.

An experimental and adventurous designer, Anamika created silhouettes and looks that were unconventional but innovative with a boundary less appeal for all buyers. The silhouettes remained true to the fluid; flowing lines that ensured a marked possibility of mix and match options.

Anamika Khanna's "Timeless the World" line was a grand start to the FDCI x Lakmé Fashion Week, as it was an emotional, joyous, fashion direction for the coming season.

A young talent **Akshat Bansal** of the label Bloni

showcased the collection which marks the third year of us making clothes, clothes that are not conformed to any particular gender. It's self-accepting, it's self-informed. Enhancing transparency and creating a unique hybrid culture is what the brand thrives on.

This year, they have introduced marine plastic waste textile giving it a new life. Blending tech-generated fabrics with local artisanal techniques, hand crochet and knitting along with glazed fabrics, clean silhouettes and gender neutral shapes blur the visual distinction and forms a strong base for this collection.

S&N by Shantanu and Nikhil showcase their line, titled #SNSafari. Inspired by the notion of celebration on the move, with earthy tones and unconventional silhouettes, the new collection #SNSafari by S&N by Shantanu and Nikhil is very edgy. It draws inspiration from millennials on the move, adding an exhilarating hint of Safari to one's luxury getaway wardrobe featuring unique design details for both men and women.

Whilst gripping on the idea of celebration-wear, the collection delineates the belief of celebrating oneself, the journey and the destination.



With an idyllic backdrop of 'celebration on the move', the collection covers a gamut of unique styles for both men and women. From asymmetric kurtas and cropped jacket shirts for women; to open cut sherwanis and structured shirts with Nehruvian details for men, alongside casual-chic elements of T-shirts, sneakers and shorts, the brand offers a sartorial choice for our uber-cool millennial customers.

Keeping the new season of Spring/Summer 2021 in fashion focus, **Ritu Kumar's** new line presented by TRESemmé was a colourful medley of hues at the joint phygital seasonless FDCI x Lakmé Fashion Week. The highlight of the ensembles from the Spring/Summer 2021 season was the stylish blend of modern minimalism with the boho touch.

To keep the theme in creative control, Ritu Kumar included a variety of yarn dyes, that brought in a bit of mix and match possibilities. The designer then showcased vibrant, floral prints and added some clever patchwork, with an amalgamation of laces, to finally end with intricate geometric designs.

The **boAt x Masaba** collaboration once again continued at the joint phygital seasonless FDCI x Lakmé Fashion Week. Masaba's breezy "Summer 21" line was aimed at women and men who are escapists by nature and long to get away in fun clothes. It was a nostalgic look that evoked days of crazy music, happy conversations and munching candy all day.

Masaba added a further stylish element when listening to music on the boAt Audio range. The limited-edition colourful headphones



designed by Masaba will be launched in retail stores and various e-commerce platforms simultaneously to the show as part of the collaboration – there are some inspired by Disco, and some for the retro, vintage enthusiast. Prints are also Aztec and tribal for those who have a penchant for rustic charm.

It was a riot of colours and abstract cow and quirky prints for the easy, collection that ended in some regal formal wear. Track pants and tops as well as joggers' pants, appeared for both men's and women's wear, while hoodies will be a favourite for both male and female buyers. Summer dresses, some off-shoulder versions, kaftans, tie-up blouses with attached skirt combos and summer blouses with asymmetric skirts, kept the tempo of the show in high gear. Maxis made a quick appearance; robes swirled over dresses, while kurtas with relaxed pants in exotic colourful prints, added to the colour story.

Keeping the sari buyer in focus, Masaba offered an assortment in colours, prints and patterns, with varying choli styles. Masaba also brought in an interesting choli/cape combo for lehengas that could eliminate the dupatta. The final trio of gold and magenta, shimmering lehengas with tiny bustiers, as well as the black, maxi skirt with an impressive gold motif teamed with a double-breasted, long-sleeved, black jacket, proved that the collection presented a fun to formal flavour.



Men's wear remained totally casual and bordered on the athleisure look with some bold colour/print blocking for the two-tone blousons, while shorts and matching shirts, as well as flowing robes over jumpsuits, added to the male wardrobe options.

Manish Malhotra knows how to celebrate the grandeur of a wedding and his latest couture, bridal collection presented by NEXA at the joint phygital seasonless FDCI x Lakmé Fashion Week March 16 -21, had everything a bridal couple longs for on the most important day of their lives.

The collection was a splendid luxurious

was perfectly teamed with an asymmetric ink kurta and slim pants.

The fabrics matched the variety of colours as pure two-toned silks and Dupion silks, vied for attention with gold silks, sheer organzas, lush crepes and elegant tissue fabrics.

Manish's bridal offering has always pushed the creative limits and this season it had a marked fashion forward appeal, when oversized jackets and colour blocked lehengas were part of the amazing range. Keeping the traditional bridal wear couples also happy with some timeless heritage offerings, Manish unveiled

the ever-popular Kalidar kurtas, the diaphanous lehengas, dramatic gowns, swirling shararas, kurtas, palazzos, striking jackets and of course, the much sought after traditional dupattas.

Women's bridal wear was luxuriously opulent with silver and gold gowns, backless and button less cholis, while the magnificent lehenga, choli and dupatta trios were creations that brides can only dream of. The sensational gowns were adorned with mini capes, while floor-kissing ornate robes, swirling kurtas and kurtis with cropped, flowing pants added to the beauty of the collection.

Completing the bridal wear looks, the collection was aptly accessorised by Manish Malhotra Jewellery that added that final touch of perfect sartorial elegance. Hand crafted completely in pure gold, the jewellery dazzled with flat cut diamonds, gorgeous rubies, majestic pearls and magnificent Russian and Zambian emeralds.

For men's wear Manish offered a variety of jackets with beaded lapels or silver shawl collars. He teamed the conventional or jodhpuri jackets with kurtas and added discreet, animal motif embroidery for the Sherwanis.

Manish Malhotra's exquisite line of bridal wear and jewellery presented by NEXA, embraces



the glorious beauty of life during the coming festive season and will definitely be coveted by stylish bridal couples.

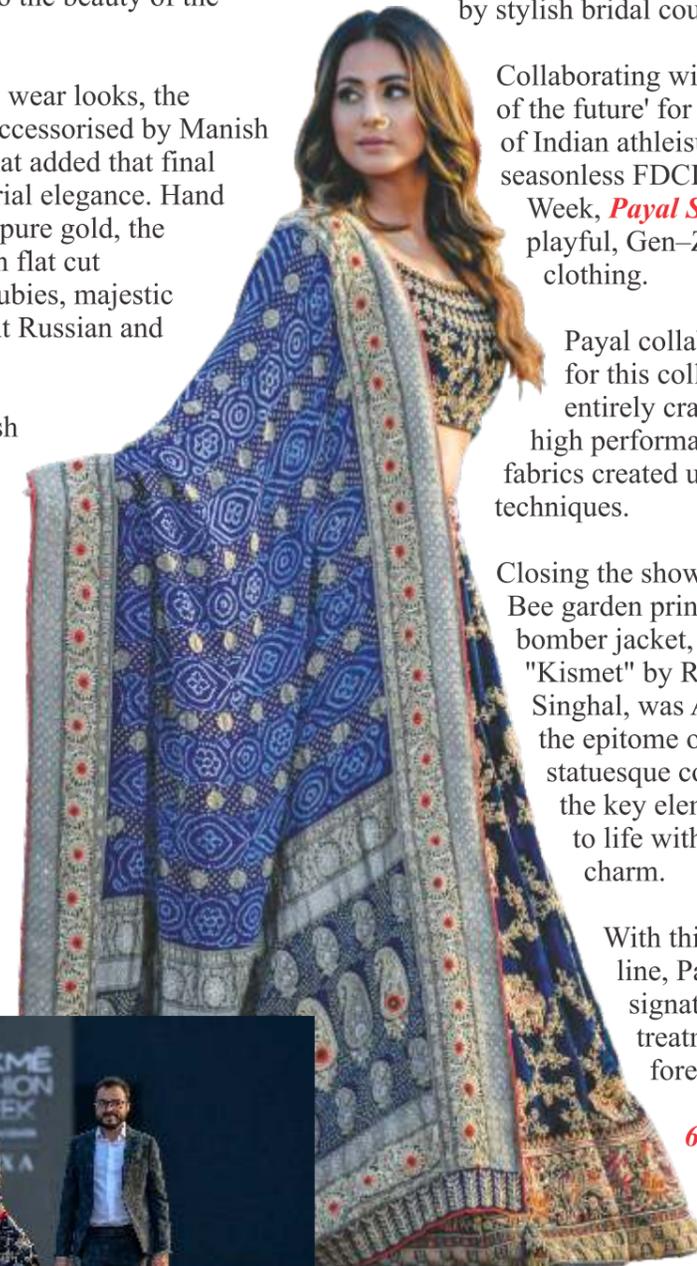
Collaborating with R|Elan™ - 'the fabric of the future' for her "Kismet" collection of Indian athleisure at the phygital seasonless FDCI x Lakmé Fashion Week, **Payal Singhal** showcased a playful, Gen-Z friendly line of fun clothing.

Payal collaborated with R|Elan™ for this collection, which was entirely crafted using the brand's high performance, eco-friendly fabrics created using sustainable techniques.

Closing the show dressed in a Yellow Bee garden printed embroidered bomber jacket, bustier and skirt from "Kismet" by R|Elan™ x Payal Singhal, was Athiya Shetty who was the epitome of laidback elegance and statuesque comfort as she brought the key elements of the collection to life with grace and easygoing charm.

