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POPPDAPP

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Mukta Singh

All things creative!
SUKHNIDH KAUR

Shooting for the stars melody
YOHAN MARSHALL

IN THE STYLE MOMENT!
Meagan Concessio

K. Vaishali
IN FULL BLOOM

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THE SUMMER ISSUE

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"Summer's the same. We are the ones who are changing

THE SUMMER ISSUE

Innovation is the bandwagon that businesses (especially startups) are always desperate to hop on! Today, if India can embark on its reputation and maintain a global status in the world economy, it is because of innovation.

The Cambridge Dictionary definition says, "Innovation is the creation and use of new ideas or methods." As per my understanding, innovation is a novel idea that has applicability, the capacity to snowball, and sustainability. We have lately seen a lot of startups starting with roaringly innovative ideas not being able to withstand the test of time. This happens due to the lack of longevity in their innovation.

But there are creators like Aniket Gupta who are trying to innovate with sustainability, aesthetics, and longevity. Or artists like Yohan Marshall and Sukhnidh Kaur, soar high in the sky of creativity and art.

We are honored to feature the story of the renowned and magnificent director, Nitya Mehra, and get a glimpse of her multifaceted mind.

This issue also covers the stories of stylists like Meagan Concessio and Namita Alexander, who are remolding the set definitions of fashion and culture. And the special cover story with the fashion industry's one of the most seasoned designers, Nandita Mahtani, listening to her journey and experiences.

It is true; summer's the same. We are the ones who are changing. This summer issue of Popp Dapp aims to present a bright-eyed and bushy-tailed perspective of society and the times to come.

I hope it resonates with you all! ■

Anuja Mathur
Editor, POPP DAPP
www.poppdapp.com

THE GOLDEN SOUTER!

Aniket Gupta. Born and raised in Kolkata. Footwear designing has been his passion and profession for 13 years. His journey has been unique and interesting. Let's hear it from him!

POPP DAPP: How do you think technology is developing in the footwear design industry?
ANIKET GUPTA: 3D printing, foot scanners, different eco-friendly materials, and the exposure to working with technically sound footwear designers and engineers have been developing at a good pace. Still, many people haven't thought much about evolved shoes that can contain GPS, medical step counting, electronic massaging shoes, shoes with led indicators for bikers preventing mishaps and accidents, etc. are still the areas and ideas that we can work with leading to a whole new pandora's box.

PD: What major factors do you consider when designing footwear?
AG: Foot measurements, consumer taste and preference, maximum comfort, and effortlessness of the wearer. Ultimately, it all depends on the consumer.

PD: How do you stay updated with the latest trends and innovations in the footwear industry?
AG: Movies, social media, personal traveling, news, and magazines such as Popp Dapp, lifestyle exhibitions, etc. feature some amazing concepts and styles that showcase trends and innovations that come with everyday mood boards.

PD: Was footwear designing always the plan, or did that happen over time?
AG: My father was already into footwear manufacturing when I joined him. With the practical and industrial exposure, product development caught my eye. That's how I connected with footwear designing and developed an excitement and liking towards a new product. So, it's been 13 years and the energy and passion have grown ever since.

PD: What keeps you motivated and inspired as a footwear designer?
AG: The need for a comfortable bespoke pair of shoes exists. Every individual has a different foot structure and anatomy. This motivation grows stronger every day and many famous footwear designers have inspired me. Naming a few would not be enough.

PD: What materials do you prefer working with and why?
AG: Usually genuine leather. Firstly, leather contours to our body shape and withstands our body weight. Secondly, it does not peel off like other recipes. Thirdly, the strength of genuine leather is unmatchable. >>

Actor Apinderdeep Singh in a Aniket Gupta Couture Shoe. Styled by Ruchira Dalmia, a fantastic celebrity stylist.

<< PD: How do you ensure your designs are marketable and appeal to the target audience?
AG: Since the concept of shoemaking and designing is bespoke, the consumer appeal depends on their liking. This is an influencing age. Hence, modern-day influencers, personal PR, and branding help in marketing. Special thanks to Popp Dapp.