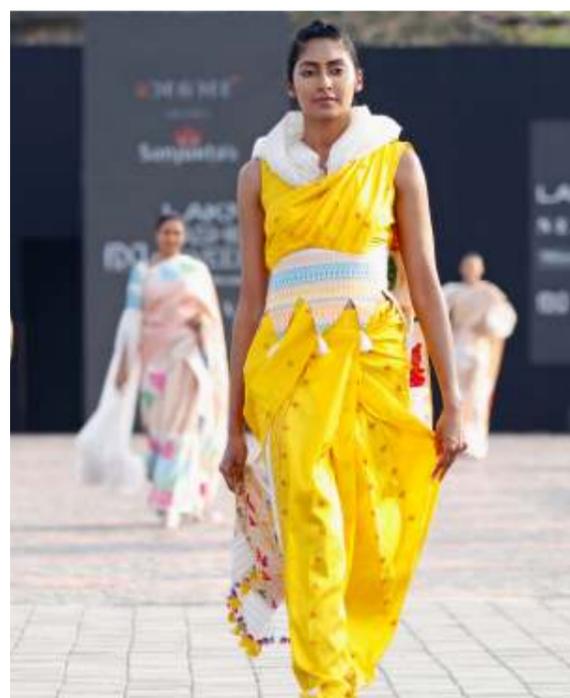
With this unique one-of-its-kind line, Payal brought her signature, bohemian, relaxed, treatment for garments to the forefront.

6 Degree unveiled a grand presentation by five diverse designer labels at the joint



symphony of colours that played their medley of hues gently through the ensembles. It was a mixture of sumptuous sorbet and blush shades, as vibrant pink moved gracefully with serene lilac, and then blossomed into grey-blue and royal beige-gold. Powder blue played a major role, while metallic gold-silver shimmered and monochrome black and white brought an end to the colour card.

The showstoppers were the stunning Kiara Advani and the very dapper Kartik Aaryan. Kiara looked magnificent in a shimmering silver gown with impressive cut outs and a silver sheer, long shoulder train. Kartik was at his dapper best in a black, bundgala jacket with three silver reindeers embroidered, which



phygital season less fashion extravaganza by the FDCI x Lakmé Fashion Week. A **Sanjukta Dutta** collection has always brought to centre stage the beauty of Indian textiles. So, her collection “Shukoolaa”, which means white and bright brought a fashionable and pure sanctity to her showcase during the Fashion Week.

Opening with a yellow, polka dotted kurta with palazzos, the show moved swiftly to a collared poncho, an interesting butterfly-sleeved blouse and a cape with train over a lehenga and choli duo. The balloon, long-sleeved choli with a tiny collar, cummerbund over long kurta with pants and the slashed jacket over sari added to the innovative look of the collection. Drama came in the form of choli sleeves with floor sweeping trains, while a poncho over draped skirt and blouse gave the line a contemporary flavour.

Stopping the show was the very regal Lara Dutta in a white/gold Mekhela Chador worn with a demure white long-sleeved backless choli.

Sanjukta Dutta's “Shukoolaa” collection was a timeless celebration of Indian textiles and fashion forward followers will covet craftsmanship that was beautifully merged with fresh styling.



Gazal Mishra's collections have always reflected her craft on the exquisite ensembles she has created. Her latest collection for Spring/Summer 2021 called “Uzbek Vintage”, unveiled a colourful and graceful story of flora, inspired by the Uzbekistan luxurious foliage.

The highlight of the collection was the beautiful thread work and zardosi embroidery, which turned the base textile - cotton silk - into visions of beauty. The colours favoured however, remained partial to a burnt pink palette. The focus of the collection was on a minimalistic approach, which revolved around a contemporary style statement.

Keeping a firm fashionable hold on the colour choice and gorgeous embroidery, there were shararas with kurtis, maxi skirts for long kurtas, pin tucking on bodice for lean kurta and a wrapped, draped version with flowing pants. The empire line midi dress with a layered hemline, peplum blouse over kurta and cropped pants, ensured that the theme of the collection was on trend.

Making a show stopping entry Bollywood star **Aahana Kumra** glided in a full-flared, tiered, long kurta with ornate embellishment on the front and back of the garment and teamed it with a swirling maxi skirt and matching dupatta.

The Shaveta and Anuj label by **Shaveta Choudhary and Anuj Choudhary** had great fashion sensibilities.



Their collection “Qalb” was a bridal line of immense beauty and craft. “Qalb”, which means heart, had as its soul some exquisite fabrics, while luxurious zardosi detailing and silhouettes will gladden the hearts of contemporary brides. Keeping the regal look of the collection in firm focus, Shaveta and Anuj designed a grand creation for showstopper **Divya Khosla Kumar**, who looked splendid in a deep gold, scalloped, hemline lehenga, choli and dupatta with dazzling gold work.

When the splendid weaves of India come together for a show, the effect has to be just magical. The “Rajwadi” collection from **'Tatwamm'** by **Abhishek and Vinita** was a symphony of weaves at the FDCI x Lakmé Fashion Week.

It was a fantasy of saris in myriad weaves, prints, colours and embellished with exotic zari work, all worn with the most traditional but stylish cholis. The colour palette vied with the rainbow for attention, as hues of all shades and tones appeared on the textiles.

Hina Khan was the perfect showstopper as she created an impact and sashayed in, wearing the stunning silk, velvet lehenga, ornamented intricately with prancing horses that added to the regal feel of the ensemble.

Every season, the **Lakmé Absolute Grand Finale** is the most awaited show, because it brings alive the best of makeup and fashion

together on one stage. This season at FDCI X Lakmé Fashion Week, **Ruchika Sachdeva** of Bodice took the spotlight as the Lakmé Absolute Grand Finale designer.

Her collection named **'Ready Set Play'** was all about patterns and shapes, with cues taken from Lakmé 's inspiration this season, that good things come in small packages. This season, the brand's theme stemmed from the fact that, at a difficult time, the world came together to find joy and peace in the smallest of things around them, and this concept resonated with the iconic beauty brand's latest collection, **The Lakmé Absolute Matte Melt Mini Liquid Lipcolor.**

The Grand Finale has always been a synchrony of makeup and fashion, and the beauty looks from the runway with the bright matte hues on the lips, paired perfectly with the Bodice collection. The outfits had everything from pastels that were inspired by summer like pale pinks, ice blue, pistachios, white, fresh yellows matched with bright color blockings, much like the vibrancy of the lip colours.

Showstopper and Lakmé Brand Ambassador, Ananya Panday was sporting a vibrant pleated skirt and the full sleeved crop top.

The venue was one of a kind.

This season's Lakmé Absolute Grand Finale was held at the

Bayview, Princess Dock, Mumbai

Port Trust,

Mazgaon at a special 'drive

-in' fashion week. The

runway was turned into

a life-sized Scrabble

board. The

concept of the set,

the makeup, the clothes all seemed to be enhancing

the playful nature of the collection. This

spectacular set resonated with the fun element that

the new makeup and finale collection have.



Adorn Your Look With Stunning Designs

Life cannot be imagined without colours as they fill us with vibrant energy. Holi is just around the corner and we have too less time to decide upon our outfit and jewellery for the day. To fill hope energy and happiness Some brands have launched their exclusive Holi Collection...

The Kaleidoscope (Avama Jewellers): The agglomeration has alluring jewellery pieces finely crafted in diamonds, emeralds, rubies, sapphires and other varieties of semi-precious stones in different colours. They are offering various ranges of bangles in colourful stones, kadas, bracelets, colourful jhumkas, pendants, rings and many more. Chandbali earrings are forever love and there cannot be any better festival than Holi to deck up yourself with a gorgeous yet light-weighted chandbalis with the combination of red or pink in them because it's light, trendy and festive. Gone are those days when women avoided wearing jewellery sets in Holi. These days festive season is the best time to make a statement



Iridescent 2021('Shi') : The collection curated by 'Shi' highlights the charm of surreal creativity at its best and creates the perfect expression of joy. This alluring collection has been ministered, especially keeping in mind the heritage and culture of India. The festive collection includes elegant Ethnic Jewellery to pair up with the look planned for the day of the celebration. The amalgamation includes exquisite Maalas, elegant earrings, delicate bracelets and everything you need to look your best. The handcrafted jewellery with Swarovski crystals and semiprecious gemstones is crafted in Silver.

Shades of Elegance (Pretios): Enticing jewellery items finely crafted in Swarovski, emeralds, rubies, sapphires, tanzanite and many other varieties of semi-precious stones in different colours. The amalgamation offers bangles, bracelets, earrings, necklaces, pendants and rings featuring various kinds of dazzling and colorful gemstones. The collection offers a gamut of designs and colourful options to customers symbolizing the celebrations of the Indian festival of Holi.

The exquisite jewellery collection ensures there is something unique for all the special people in your lives with a great range of collections at affordable price points. Select from stunning rings, beautiful pendants, graceful earrings, trendy bracelets and gorgeous necklaces . Make Holi a memorable occasion with 'Shades of Elegance', for “the heart that gifts shines like a diamond”.





Play with overlays

POLAROID introduces the Spring/Summer 2021 eyewear collection. Enabling to see the world from a brighter and colorful point of view, Polaroid offers in SS21 season a wide range of original eyewear remaining always true to its DNA of clearer vision and high protection and add to the product range a new Sustainable Collection born to satisfy the need of those looking for a sustainable choice. The collection presents stylish and on-trends sunglasses for men and women, in lightweight polycarbonate or metal, emphasized by playful colors on the frames and on the lenses, as well as spotted rainbow details as an unexpected touch.



Easy Remedies To Take Off Holi Colours From Nails

Dr. Blossom Kochhar

Holi hai! So, Holi is almost here, and we all are eagerly waiting for colourful Holi parties. As you plan for a Holi party, the first thing that comes to your mind is, how you will protect your hair and skin? You look for oils, moisturisers, home remedies, etc. But one thing that most of the time gets neglected is "our nails". While playing Holi, our nails are regularly stained with harmful colours for at least 5 to 6 hours. This can spoil all your nail art, nail extensions, French manicure, or even plain nails. No one wants those dry, brittle, multi-coloured, dirty nails. Here we will share some easy home remedies that will help you to easily clean your nails at home without spending a massive sum of money.