PD: How do you incorporate sustainability and ethical practices into your designs& production process?
AG: We provide shoe-shine services. Hence, proper maintenance of every pair can be long-lasting. Firstly, we do not copy other brands. We combine different styles and combinations with a different cut and work that is original as per the consumer's taste. Since every pair is bespoke and made on order, the production process is streamlined and every pair has my attention. We give fitting trials to every patron which helps us ensure customized comfort for every individual.

PD: Can you discuss any challenges you faced in the footwear design industry & how you overcame them?
AG: Firstly, material. Sourcing the right material and the right price is a task. A large sector of this industry is unorganized. Secondly, labor. It is labor-intensive work and employing skilled labor is a very important task. These factors are the backbone of every designer. The only way to overcome these is through continuous research and development. Keep looking, that's the mantra.

PD: How important do you feel fashion magazines are in advocating & promoting the true essence of fashion?
AG: Fashion magazines have been a pioneer and trendsetter for everyone. People used to buy the magazine and then get inspired and try to get the same look as a celebrity or an icon as per their budget. They are the reason renowned or upcoming designers or fashion enthusiasts get a chance to showcase their craftsmanship and caliber.

PD: What are your future plans?
AG: The plan is to grow multifolds. Collaborate with multiple designers and celebrities and their stylists to become a household name in India first, then go global.

Visit our studio in Kolkata and make yourself a bespoke pair. Feel the difference and experience the best method of making the right footwear. Every foot is unique and a comfortable pair isn't a luxury but a necessity. Can't wait to welcome you to Aniket Gupta.■

EMBRACING HER POWER

"I'm an artist and while sharing my art on Instagram I also meandered into sharing pictures from my life as I cheered myself to embrace age joyfully"

- MUKTA SINGH

I'm an artist and while sharing my art on Instagram I also meandered into sharing pictures from my life as I cheered myself to embrace age joyfully. It garnered some delightful attention from designers and stylists and initiated me into the world of modeling.

POPP DAPP: When did you decide to get into modeling?
MUKTA SINGH: I did not decide to get into modeling at the outset. In 2020 while I was growing out my greys, some friends suggested that why don't I take up modelling, as it would encourage women to be stylish even as they aged. I did follow a few international silver fox models. A desire to be somewhat like them manifested into a reality when brands and designers began reaching out through DMS.

PD: If you were to advise your 30-year-old self, what would that be?
MS: At 30 I felt so old. I did a lot of dangerous things like parasailing and horse riding because I felt I'd lived most of my life and I should now not be afraid to die. But today I feel so youthful and eager to live, I wish at 30 I knew that life only gets better. I'm happy I did those things at 30 but I could have done with more joy with my current state of mind..

PD: You have seen technology taking over the creative fields like music, art, and fashion. How has your experience been?
MS: I'm not averse to technology in any field. Good musicians still sound good with auto-tune. Art can be interesting and as for fashion maybe AI will replace actual models one day. However, man-made creations will never lose their charm. Why do we still admire old art in galleries? On the other hand, technology is also man-made and needs appreciation.

PD: Did you face any challenges while choosing modeling as your career option?
MS: Fortunately, I did not face any challenges while modeling. All I received was encouragement from all quarters.

PD: We know that you love classic rock! Who made you fall in love with it first – Mick Jagger or Steven Tyler?
MS: Most undoubtedly it was Mick Jagger!

PD: What fuels you as an artist?
MS: Just the desire to create something beautiful fires me to create art. Sometimes I'm afraid to even create because I am judgmental about my art but creating art gives me an escape from reality. While painting musicians of my youth I go back to my teen years.

PD: In one of your interviews, you talked about your early greying at the age of 15. How did you handle that?
MS: My early greying was very distressing. I'd feel very sad when anyone would point out my greys. I felt abnormal.

PD: How do you define your sense of style?
MS: My sense of style is dynamic and changes with the times. However, I'm a fan of minimalism and sometimes bohemian.