Dip in cold water: After playing Holi, the first thing that you must do is dip your nails in cold water or room temperature water. Take a bowl filled with cold or room temperature water, squeeze 1 or 2 lemons in it and leave the squeezed lemons also in the bowl. Soak your nails in cold water for up to 10 minutes and keep rubbing softly with lemons. Bleaching agents present in lemons will help clean colours from your nails and hands.

Vinegar Dip: Take 3 to 4 spoons of vinegar in a bowl and dip your nails in it for up to 5 minutes. Take a cotton ball and start rubbing your nails with it. Dip cotton in vinegar and keep

rubbing on your nails. The high content of citrus present in vinegar will remove the stubborn colours from your nails. But this can also dry your nails excessively. Use Nail and Cuticle Conditioner by Blossom Kochhar Aroma Magic. It will help to nourish, hydrate and strengthen the nails.

Clear nail paint with almond oil: Apply clear nail paint onto your nails. Take a bowl filled with lukewarm water and add few drops of Blossom Kochhar Aroma Magic Almond Oil in it. Slowly start rubbing your nails. This will help to take off colours from nails easily and regain the moisture lost by nails while playing Holi.

Orange peel powder or Amchur powder: Both amchur and orange peel powders have bleaching and exfoliation properties. You can use either of them or both and make a fine paste with water. Apply this mixture on your nails and leave for 10 minutes, wet your fingers and slowly start exfoliating your nails with it and rinse off with cold water. After this, use Blossom Kochhar Aroma Magic Olive Oil to give deep nourishment to the nails.

Pre Holi tips for nails:

- Apply a thick coat of dark-coloured nail paint.
- Apply rich moisturiser on nails and body.

Enjoy your Holi with no worry! Wish you all a very happy and colourful Holi!



COVER STORY

Shahana Hussain

Beauty is the sole purpose of my existence

Rituparna Sengupta Basu

The

Queen of Ayurvedic Beauty, Shahnaz Husain changed the face of beauty and glamor over the years. She is one of the prominent faces who proposed the trend of herbal beauty in India and took it to a global level. Her only focus is to help women with various effective skincare regimen using natural and herbal products. Due to her impeccable skills in cosmetic therapy, Shahnaz Husain received Padma Shri Awards in 2006. She bagged other awards throughout her career too. In a recent chat with Expresso Magazine, Shahnaz Husain opened up about her life, the struggles she faced, and how she changed the definition of beauty.

Expresso: Your journey was filled with obstacles. So how did you manage them to overcome?

Shahnaz Husain : When I look back at my journey so far, I realize that much more than I ever dreamed of has come true. It is important to believe in your dreams and do everything within your power to change those dreams into reality. Hurdles do come up in life, but I have always tried to meet them as challenges and opportunities, with my desire to excel, my relentless determination to succeed, an iron will, steel grit, and sheer hard work. If you want to achieve something and you're willing to persevere, trust me, you'll get there.

Expresso: Being a successful entrepreneur in the beauty industry what challenges did you face and how you handled them?

Shahnaz Husain : Entering the international market was the biggest challenge. Back in the day, India did not have a standing in the international market, but I decided to attend the International Beauty Congresses regardless. There, I spoke about Ayurvedic beauty treatments and tried to garner attention towards herbal healing. I participated in the Festival of India in London in 1982 and was given a counter in the Perfumery Section at Selfridges. With international cosmetic empires pumping billions of dollars into a hysterically mad cosmetic industry, selling youth & dreams in bottled jars, and in the face of fierce competition, I stood my ground and sold Ayurvedic magic – introducing people to something they had never experienced before. People were quite surprised that I was able to sell the entire consignment within just three days,



setting up a new cosmetic sales record at the store in the process.

Consequently, I earned myself a permanent stall at the London store. From there, we moved on to Harrods in London, Galeries Lafayette in Paris, the Seibu chain in Japan, La Rinascente in Milan, and El Corte Inglis in Spain. Over the years, I experienced the increasing demand for Ayurvedic beauty care across the globe. Needless to say, it wasn't easy, but I had faith in myself and Ayurveda and it carried me through all the hardships.

Expresso: What is the most rewarding part of you in this long journey?

Shahnaz Husain : I have always fought for the recognition of Brand India and Ayurvedic Beauty Care in the international market with a crusader's zeal. The most rewarding part of this journey is representing India at World Entrepreneurship Summits, Congresses, and Seminars and achieving international recognition and prestigious international awards for my Ayurvedic Innovations. I was invited to speak at Harvard Business School on how I created an international brand without commercial advertising, becoming a Case Study there for brand creation. Now I am a Subject at

Harvard for “Emerging Markets” in recognition of the international market created by me for Ayurvedic beauty care.

Expresso: People still now talk about fair complexion. What are your views on it and do you think that it is important to change this perspective?

Shahnaz Husain : I have always said that what matters is the good health of the skin and not its color. But, in India, the desire for a fair complexion seems to have always existed. One may wonder why fair complexion is such a big deal in India. The answer to this question is not simple. Since India is a very diverse nation, we see a broad spectrum of skin complexions across the country. If all Indians were dark in color, the mindset may have been different. That being said, it is high time we change our perception of fair as beautiful. In fact, I welcomed the new advertising guidelines on fairness creams and the criticisms of color prejudice. The so-called "fairness" creams have been re-branded and re-named.

Expresso: Did you commit any mistake in your journey and what did you learn from it?

Shahnaz Husain : There have not been any such glaring errors of judgment, but I feel that one learns from all experiences. However successful one may be at International beauty exhibitions or fairs, it has been a learning experience for me in terms of the kind of

demands in different countries.

Expresso: What are your thoughts on the rat race you are slotted in with your contemporaries?

Shahnaz Husain : When I started herbal beauty care, I was the pioneer. I also adopted an integrated system of a chain of salons and ranges of products that rely on each other. This was also a new concept. To that extent and due to franchising, our business model was very different. Of course, there is no doubt that beauty care in India was fashioned after the Shahnaz Husain products and the concept of herbal care.

I would say that I had a head start and through franchising, we established a global network of franchise salons, outlets, and academies. We had to set up a zonal distribution system because salons extended all over India and they were our outlets. To that extent, we were out of the so-called “rat race.” We have also become known for product innovations and have established a leading position in the international market in terms of the Ayurvedic beauty movement. India is one of the largest consumer markets in the world and there is space for more players. At the same time, the Indian consumer is very value-conscious and the internet has changed the way we do business. So, such factors do count. We have positioned ourselves as the leaders in the higher segment in Ayurvedic Beauty Care and have also made an impact in the middle segment due to brand identity and brand loyalty.



Expresso: The craze of Ayurveda took the industry by storm within a few years so what are your views?

Shahnaz Husain : That is very true. There has been a worldwide “back to nature” concept sweeping the world for decades, along with the “total wellness” concept. The result is that holistic systems like Ayurveda have become popular. In India, faith in Ayurveda has always existed and that is why Ayurveda still flourishes. Today, due to the preference for organic products and herbal healing, Ayurvedic beauty care has become popular, not only for general beauty care but also for the treatment of skin and hair problems. My dream is to see Ayurvedic beauty care leading the international market within the next decade.

Expresso: Do you think that female leaders still face reservation and prejudices and how they can avoid these social stigmas?

Shahnaz Husain : They say it is a man's world, but women have come a long way, even in the business world. Women do face challenges in the work environment, as well as the family set-up, but women empowerment and education are helping women to get around these challenges. It is also a question of gender equality so that women can also have their say in the decision-making process. Education and skill development will help women to be financially independent and this brings about a change in their status too. Gender equality is the answer. We all have to believe that men and women have the same rights, responsibilities, and opportunities. Only then can we be free from social stigmas and conditioning.

Expresso: The trend of visiting the wellness centers are increasing among the celebs. So how useful it is.

Shahnaz Husain : Today, the “wellness” concept is sweeping the world. That is why spa treatments are becoming popular. Recently, a major thrust in the growth of spa treatments has been noticed. Even the salons are being converted into day spas or offering both salon and spa treatments. They are considered solutions to stress-related problems. The accent has been on providing luxurious and relaxing treatments for de-stressing body and mind, where the healing

hands of trained therapists take over in a serene and peaceful ambiance.

Today, they are not merely “pampering luxury treatments,” but are considered necessary for stress management and total well-being. With deep tissue massage and body polish, the treatments help to remove fatigue, soothes the body and mind. In fact, Ayurvedic spa treatments help to cleanse the system and are geared to remove toxins, thus revitalizing the body. It can have a renewing and refreshing effect, contributing to both mental and physical well-being.

Expresso: Few skincare and beauty trends that will rule 2021 and make a mark.

Shahnaz Husain : For the last one year, people have been spending their time mainly at home and keeping away from shops and salons. Salons were almost remained closed throughout 2020. People have been trying out DIY beauty treatments that one can do easily at home. They have also become more conscious of hygiene, what with the use of hand sanitizers and handwashing. Immunity-building supplements and foods have become a trend. Natural products and holistic approaches were popular and will become more so. Everyone wants to adopt organic, natural, and sustainable beauty.



Expresso: A quote you live by in your life?