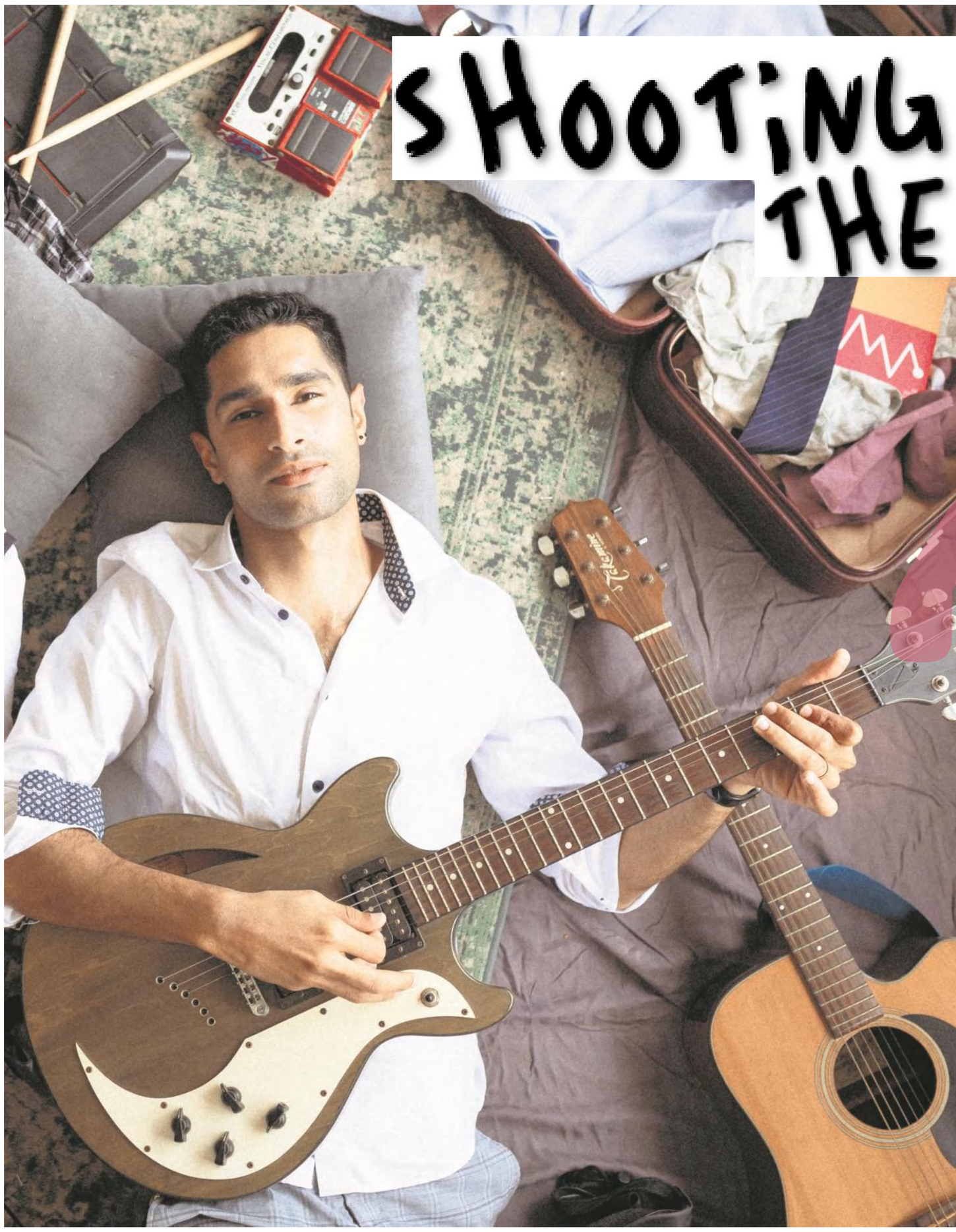
PD: Fashion works in circles. We are now seeing the essence of 80s fashion in the broad bottoms and bold prints. Which era of fashion is your personal favorite and why?
MS: I love 80s fashions. The big hair and hippie vibe. Hope they're here to stay!

PD: You have worked with India's renowned brands and designers. How has been your experience?
MS: My experience with brands and designers has been very heartwarming. I've made heart-to-heart connections that will last a lifetime (or what remains of it)

PD: What has been your biggest learning in life?
MS: My biggest learning from life is never to stop looking forward to it.