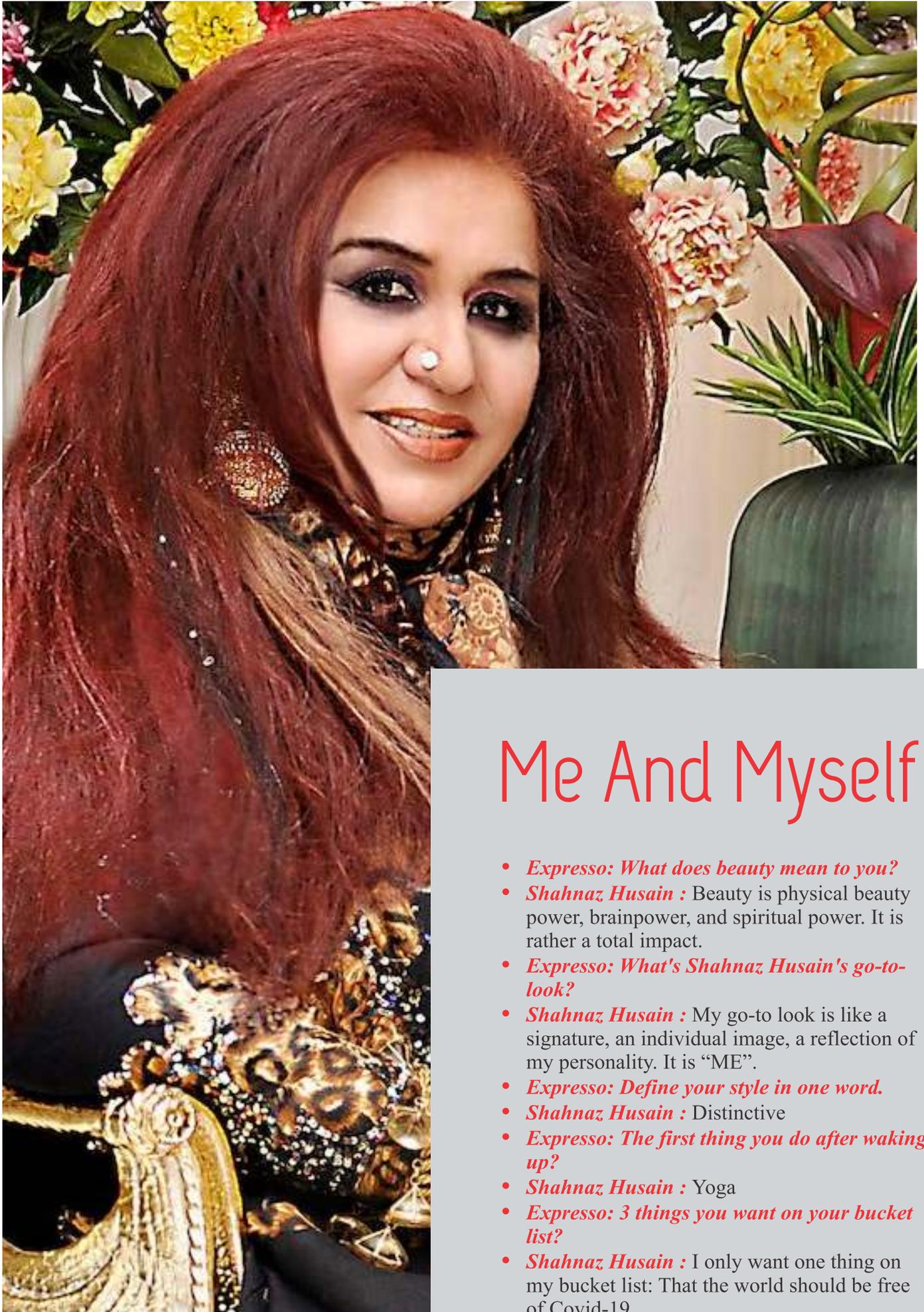
Shahnaz Husain : “Beauty is not merely my career; it is the sole purpose of my existence.”

Expresso: What advice would you like to give to young

women entrepreneurs?

Shahnaz Husain : Professional qualifications, vocational training, and skill development are the keywords now. It is essential to acquire professional and vocational training in your field. If you can get advanced training and also specialize in some aspects, it can be a real advantage. Believe in yourself and your abilities. Keep learning. Have the courage to say “I don't know this, but I can learn it.”

The sky is the limit, but one should have relentless determination to excel and the ability for sheer hard work. Never give up. If you never give up, you cannot fail. Have the ability to adapt and adjust, because one has to adapt to the changing demands of the market and trends. You may start in a small way, but think “big.” You have to think that nothing is beyond you.



Source - Google

Me And Myself

- **Expresso:** *What does beauty mean to you?*
- **Shahnaz Husain :** Beauty is physical beauty power, brainpower, and spiritual power. It is rather a total impact.
- **Expresso:** *What's Shahnaz Husain's go-to-look?*
- **Shahnaz Husain :** My go-to look is like a signature, an individual image, a reflection of my personality. It is "ME".
- **Expresso:** *Define your style in one word.*
- **Shahnaz Husain :** Distinctive
- **Expresso:** *The first thing you do after waking up?*
- **Shahnaz Husain :** Yoga
- **Expresso:** *3 things you want on your bucket list?*
- **Shahnaz Husain :** I only want one thing on my bucket list: That the world should be free of Covid-19

RUNWAY

Hues Of Hampi

By Roopa Sengupta

Hampi, the city of ruins, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Situated in the shadowed depth of hills and valleys in the state of Karnataka, this place is a historical delight for travellers. Surrounded by 500 ancient monuments, beautiful temples, bustling street markets, bastions, treasury building and captivating remains of Vijayanagar Empire, Hampi is a backpacker's delight. Hampi is an open museum with 100+ locations to explore and a favourite way to see the city from the perspective of its history.





Hampi was the capital of the Vijayanagar empire around 1500 AD, and by some accounts, the second largest city in the world at that time. Over the next centuries it fell out of importance, and now you can explore the ruins of a lot of temples and other structures spread out over a vast area. The terrain around Hampi is as mysterious as the ruins itself – the city is surrounded by boulders of different sizes, and you can climb to the top of them with a little effort to get a stunning view of the entire city and the geography.

Hampi is located on the banks of the Tungabhadra River. Famous for its massive, beautifully carved temples, especially the Virupaksha Temple, dedicated to the patron deity of the empire. You can also find remains of the old aqueducts, canals and military barracks and stables here. Hampi was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1986 and many efforts have been taken to restore the lost glory of the place – very limited (if any) modern establishments are allowed in the main area, which gives an authentic feel to the ruins.

How to reach Hampi:

Your gateway town to Hampi is Hospet, a bustling town located very close to the Hampi village. This is the major travel hub from where you can get the travel connections. Some of the long-distance express trains pass via Hospet. Many private operators run regular long distance bus service to Hospet. Check out with the Red Bus or VRL Travels. The KSRTC operates many buses from Hospet to Hampi. The nearest Airport is Hubli, 160 km. from Hampi.

Where to stay in Hampi ?

Best place to stay in Hampi for backpackers is at other side of the Tungabhadra river, known as Hippi Island. Many budget options available at Hippi Island, like cottages guest houses and hostels. They are beautiful, less crowded, and traveller friendly. To reach Hippi Island you have to cross Tungabhadra river. Coracle and boats are available.

Guest houses and cottages are available also in Hampi market near Virupaksha Temple. Or you may prefer the conveniences of Hospet town and Kamalapura village area with many hotels of choice.

There are few 5-star hotels and resorts are available around Hampi.

Best time to visit Hampi

The winter season (October to February) is the best time to visit Hampi. However, Hampi is mostly moderate and dry throughout the year. The weather remains moderately cool except for peak afternoons but mostly perfect for exploring the World Heritage Site. The summers bring soaring high temperatures and therefore, March to June is not the best time to visit.

How much time you need to explore Hampi?

You have to keep minimum 2 to 3 days to explore Hampi. Well, the meaning of satisfaction is relative. For those who like Hampi's charm, even a week spent at Hampi might look it was too short. Make your own version of Hampi itinerary. You can easily make tweaks to the Hampi itinerary as you start exploring it. Hampi is a Do-It-Yourself travellers' delight.

Hampi has many big and small attractions. You may need to pick and choose the attractions based on your interest like photography, hiking the hills, bouldering or even the religious sites like Virupaksha and Vithala Temple.

Places to visit in Hampi:

Virupaksha Temple: This is where the “temple side” of Hampi gets its name from. Dedicated to Lord Shiva, it is the most visited temple of Hampi owing to its popularity.

Vittala Temple: This temple is named after Vittala, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. The temple complex is an architectural masterpiece and is home to the famous Musical Pillars, Stone Chariot and King's Balance.

Hampi Bazaar: It is a kilometre long stretch of open land in front of the Virupaksha temple with ruins on either side where you can shop for antiques, clothes and jewellery.

Monolithic Bull: At the far eastern end of the Hampi Bazaar is the Monolithic Bull, the divine vehicle of Lord Shiva. The Bull symbolically faces the shrine of Lord Shiva at the Virupaksha temple.