PD: What are your future plans?
MS: My future plans are to go with the flow and see what life brings along

Hope I'm able to bring positivity to your life through this interview !■



SHOOTING FOR THE ~~STARS~~ MELODY

"My journey is one of constant evolution & self-discovery. I have spent 10 years as a professional musician, I have toured with massive artists, composed & produced songs for independent artists & labels, sung for ad films, acted in movies, walked the ramp, delivered a TED talk, and done several voice-overs, judged events & competitions, done scores for shows & performed at the highest level in India. I am an Artist, Composer, Producer, Vocalist, Session drummer & Actor/model, or as my manager describes me 'An unstoppable force in Indian music' & I am just getting started.

YOHAN MARSHALL

POPP DAPP: What first got you into music?
YOHAN MARSHALL: When you connect with something at a deep level there is a visceral feeling, a curiosity you cannot ignore, a need to know how & why. That is the feeling I got the first time I saw a band playing live. I went through my share of challenges as a very young child & the raw power of experiencing rock music for the first time was a feeling like no other. The drums caught my attention first. The aggression, control & independence required to play as well as the pure release of playing your heart out just struck me as transcendent. You know that thing that people say. I did not choose it, it chose me. Yeah, it sure felt like that.

PD: Was music always the plan, or did that happen over time?
YM: Coming from a family of extremely bright Lawyers I was a fearless, rebellious young boy who had no interest in physics or history. I always felt different & found interest in building things, puzzle solving & art. School was terrible for me & I gave my parents a lot of trouble. I found my voice when I found music. It became my way of communicating, navigating & understanding life. I never thought about becoming an artist & no one in my family was into music but thankfully I had amazing principals/teachers (Mahatma Gandhi International School) who saw this & encouraged me to explore it. My parents were extremely supportive & allowed me to pursue this beautiful path. I formally studied music at two fantastic music schools [K.M. Conservatory & Swarnabhoomi Academy of Music] under some amazing teachers, I then moved to Mumbai, formed a band & started performing at some of the country's biggest events & festivals. Being a promising young independent musician in Mumbai opened all sorts of doors for me, I got called to tour with mainstream Bollywood artists as a session drummer. In my first few years in Mumbai, I ended up traveling around the world & performing with Arijit Singh, The Bartender, Lisa Mishra, Manasi Scott Off & Vir Das to name a few. I came to be Known as one of the country's most versatile personalities in music, walking for Lakmé Fashion Week, featuring in GQ's best-dressed campaign as well as Cosmopolitan 2024, delivering a Ted-X talk & performing at India's biggest events such as 'The Stage' (Tv show), Formula-E India & Priyanka-Jonas's wedding. I could not be more grateful for these opportunities & allow each experience to teach me something new.>>

<< PD: In terms of the overall composition, which is your favorite song and why?
YM: Different Songs for different reasons. I love Gravity by John Mayer both emotionally & on the music level. It is my therapy song. When things go wrong & I need to get my head right I pour myself a drink, turn my monitors up & let John play me through my blues. Such a deep cut & lyrically so universal that it always helps me find my center again. Musically it creates space, is full of dynamic variations [Ups & Down] & carefully pays homage to the blues with a modern nod.

PD: How do you find synergy while collaborating with other musicians?
YM: Collaboration is beautiful & keeps you on your toes, I might be used to working a certain way but the artist who I am writing with has a completely different perspective or way of working. It is amazing how much you can learn from one another if you are open enough. Collaborating has opened my mind to so many new possibilities. I work quite fast & when I find people on my level it is just a rollercoaster. I feel lucky to be collaborating with some lovely musicians & have some amazing songs coming up with some stellar artists very soon.

PD: What is your creative process like?
YM: Because I do a variety of things it depends, some compositions start on the acoustic guitar for me, it is the easiest way to get an idea going in 5-7 minutes. Others start with a drum groove. In other moments I get inspired by a vocal phrase or in some cases by a lyrics theme idea. If I was to see an idea through, I need to be able to put it together quickly so I do not worry about it being perfect initially, I throw down an acoustic guitar part, play some chords on the keys, record a vocal melody in gibberish or dummy lyrics, put a simple drum part together & add some bass. There it is. the demo version. I can now hear it back & start to fine-tune things, start to dig deep & give it feeling/meaning. That is one way I would go about it. To me, being creative means being open. I am open to working in order or in any way.