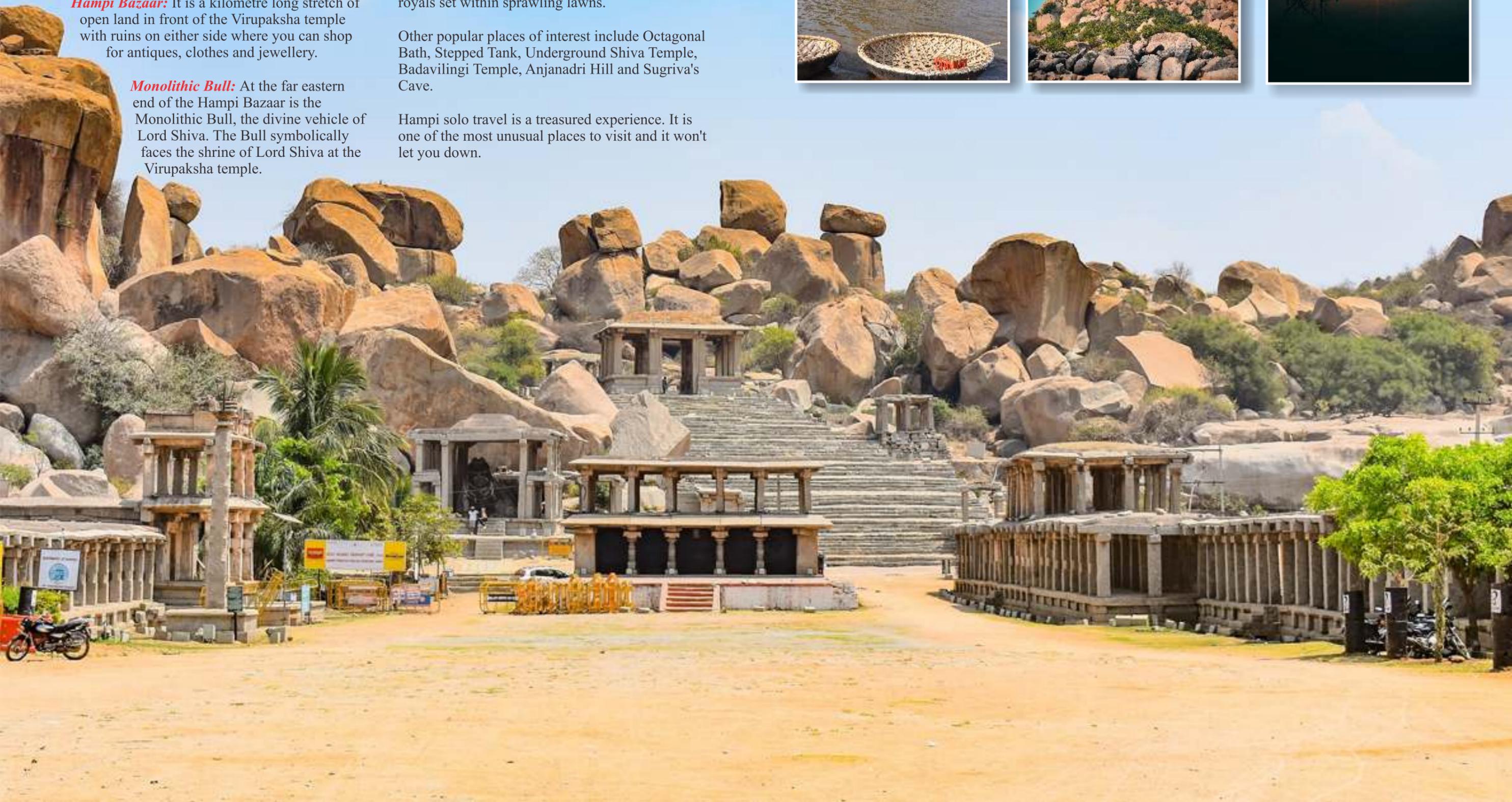
Lotus Mahal: Named after the shape of the architectural marvel, the Lotus Mahal was known to be a place for socializing in the earlier days.

Queen's Bath: This place was once a bathing complex for the royals. Verandahs surround the complex with little windows opening up to a pool in the centre.

Hazara Rama Temple: The temple depicts incidents from the Ramayana through intricate carvings. It was once a private temple for the royals set within sprawling lawns.

Other popular places of interest include Octagonal Bath, Stepped Tank, Underground Shiva Temple, Badavilingi Temple, Anjanadri Hill and Sugriva's Cave.

Hampi solo travel is a treasured experience. It is one of the most unusual places to visit and it won't let you down.





Make Holi this year an ecstatic carnival to commemorate and remember, along with an unlimited pour of premium beverages, special mocktails, and a lavish buffet spread. Enjoy traditional food from various regions of the country to carouse- in a colorful diversity. The menu will feature tantalizing dishes like, “Chaats”, “Kebabs”, “Biryani”, “Jalebis”, “Mishti doi” to make your day full of even more exhilarating. On the otherside, This Holi 2021, JW Marriott Hotel Bengaluru, delightfully introduces “Holi Staycation at JW Marriott Hotel Bengaluru”, an exclusive staycation package which offers a special 20% off on standard room rates & endless experiences for their dear travellers. The flagship property of Marriott International in the city is the ultimate luxury destination to unwind and rejuvenate.

Recently, staycations have become one of the trendiest holidays when a family/couple spends leisure time together in one's home country instead of travelling abroad. This Holi Staycation, experience tranquillity at the hotel's luxurious rooms that overlooks one of the city's iconic green canopy at Cubbon Park.

Wake up to the breath-taking view of Cubbon Park that reminds you of old Bengaluru followed by a complimentary breakfast at the all-day dining JW Kitchen.

JW Kitchen, the all day dining restaurant at *JW Marriott Hotel Bengaluru*, city's most loved luxurious property has always crafted something out of the box for their loyal patrons and they rightly continue to do so. This year, the hotel had introduced Themed Brunches that are dedicated to special theme cuisines once a month.

This Holi, indulge at a special holi themed buffet curated by the culinary team at JW Kitchen and enjoy the variety of festive offerings starting with some chilled Thandai, Aam panna, Vodka shot golgappa and moving towards the live counters are straight from Punjab, Rajasthan and Chandni Chowk; the main course will include Gosht dalcha, Gosht ka soweta, Tari wala desi kukad, Guncha-o- keema, Shahi pitod and irresistible desserts such as Jalebi with masala doodh, Gujiya(Dry fruit & mawa/Gulkand), Gur pare, Bhapa doi, Gur coconut ladoo and lots of other endless options at JW Kitchen a local favorite amongst Bengaluru people.

Enjoy The Perfect Weekend in A Luxury Way

As the season of colours is just around the corner, JW Marriott is zealously gearing up to celebrate the much-awaited long weekend. Celebrate the festival of hues at the Lawns of *JW Marriott Kolkata* with a moreish spread of festive food on 29th March 2021.





Walnut Matar Kachori

Chef Meghna Kamdar

Ingredients

- 1 ½ cup peas
- 1 teaspoon oil
- ½ teaspoon cumin seeds (jeera)
- A small piece of cinnamon (dalchini)
- 2 cloves (laung)
- ½ teaspoon garam masala
- A pinch of turmeric powder (haldi)
- Some finely chopped green chillies
- 1 finely chopped small onion
- Salt as per taste
- 3-4 tablespoons finely chopped coriander
- Some finely chopped California Walnuts
- 8-10 spring roll wrappers/maida roti
- Corn starch and a spoonful of water (for slurry)

Method

- Heat up the pan, add 1 teaspoon oil, 1/2 teaspoon cumin seeds (jeera), a small piece of cinnamon (dalchini), 2 cloves (laung), 1/2 teaspoon garam masala, a pinch of turmeric powder (haldi), some finely chopped green chillies and (ginger/garlic alternate)
- Then add 1 finely chopped small onion, add salt as per taste, mix it well and then add 1.5 cup green peas (fresh/frozen). (Do not overcook this mixture)
- Further take a mixing jar/chopper, add mixture in it (remove cinnamon stick and clove before grinding) and then grind coarsely.
- Transfer the mixture in the same pan, add 3-4 tablespoons finely chopped coriander. Add some finely chopped California Walnuts and mix it well. (You can add a pinch of sugar)
- Take some spring roll wrappers/maida roti, add stuffing in the middle.
- Apply some slurry on the corners of wrapper to stick (make slurry with some corn starch and a spoonful of water)
- Bring together all the corners gently and seal giving it a good potli shape.
- Place all the kachoris on a baking tray (place parchment paper on it) and brush some oil over it.
- Pre-heat oven at 190° C and bake it for approx 20-25 mins (check once after 15 mins, if it turns golden brown then it's done)
- Take kachoris on a serving plate and tie a knot with spring onions.

Soak in The Spirit of The Color

Here are some simple yet delicious and healthy Holi recipes with the added crunch of walnuts that you can make in 15 minutes.



Walnut Sheer Pira Chef Meghna Kamdar

Ingredients

- California walnuts
- 2 cup water
- 2 cup sugar
- Cardamom (elaichi) powder - 2 pieces
- 3 cup milk powder
- Some pumpkin seeds
- Some dried fruits such as (orange, kiwi and mango)

Method

- Heat up the pan, add some chopped California Walnuts and dry roast it, then transfer it in a bowl. (Walnuts provide healthy fats, fiber, vitamins and minerals, also rich in antioxidants).
- Add 2 cup water in the same pan to make chashani/syrup, add 2 cup sugar in it, add cardamom (elaichi) powder - 2 pieces.
- Mix it and cook for at least 15 mins. on medium flame.
- Then take some chashani/syrup in between your fingers, If the sugar string between your finger and thumb doesn't break after pulling apart, 1 string sugar syrup/chashani is ready.
- Further put the heat on slow flame and add 3 cup milk powder in it (add step by step and keep stirring vigorously to avoid getting lumps in it).
- Add roasted California walnuts and some pumpkin seeds in it (you can turn off the stove/put it on slow flame now)
- Add some dried fruits (orange, kiwi and mango to balance the sweetness of other ingredients) and mix it well.
- Further transfer the mixture in a tray (greased with oil and place a parchment paper on it).
- Add some California walnuts, pumpkin seeds and dried fruits on top. Rest it for minimum 3 hours at room temperature to set.
- To cut it into pieces apply some ghee on the chopper and then cut it to get perfect pieces.
- Finally, your Sheera Pira is now done. Enjoy this Delicious Sweet during Festive Season!!!



Akhrot Stuffed Shahi Tukda

Chef Neha Deepak Shah

Ingredients

- 3-4 bread slices, corners removed
- For the filling-
- 1 cup roasted California walnuts
- 2 tablespoons Ghee
- ½ cup khoya
- ½ teaspoon cardamom powder
- 2 teaspoons rose water
- Dried rose petals
- ¼ - ½ cup sugar (adjust according to taste)

For The Instant Rabri

- ½ tin Amul mithaimate
- 1 cup milk
- Sugar
- ½ teaspoon elaichi powder
- A few saffron strands dissolved in water
- 2 teaspoons milk powder

For The Garnish

- Dried rose petals
- California Walnuts
- Pistachio
- Silver leaf

Method

- To start with, grind the roasted walnuts coarsely. You can crush them too.
- Heat ghee in a pan and add the ground walnuts. Roast them lightly on medium flame with constant stirring.
- Crumble the mava and mix well with walnuts. Cook until the mixture turns crumbly.
- Add the cardamom powder and rose water and cook for another few minutes.
- Mix in the dried rose petals, remove from flame and keep aside to cool.
- For the instant rabri, heat the Mithai Mate in a heavy bottomed pan. Add the milk and keep cooking and stirring on medium flame.
- Add the saffron water, cardamom powder and milk powder. Cook for a few minutes and then remove from flame and keep aside.
- To make the rolls, flatten and roll out the bread slices using a rolling pin.
- Now, mix the sugar into the prepared filling and place the crumbly mixture onto the centre of a slice.
- Apply some water onto the edges of the bread, roll tightly and seal them. Repeat with other slices.
- Mix the prepared rabri and place it on medium flame to warm it up.
- Meanwhile, heat ghee in a pan and slightly toast the rolls from all sides.
- Divide each toasted roll into 2.
- Now, pour some rabri onto a flat dish and place the rolls. Pour some more rabri over them.
- Garnish with walnuts, pistachios, silver leaf and dried rose petals.
- Serve immediately.

Dig into the Delicious Wood Fire Treats

Nestled away cozily under banyan tree, a wide ranging fusion inspired Indian food menu and wood fire pizzas to please every palate. Eclectic fusion flavors come together using fresh ingredients. The sensational food is a derivation of authentic, rustic flavors being fused with traditional Indian flavors making for an assortment of food like no other.

Legacy property Pebble has partnered with modern contemporary NuAir. The venue has been an integral part of the clubbing scene in Bangalore for over two decades.

Pebble debuted as NuAir Pebble marking their entry into a post lockdown market with a revamped menu and aesthetic all in compliance with all COVID-19 regulations.

The nalli nihari boasts an aromatic blend of spices that can be paired with your favorite bread or naan or the flavorsome prawn curry is a delight on a plate for the seafood lover looking for some lip smacking seafood curry. Kadai chicken is yet another delight for chicken lovers; that is not all there is something for everyone, creamy and rich Shahi Paneer is yet another fast moving delicacy at NuAir Pebble amongst other vegetarian options for the veggie lover. These beautifully crafted dishes are

carefully curated to retain the spiciness and tanginess of Indian flavors whilst marrying them to other equally complex and aromatic flavors. NuAir Pebble also has an impressive wood fire menu. Their rustic wood brick oven compliments NuAir Pebble's kitschy yet somehow tropical aesthetic. Their 'Inside Out' specialty calzone is an enticing mixture of spinach, mixed peppers, onion silvers, paneer and cheese all bundled into a heavenly cocoon of inhouse kneaded sourdough and baked to absolute perfection.

Adding to the already intricate menu, are their wood fired pizzas. The NuAir double cheese burst is a cheese lover's dream come true followed by their extremely popular Peri Peri Chicken Pizza for the spice enthusiast. The most unique selling point of NuAir Pebble is however their gorgeous location, a venue big enough to fit 2500 people easily, centered around their star attraction, the banyan tree. The venue is an outdoor lover's dream come true with garden seating areas and exclusive cabanas all under their signature banyan tree.

The place is covered with kitschy knick knacks and the décor is a collection of floral tropical cushions, neon lights and rustic seating. It is the quintessential photo opp for social media enthusiasts and avid Instagram users.



Quick Facts

Address: Princess Academy, Palace Grounds, 9, Bellary Rd, Bengaluru, Karnataka 560080

Timing: 11 am to 1 am

Cost for two : 2000/- INR

Indulge Into The World Of

Aromatic

Holi is an occasion which is just incomplete without Thandai. So, here are the Thandai recipes that are easy to make and will give your taste buds a sweet blast.

Thandai





Badam Kesar Pista Thandai

Serves 4

Ingredients

- Almond 40 gms
- Saffron 0.2 gms
- Pistachio 40 gms
- Full Cream Milk 1 ltr
- Thandai Mix 120 gms
- Sugar 150 gms

Method

- Blend the nuts and milk along with the saffron and thandai mix. Strain it
- Serve it chilled and garnish with roasted nuts.

Strawberry & Mint Thandai

Serves 4

Ingredients

- Fresh Strawberry 50 gms
- Strawberry Ice cream 200 gms
- Fresh Mint 30 gms
- Sugar 100 gms
- Thandai Mix 120 gms
- Milk 800 ml
- Roasted nuts 25 gms

Method

- Blend the strawberry ice cream with milk, fresh mint and fresh strawberry. Strain it
- Add in sugar and thandai mix, blend along
- Serve it chilled and garnish with roasted nuts.





Pina Colada Thandai

Serves 4

Ingredients

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------|
| • Pineapple Juice | 600 ml |
| • Coconut milk | 200 gms |
| • Vanilla Ice cream | 400 gms |
| • Thandai Mix | 120 gms |
| • Tender coconut pulp | 50 gms |
| • Roasted nuts | 25 gms |
| • Saffron | 1 pinch |

Method

- Blend pineapple juice, coconut milk and vanilla ice-cream with a pinch of saffron.
- Add in the thandai mix to the above mixture
- Serve chilled with tender coconut pulp and roasted nuts as a garnish

Mango Mastani Thandai

Serves 4

Ingredients

- | | |
|-------------------|---------|
| • Mango Pulp | 300 gms |
| • Mango Ice cream | 100 gms |
| • Almond | 20 gms |
| • Cashewnut | 20 gms |
| • Pistachio | 20 gms |
| • Milk | 700 ml |
| • Thandai Mix | 120 gms |
| • Tutti Frutti | 40 gms |

Method

- Blend the nuts in a jar, Add in mango ice cream milk and mango pulp.
- Blend the above ingredients to a thick consistency, add in thandai mix for the final blend.
- Serve chilled with roasted nut and tutti frutti as a garnish.

Recipes Curated By Chef Akshraj Jodha, Executive Chef at ITC Windsor.

**Picture Source - Google*



FEATURE STORY

Light On The Trendsetting Sheroes Of B-Town

By Abir Majumder

These multifaceted women have defied stereotypes to make their own professional and personal rules. International Women's Day is celebrated on March 8 to honour the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. We mark this special time with a list of some of the most impressive achievers in Bollywood who with their personal and professional choices, have blazed new trails in the industry.

Ekta Kapoor

Be it the big screen or the small, Content Czarina and OTT disruptor Ekta Kapoor has stamped her presence on both and has always evoked strong reactions from admirers and critics. Her content has been at times critiqued for being too regressive and occasionally for being too provocative. However, she has grown from strength to strength in an industry known for primarily masculine voices in board rooms. She founded Balaji Telefilms Limited in 1994 and since then, has gone on to become a formidable film and television producer and the joint managing director and creative head of her company. She also founded Balaji Motion Pictures in 2002 and ALT Balaji in April 2017.

A Padma Shri awardee, Ekta has grown beyond her lineage and is not just known today as actor Jeetendra's daughter. She is now a star maker and a path-breaker who unapologetically lives and works on her own terms.



Twinkle Khanna

Not one to be stymied by the labels of a star-daughter or star-wife, Twinkle Khanna has chartered her own course as an author, newspaper columnist, interior designer and film producer. She also gave up her acting career for more fulfilling creative choices.

In 2015, her first non-fiction book, 'Mrs Funnybones: She's Just Like You and a Lot Like Me' became a bestseller, and her second book, 'The Legend of Lakshmi Prasad,' also inspired social entrepreneur Arunachalam Muruganantham's biopic, 'Pad Man.' Her production house, Mrs. Funnybones Movies was set up in 2016.

Her first novel, 'Pyjamas Are Forgiving' made her the highest-selling female author in India in 2018. In 2019, Khanna also launched Tweak India, a bilingual digital media platform for women, proving that she is someone who always listens to her inner muse and believes in living a life that is rich in creativity.



Deepshikha Deshmukh

Starting as a costume assistant on the sets of 2001's 'Mujhe Kuch Kehna Hai', Deepshikha Deshmukh earned her stripes at her family's heritage production house to make her way up to lead the marketing, strategy making, and production efforts at Pooja Entertainment. She debuted as a producer in 2016 with the critically acclaimed film 'Sarbjit,' starring Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and Randeep Hooda.

While constantly balancing her roles as a producer, a mother, and a homemaker, she has continued to expand her horizons and even started a natural skincare brand called, 'Love Organically.' Last year, she took on a global pandemic to complete the start-to-finish shoot for Pooja Entertainment's big-budget production, 'Bellbottom,' in two extended outdoor schedules. In 2021, she will be helping the production of 'Ganapath', an action thriller starring Tiger Shroff, and will continue to charter new creative territories.

Sushmita Sen

Sushmita Sen has lived a charmed life but she has never taken it for granted. Defying all predictions, she pipped Aishwarya Rai to the post by winning the Femina Miss India title in 1994 and went on to become the first Indian to win the Miss Universe title at the age of 18. Apart from being a successful actor, she has walked her talk as a social changemaker by adopting two baby girls in 2000 and 2010. She was diagnosed with the Addison's disease, a condition which affects the body's adrenal gland, in September 2014 but fought her way back to health and also made a comeback as an actor in 2020 with the hit OTT series, 'Aarya.' Be it her personal or professional life, Sushmita has always won her battles with unmatched grace and dignity.



Kareena Kapoor Khan

Kareena Kapoor Khan has proven that it takes more than a family name to survive and thrive for over two decades in the film industry. Even her six Filmfare Awards do not begin to sum up her longevity or the fact that she remains a much in demand leading lady with immense box-office clout.