PD: How do you find inspiration when working to a deadline?
YM: It can be very daunting to present something on a timeline.
The creative part of the process of composition, writing & arranging should not be rushed. The more time & space you give yourself here the better the product will be. Once you have your idea in front of you & all that is remaining is the Production & additional tasks it is go time. I work fast so I generally do not feel overwhelmed but certainly, a quick deadline does tend to push you to work differently.

"You do not know; you cannot know & you should not try to know. I feel like it is important to make music that YOU resonate with first.

PD: How do you deal with writer's block?
YM: I pride myself on being a good writer & composer. In many moments you get stuck & nothing is helping it move forward. I have picked up some amazing tips about writing from friends & peers. If I feel stuck with something I pick up a book & open a random page & start reading go for a walk or watch TV. When it comes to writing your music, this can be a especially tricky thing. You need to live and have experiences worth writing about. There have been incomplete songs that have been in my folder for years, I come back from a holiday or return from a tour or have a crazy night with the homies & open it the next day & boom suddenly I have those last 5 lines that I knew I was waiting on. Writing is a deep art & forcing it does not always work. Over the years I have learned to be softer on myself & not force it when it is not coming. I give it time. I know the lyrics/music will find its way through me.

PD: How do you ensure your lyrics resonate with the audience?
YM: You do not know; you cannot know & you should not try to know. I feel like it is important to make music that YOU resonate with first. A lot of artists make music & art keeping the audience in mind from the very beginning. Somehow, I cannot seem to make anything good like that. Initially, I just dig to find things that make me feel something. Once it is at a stage where the creatine aspects are done, now I might be at a better place to look at it from a consumption perspective, perhaps shorten something or simplify something to make it resonate more easily.

PD: Share a bit about your current projects.
YM: I am Presently working on 6 of my original songs & have 4 crazy featuring artists joining me on these. I just shot an amazing music video for my upcoming single 'Just for Once' which will be out toward the end of April. Yesterday I was invited to be a part of a collaborative songwriting project by Sony Music Publishing India where I made music with the Swedish duo Willian-Petter. I just played my original set at The Lil Flea & have some lovely gigs coming up this month. I am also producing songs for 3 amazing artists that are set to release very soon.

PD: What are your future plans?
YM: My recent single "Jo Tu Mere Pass Hai" released in March just hit 100k & is going strong. I will be putting out 3 more original songs & some exciting new video material this year with some fantastic featuring artists. Nothing gives me more pleasure the making you guess who those artists are. My next single "Just for Once" will be out in the first half of May & I have some big performances lined up so stay in touch.

Thank you for tuning in & reading a bit about my life, stay in touch on socials & see you at the next gig!■

IN ALL HER EMINENCE

"Fashion can be a place for personal and collective expression. It is also a place for protest and collective change!"

- ARTI SANDHU

I am an associate professor teaching fashion design at the University of Cincinnati, in Ohio, USA. I grew up in India. I began my teaching career in New Zealand, then moved to Chicago, and now Cincinnati. In total, I have been teaching fashion for almost 22 years.

POPP DAPP: You have a peculiar styling sense with this brilliant amalgamation of ikat, cotton fabrics, and contemporary styling. What inspires you to create such looks and combinations?
ARTI SANDHU: I love collecting interesting textiles. Over the years I have also found that there are lovely synergies between different types of hand-crafted textiles - like mixing ikat with a print or a small print with a stripe, for example. This play of patterns and textiles makes me feel energized. Usually, when I style a look I start with a color or a garment that I want to wear and then think about what else to pair it with. I try to have no more than 3 to 4 interesting elements in a look…. Otherwise, it feels imbalanced. I think most of the time I try to wear at least one patterned item - even if it is a scarf! And now, more than ever, it is rare for me not to wear something that is from India.

PD: Liking fashion and understanding fashion are two entirely distinct things. As a fashion professor, what is your suggestion to aspiring fashion students?
AS: I believe to be working in fashion one must have an immersive appreciation for some aspect of fashion - whether it is a love for the technical or the aesthetic (color, textile, design). To be a successful designer one must observe clothing - how people dress, what they give value to, what they hold on to, how we make things, etc. That knowledge is critical.

PD: Fashion is an individual's identity and representation of one's inner self. But it is equally important to be aesthetically proper by following some fashion rules. What is your take on this?
AS: I do not follow any external rules or trends - well, aside from being dressed and presentable. However, for me, my own rules are about being modest and feeling comfortable.

PD: What's fashion for you? And how would you portray your sense of styling?
AS: Fashion for me is my personal creative space. Fashion is also much more than what we see on the runway or in a glossy magazine. Fashion can be a place for personal and collective expression. It is also a place for protest and collective change. I enjoy learning about how people navigate their fashion journeys - it is a great place to observe and learn about society.

PD: Was getting into fashion education always the plan, or did that happen over time?
AS: No, it was never my intention to become a professor. I just happened to apply for a teaching position (in New Zealand) after completing my masters in the UK and was fortunate to get the job! I enjoyed the experience so much that … well, I have not thought of changing tracks.

PD: What do you think is the dissimilarity between US and European fashion?
AS: It is often believed that US fashion is about price and accessibility and European fashion is about quality. I am not sure if those stereotypes hold with the way fast fashion is a global phenomenon. But if I were to generalize, the US appears more casual in how it dresses and Europeans more put together.

PD: What are your future plans?
AS: To complete my part-time PhD (in my 40s) as a full-time professor and mother. It will take time… a whole lot of precious time.

Aside from making sure they find and follow me on Instagram... lol … It is never too late to discover your true sense of style. Personal style cannot be purchased in one sitting and neither does it lie in expensive labels. It takes time and patience.■

THE RIVETING DUPLEXITY

Spread offers a unique blend of urban sophistication & astoundingly raw essence of Indian heritage & culture. When the world is sitting on the verge of dissolving the demarcation between contemporary & orthodox; let's leap into how would such a parallel universe be!

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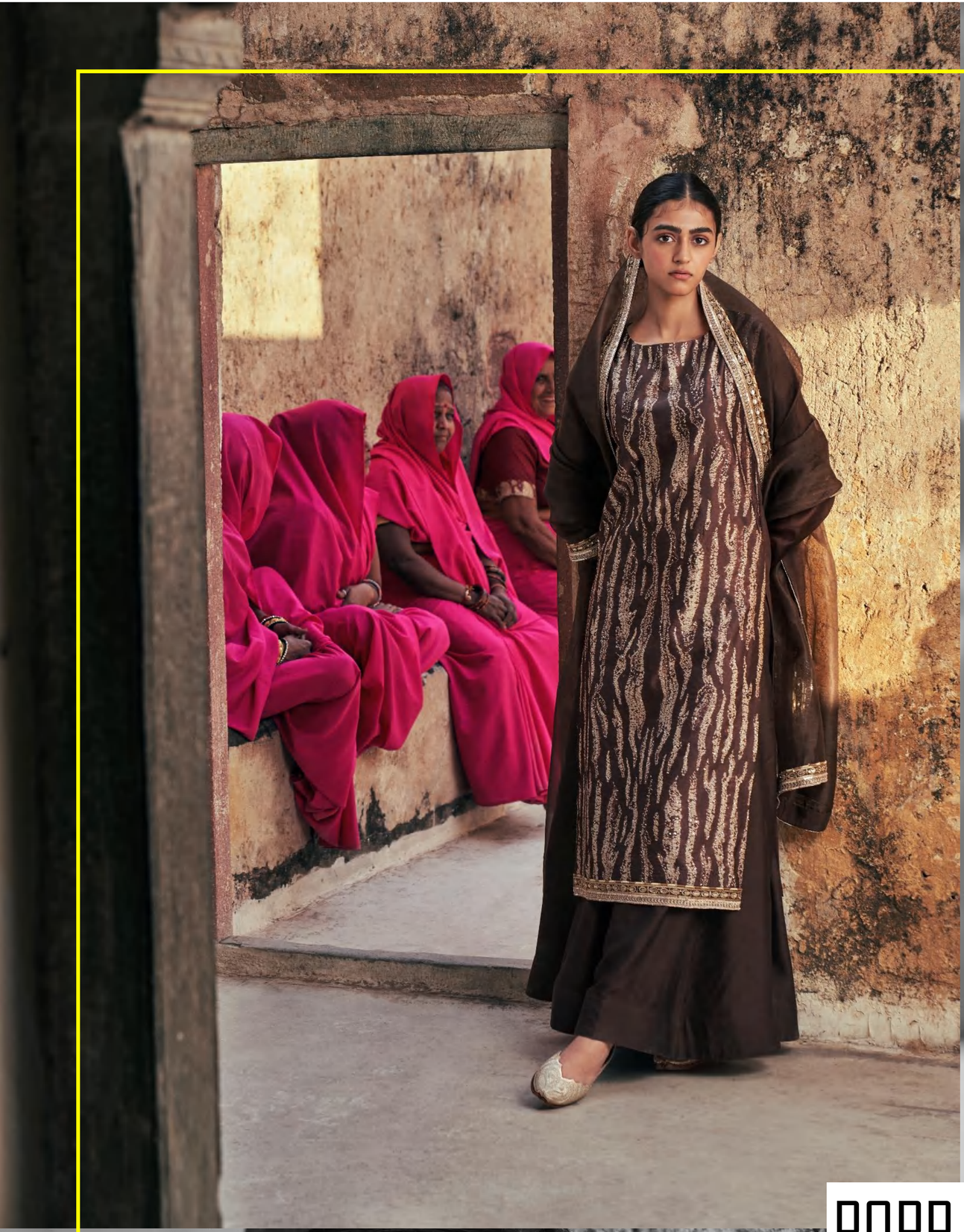