After making her acting debut in the 2000 with 'Refugee,' her performances in films like 'Aśoka', 'Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham', 'Chameli,' 'Dev', 'Omkara,' 'Jab We Met', 'Kurbaan,' 'Heroine,' 'Udta Punjab', '3 Idiots' and 'Veere Di Wedding' have established her versatility and star power.

Her off-screen life has fascinated fans and popular culture but she has always made her personal decisions with fearless conviction. In a beauty-obsessed industry, she has worked through two pregnancies unselfconsciously and will now be penning a book to tell women how she did it. She has also worked with UNICEF since 2014 as an advocate for the education of girls.



CELEB TALK

My Journey was More Like A Self-struggle

Achint Kaur

From shows like 'Banegi Apni Baat', 'Kahaani Ghar Ghar Ki' to 2 States and Chopsticks, Achint Kaur is one of the talented women of Bollywood. With years of experience in the industry, Kaur became a prominent face here. She rose to stardom from soaps and serials, and now is ruling the OTT platform. Although she initially faced challenges to penetrate the industry, Kaur gradually evolved as an actor. Recently, she opened up about her story to Expresso Magazine and gave a sneak peek into her recent show Hey Prabhu on MX Player.

By Nabanita Dutta

Expresso: *You worked for television, movies as well as for the OTT platform. What are your views on the rise of content on web media?*

Achint Kaur: I feel the right way to describe the contents on web media these days are more addictive and delicious to accept. The reason behind this is you get a myriad of options when it comes to shows and all of them belong from different genres. Besides, you also get the opportunity to explore the work of different actors. You experience creativity in its real essence and the viewing experience is limitless. Basically, the entertainment industry witnessed a massive shift due to the OTT platforms as it became easy to connect with people from anywhere. Although web media is no doubt challenging, still I feel that it did wonders to the entertainment industry.

Expresso: *What kind of challenges or obstacles did you face when you worked for a web show?*

Achint Kaur: Honestly, I did not face any challenges while entering the OTT platform. Although I had to push myself initially, the directors, casting directors, and other team members who were working for OTT. It was tough to break free from the period mold. The reason behind this is people during that time were not receptive. However, I was lucky since people looked at me in a positive way and had expectations. As a result, I easily fit into different roles. Although initial inertia was there, now things are fine.

Expresso: *Are you choosy while taking up*

projects?

Achint Kaur: Well, I just follow my gut feeling when it comes to choosing any project. It is like if my intuition talks to me to accept and move for a project, I accept it. Once I hear my positive inner voice I move forward. However, while working for television shows, I was picky. It is because the fight for survival is crucial. Everything is about the gut feeling when it comes to me and this is the only path that I follow when it comes to choosing any project.

Expresso: *How do you look back on your journey and how the industry changed in 27 years?*

Achint Kaur: When I look back to my journey, it was filled with self-education, evolvment and I have nothing to crib about or regret. However, I feel that things could have been better but things are pretty good now as well. That's life, it keeps changing and the industry at the same time changed too. For example, earlier we used to cater to a limited audience but now the audience increased too. Change is inevitable and this is the best part since things do not become monotonous. I keep on working myself with the changing time so that I or my work don't look outdated. Summing up things, my journey was quite amazing and exciting.

Expresso : *How have you faced the struggles in these years of your career?*

Achint Kaur: You see, I never thought of becoming an actor. I remember, when my son was only two and a half years old, I got an opportunity to work in the industry. Besides, during my initial days, I used



to receive a lot of mean comments due to my voice and skin tone. I faced a lot of tough times, so my journey was more like a self-struggle. I did almost thirty to thirty-five projects. Out of them, almost ten to twelve were my best works. So, I was lucky. I never blamed anyone; instead, I worked on myself to fit in while maintaining my own identity. Rest is all your destiny since you cannot fight against everything.

Expresso : Do you find any similarities between Achint and Mita?

Achint Kaur: The way she introspects her life and she believes in right and wrong for herself and not others. Hence, the change she wants is from within that evolves her. Therefore, in some ways, she is like me.

Expresso : How was your working experience with Parul and Rajat?

Achint Kaur: It was amazing since Parul has been one of the cutest kids I have known and Rajat is one of the most promising actors. Since we all had such good chemistry with each other, we did not have to put in extra effort to build the characters. Whatever came in our way, we accepted it and delivered it on camera and everything was effortless. So, things were quite easy while working with Parul and Rajat.

Expresso : What are the three things for which the audience should watch 'Hey Prabhu'?"

Achint Kaur: First is the thought behind the story, which is quite different. If you watch the series, then you will understand that stress is something that we all neglect daily. As a result, it causes harm not just to yourself but to others. Secondly, it focuses on issues like self-complexes. During our time people used to judge those who did not settle by 22 or 23. Today, the world offers so many things that it is okay even if you settle during your 30s. Thirdly, the set of people. We had a lot of fun while shooting for the series. I am sure that the fun has translated perfectly onto the screen. The show caters to people from different backgrounds so everyone will find something relatable in the second season.



I never blamed anyone; instead, I worked on myself to fit in while maintaining my own identity



RISING STAR

A successful actor, a model, and a renowned entrepreneur, Parul Gulati is undoubtedly one of the rising stars of the industry. With a perfect combination of beauty with brains, she undoubtedly sets an example for every ordinary girl who dreams of shaping her own identity. From Haq Se, Girls Hostel to Selection Day, she rose to stardom without giving up on her dreams. Hailing from Rohtak and making a mark in the industry, she detests the word 'impossible.' In a recent chit-chat with Expresso Magazine, she revealed her latest project, Hey Prabhu.

Parul Gulati

I will accept constructive criticisms

By Rituparna Sengupta Basu

Expresso : *The release of Hey Prabhu is knocking at the door... So how are you feeling?*

Parul Gulati : Well, this show will be memorable for me since we shot this show amidst a pandemic. I am actually having a mixed feeling since I am both excited and nervous. You see, the first season did a great job, and now there is season 2, so I am hoping that the second season will do as good as the first one.

Expresso : *What were your thoughts when you got the script of Hey Prabhu?*

Parul Gulati : I remember that when I received the script, I was traveling, so obviously, I was in a good mood. My character in the script is a simple girl who believes in walking on the correct path and does everything keeping in mind the ethics. So, this character kind of intrigued me. Moreover, when I got to know that the same director is making the second season, it made me extremely happy.

Expresso : *Share with us your working experience with your co-star Rajat?*

Parul Gulati : Well, we have a great relationship, you see. We fight and, at the same time, appreciate each other's work. Besides, he is quite a fun person. I have not seen someone more fun-loving and chilled out than Rajat.

Expresso : *How do you choose a project? Any unique method that you follow?*

Parul Gulati : Honestly, I do not follow any specific methods while choosing any project. Instead, I believe in my gut instinct. Although now I am planning to look into a few things like the character and the story, mostly I leave everything to my gut.

Expresso : *How has life changed after Girls Hostel?*

Parul Gulati : Girls Hostel was one of the finest and the most memorable projects of my life. Both first and the second season turned out to be an exciting journey. I met with so many women while working here. Besides, I connected with so many girls who related to the story and whom I did not even know. So, Girls Hostel will always be close to my heart.

Expresso : *Do you think OTT has opened up a broad-way for newer talents?*

Parul Gulati : Yes, absolutely. You see, after completing Girls Hostel, I have worked in five to six other web shows. Probably, it is because I have felt that the web show comes with exciting yet rich

content. OTT platforms come with great opportunities for actors like us. Besides, the best part of MX Player is you do not have to pay for the subscription. Thus, making it easier for others to watch shows here.

Expresso : *You worked for TVF, and you have done lots of Web shows, so what are the things you did for getting inside the skin of any character?*

Parul Gulati : Well, if you ask me, I think it depends. When working for web shows, I think everyone should chill regarding the preparation for the character. It is crucial to prepare for the character before the show. At times, it is necessary to check the audience to whom we are serving, the show's story, etc. But, what I look for is the writer's demand, the world from whom he or she belongs, etc. Getting an idea of the writer and doing some research is essential. I always do my part of research before jumping into playing any character.

Expresso : *What kind of risks did you face when you started your company Nish Hair?*

Parul Gulati : I did take some risk as I put my acting savings for my company since it was my dream. I was worried that regarding its success. I remember when I initially asked people about hair extensions, they used to run away. I gradually started educating them about hair extensions and hair loss. There were ups and downs, but now everything is fine. So, I feel that any business involves risk, but it is easy to overcome the threats with a good strategy.

Expresso : *You are born in Rohtaq, so how did you look back at your journey? Do you always want to be an actor?*

Parul Gulati : The journey was, no doubt, incredible. I was 17 then, and I barely had any idea about what I want in life. Now, I am in Mumbai, and when I look back to that phase, it feels fantastic.

Expresso : *Does criticism affect your performance as an actor?*

Parul Gulati : No, I do not think that criticism affects my performance. I feel that I haven't reached a stage where I will work on one project and sit idle. Also, if any critic talks about my work, then I will positively take that criticism. I will accept constructive criticisms and focus on improving the needed areas. Apart from that, I never take other criticisms seriously.



RIISING STAR

*Scroll Mantra is a young, dynamic and one of the fastest-growing PR agencies the brainchild of **Neha Bajaj**. Enriched, enliven and vibrant Public Relations professional with over 15 years of experience across various corporate clients, Neha brings on broad and deep insight into communication approach for brands. She always maintain offering bespoke services to suit the client's need. In a recent chat with us, dynamic **Neha Bajaj** opens up about the insights on how she established herself in the communication industry, talked about her journey as an entrepreneur, and more.*

Founder and Managing Director of Scroll Mantra

Neha Bajaj

Let's get rid of the window dressing

By Abir Majumder

Expresso: What drew you to start an organization like Scroll Mantra?