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IT-GIRL AESTHETICS with HANNA

"I am grateful for the support of my followers who have contributed to my growth immensely and motivated me to create more content!"
- HANNA KHAN

Always keep inspiring those around you, and embrace your individuality and style. Spread love and positivity through your expression!

Embarking on my journey as a fashion influencer has been an exhilarating experience filled with creativity and self-expression. It has allowed me to connect with like-minded individuals who share my passion for fashion and style trends. I am grateful for the support of my followers who have contributed to my growth immensely and motivated me to create more content.

POPP DAPP: How did you become interested in an offbeat, interesting, and unique career such as Luxury Fashion blogging?
HANNA KHAN: I am someone who has always kept up with style, trends, and the latest collections from luxury and fashion brands and just loved everything to do with fashion. It was just a part of my being so was not very hard showcasing my lifestyle to a larger audience and came to me very organically. My friends would always come to me for recommendations of what to buy or ask me to style them for birthdays or events we would attend, I would jokingly say I am going to start charging you for my services. And later I realized there is a whole career I can build around this idea.

PD: How did you begin to pursue your dreams of becoming a fashion blogger?
HK: I started in 2019, at that point there were not many new faces in the industry, just people who have been doing this for years. So, I feel it worked in my favor and stirred up a lot of buzz within the industry when I announced my arrival. I still remember my first photoshoot, it was at a friend's restaurant, I put together a few looks from my wardrobe, a friend of mine did my makeup, found a photographer off Instagram and my sister and her best friend came along for morale support. Those photos turned out so fabulous, that my style immediately got noticed and loved, within a few weeks I was at fashion events, getting approached by fashion and beauty brands. It all seemed so surreal. I would have to say I got very lucky with all the love and support people in this industry have given me.

PD: How did you juggle your passion with your education?
HK: I was working with my father at the time I began and continued to balance both for the first year. Once this took off, I decided to follow my passion full-time and became a full-time influencer.

PD: Who or what has been your greatest fashion inspiration?
HK: I know it probably sounds cliche but I would be lying if I did not say my mom!! She has always been way ahead of her time. She is always elegantly dressed; her fashion choices reflect her personality and cultural values. She has taught me how to shop for quality over quantity, the importance of sustainability, and the knack to mix and match contemporary styles with vintage pieces. All this and most importantly being confident in my skin!