Neha Bajaj : After spending almost, a decade in the PR Industry, I envisioned a uniqueness in the industry offerings by formulating something new, innovative, and different. My experience of working with inspirational mentors and industry thought leaders brought a life-changing skill and helped me to grow both personally and professionally. This phase allowed me to identify my skillset and implement my learnings to formulate something new. The concept of Public Relations is still evolving in India and today, every brand aims to create their own identity and recall by engaging in all mediums. Basis my experience and research in the industry, I was able to map market requirements and understanding the need gap. Initially, our focus was on Public Relations but gradually we expanded our reach towards social media and digital marketing. Hence, I repositioned Scroll Mantra to an integrated communication agency with a vision to provide a holistic marketing strategy for new and established brands.

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We need a much stronger organisational framework that provides possibilities for those facing mid-career challenges, allowing them to succeed and progress up the corporate ladder

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Expresso: *Did you always wanted to work in the Lifestyle field?*

Neha Bajaj : Having worked with various renowned brands from different sectors such as Hospitality, Technology, Auto, Entertainment, Retail, Lifestyle, I was always keen to explore and learn about different domains and sectors.

I got an opportunity to work majorly with lifestyle brands but with each brand, there was something new to learn. This evolved me to gain more knowledge about this industry and engage with people to build strong connectivity.

Expresso: *What type of lifestyle brands are you currently working with?*

Neha Bajaj : We are currently working with a skin care and a hair care brand. We have worked with a lot of other lifestyle brands in the pre-COVID era.

Expresso: *Hence PR is a stressful business along with a lot of problems. So, how do you deal with that to overcome?*

Neha Bajaj : PR is considered as one of the most stressful jobs as it keeps you on your feet 24*7. I have always been very passionate and dedicated to my work and how difficult a task maybe, I have found ways to tackle it. I have always tried to inspire my team to enjoy their work and foremost an important aspect is to prioritize the work which will



balance and ease the work.

Expresso: *What do you think that one habit should an entrepreneur need to become more productive?*

Neha Bajaj : Though many habits leverage productivity in business growth. Being an entrepreneur, I have always preferred to prepare and plan my day well in advance. There are certain situations where unplanned work may come up, but I have always kept a grace time to close unavoidable plans. It is one of the important aspects which helps one to work in a balanced style resulting in a better deliverable.

Along with this, I feel prioritizing your task is important. Prioritizing as well as setting up a

deadline for yourself, ensures you work smoothly. Simultaneously, your employees are your core strength and it is important to encourage and guide them for their individual as well as company's growth and development. These factors are important in upholding balance in work and family life.

Expresso: In your long 15 years of the journey how do you describe the business?

Neha Bajaj : From the time I started working in the PR industry and when I look at it now, I have observed a leap of changes in the PR functions. Both agencies and brands have improvised the traditional approach of PR to an advanced and digitalised format. Requirements for PR is no more confined to print media especially leading newspapers. A shift towards digital platforms and technology evolution has revamped the function of PR. Brands are keen to position themselves in the online presence and moving to explore digital PR.

Expresso: Now these days many young generations (many of them are women) came into entrepreneurship. What's your take on this?

Neha Bajaj : Today's younger and new generation are inclined towards new ideas and creativity. They are always keen to explore new ways of doing things, build a uniqueness and create something of their own. The new generation is taking charge of the industry now. Women, these days, are making their mark in every industry and are more inclined towards being financially and socially independent. Many women entrepreneurs have converted their passions and interests into their professions and have started their

own ventures in beauty, lifestyle, retail, pharmacy, technology and other sectors.

Expresso: In our country, where gender stereotyping is always a big issue. What Do you think about how we can minimize this?

Neha Bajaj : When it comes to being an equal opportunity employer, agencies must walk the talk. Let's get rid of the window dressing. Second, there is a significant problem with the job gap, which must be addressed. We need a much stronger organisational framework that provides possibilities for those facing mid-career challenges, allowing them to succeed and progress up the corporate ladder. This makes us more empathic, which is a necessary trait for resolving conflicts, understanding others, and bonding with them. Before entering your workplace, it is critical to leave your opinions at the threshold. Culture, gender, and religion are all flaws that must be abandoned.

Expresso: List three things that are needed to make a strong successful customer base?

Neha Bajaj : The three things I would recommend is

- 1) People and businesses can now exchange information and have discussions through social media. It is important to make full use of available resources for a successful customer base.
- 2) It's critical to keep trying new ways to reach out to your audience and not to dismiss things that haven't worked in the past. So, adapting to new ways when business is growing is important for any organization.
- 3) Personalisation and customer insight are the key issues to know your prospects and the real customers.



REVIEW



The
MARRIED
WOMAN

A Melodramatic Slow Show You Won't
Mind Watching Due to the Stellar
Performance

The Married Woman Review

Rating - 4/5

Casts : Monica Dogra, Ridhi Dogra, Suhaas Ahuja

By Nabanita Dutta

It is evident that in a city of immense religious divisions and orthodox middle-class values, expectations and gender discrimination is common. Well, 'The Married Woman' show by ALT Balaji highlights this dark side of society. The series is based on Manju Kapur's novel 'The Married Woman,' released on this International Women's Day. It is undoubtedly one of the worth watching shows due to its captivating performance by the cast.

The show's trailer is relatively conventional, as it throws light on two lovelorn women coming from a different world, falls in love with each other. The screenplay and the direction for the actors is something that sets it apart. Set amidst the 90s, when homosexuality was unacceptable in society, the story is no doubt uplifting. Besides, it even heightens the prominent political backdrop of the 1992 riots due to Babri Masjid.

In a society backed by various orthodox thoughts and believes, it is difficult to survive if you fall for the same gender. Probably, Astha received the same teachings, which almost every middle-class girl gets when growing up. She has to be a dutiful wife, a responsible mother, and a caring daughter-in-law. Astha is married to an uncaring man Hemant (Suhaas Ahuja), who refuses to indulge in sexual activities with her. Filled with domestic responsibilities and duties, she often feels low.

Despite these societal norms, she sets her journey to unleash self-revelation. Surprisingly, her life takes a U-turn when she meets the talented artist Peeplika Khan (Monica Dogra). A free-minded soul, Peeplika helps Astha to discover her true self. Soon Astha realizes that she feels for her, even after being married. From here, her journey goes off-limits. It is an 11 part series, and Sahir Raza directed it.



Although the concept is unique as it breaks the monotonous walls of the same old love stories between the opposite sexes, somehow, it did not turn out to be fruitful. Writers Jaya Mishra and Surabhi Saral could not do justice to the original story. The entire focus of the narration is on Astha and her taken for granted married life. First, her focus was Aijaaz Khan (Imaad Shah), a thriving theatre director. She found him intriguing as he taught her to break from inhibitions and accept her desires.

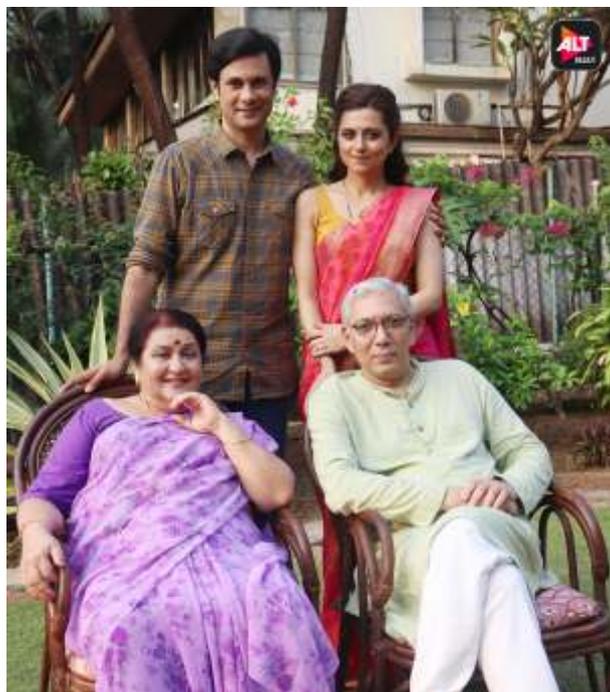
Eventually, she ends up falling for Peeplika, Aijaaz's wife. However, the series did not portray the reasons behind this attraction and intense passion. Although the dialogues like 'fall in love with a soul, not gender' and others did impact the viewers' minds, the stretchy episodes are a sheer disappointment. Viewers will find it boring since the episodes are pretty non-developmental. On top of that, you will find the subplot of inter-caste marriage to be irrelevant. Moreover, the concept does not add any significance to the main plot too.

The achievement of 'The Married Woman' lies in the bond between Astha and Peeplika and the tests they had to face for proving the strength of their bond. The turmoil, twists, and vortex of emotions that Astha faced while handling her family are on-point. Above all, her fight to choose Peeplika for expressing her love turned out excellent in the

series. Coming to the lyrics of the title track 'Bematlab' by Amrita Bagchi, it is faultless and justifies the plot. Moreover, it enhances the background score as well, which once again wins the audience's heart. The character development by the actors are more or less impressive. Ridhi Dogra, who played Astha, did a stunning job.

Her seamless work and the way of absorbing the traits of the character are impressive. She portrays a perfect woman who is cautious to show her desires and is not ready to subside them. Astha breaks all the walls, aptly depicts her thoughts, and exhibits a clear image in front of the viewers. Keeping in mind the sensuality and intensity, Monica Dogra, who played Peeplika Khan, successfully handled her character and did justice too.

Other casts like Suhaas Ahuja did more or less good work as he plays a patriarchal husband who ignores and overlooks his partner's feelings. However, Imaad Shah portrays a headstrong character, extremely opinionated but a liberal thinker in the series. Ayesha Raza, Astha's sister-in-law, needs a special mention as she victoriously manages to impact the minds of the viewers. Even after having limited dialogues and less screen time, she did a fantastic job. Overall, the stellar performance of the actors and the sensitive plot makes 'The Married Woman' a perfect binge-watching show.







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