PD: Who do you envision as your target audience?
HK: My audience is a mix. It is primarily individuals who have a strong interest in high-end fashion, the latest global fashion trends, and an upscale lifestyle. It is also people who I share similar social, moral, and cultural values with. Because I am vocal about these things. Lastly, it is people who like to laugh or have something to relate with and share with their friends, as a lot of my current content is now humor-based.

PD: What motivates you to blog?
HK: I am motivated by the positive impact I can make on my followers' lives. A lot of them have reached out to me personally and thanked me for inspiring them in many ways when it comes to fashion choices or their personal lives.

PD: How do you describe your style?
HK: My style is classic and elegant; it has got a new term nowadays called the old money or it-girl aesthetic laughs.

PD: A fashion rule that you never break.
HK: I think it is important to dress for the time of day or environment you are in. I often see people wear shoes or bags in the day that are too bling and can be worn for a dinner/ party and it seems like they are trying too hard and a bit ridiculous. It is important to have a segregation of evening wear and day wear clothing and accessories.

PD: What are your forthcoming plans?
HK: I am too superstitious and firmly believe in *Nazar* so that is something no one will know until it happens! Laughs!■

BLOSSOM IN MODERN-ELEGANCE

Tara-C-Tara, proudly announces the launch of its latest clothing line– a celebration of Bohemian and floral printed co-ord sets.

The Bohemian and floral printed style has emerged as a timeless and versatile trend, capturing the hearts of fashion enthusiasts worldwide. The popularity of co-ord sets, featuring matching tops and bottoms, has soared, becoming a go-to choice for those seeking a cohesive yet effortlessly chic look. This trend seamlessly marries the free-spirited aesthetics of Bohemian fashion with the enduring charm of floral patterns, creating a style that is both vibrant and carefree.

Tara-C-Tara, proudly announces the launch of its latest clothing line– a celebration of Bohemian and floral printed co-ord sets. Inspired by the free-spirited and unconventional vibe of Bohemian style, coupled with the timeless allure of floral patterns, this collection embodies a "Modern Elegance" philosophy.

The design ethos of this collection focuses on creating pieces that seamlessly transition from day to night, offering versatility and timeless appeal. Comfort is paramount, with unique textures and a pleasing hand feel prioritized to enhance the tactile dimension of the co-ord sets. High-quality, durable fabrics were meticulously selected to ensure longevity and maintain the integrity of the pieces over time.

Bohemian style brings a sense of freedom and individuality, while floral prints add a touch of romance and freshness. The combination creates a collection that is not only aesthetically pleasing but also embraces a relaxed and easy-going lifestyle. Distinguished by its modern elegance, the collection blends clean lines with bold patterns and colors, offering a fresh perspective that caters to sophistication and contemporary flair.

The carefully chosen color palette, featuring earthy tones, muted pastels, rich jewel tones, and contrasting neutrals, enhances the overall bohemian and floral aesthetics, creating a visually pleasing ensemble.

To ensure versatility, the collection incorporates various silhouettes, including *A-line* and *straight cuts*. The co-ord sets are designed with mix-and-match potential, allowing wearers to seamlessly transition from casual to formal settings. Comfortable and breathable fabrics make the pieces ideal for events ranging from casual day outings to more formal gatherings.

"As the founder of Tara-C-Tara, I am thrilled to introduce our latest venture – a symphony of Bohemian and floral elegance in the form of our co-ord sets. This collection is a celebration of individuality, style, and the timeless allure of Boho-chic. We invite you to embrace the beauty of 'Modern Elegance' as we redefine fashion with each carefully curated piece. Let your style blossom with Tara-C-Tara", says Ankur Shukla, the founder of Tara-C-Tara.

With a keen eye on trends, Tara-C-Tara anticipates the future of fashion through thorough market research and trend forecasting. Their design team, committed to innovation, experiments with materials and techniques, infusing each collection with fresh and unique elements. This dedication ensures the brand remains at the forefront of fashion, consistently offering an elevated and trendsetting experience for consumers.

Tara-C-Tara's collection isn't just a fashion statement; it's an embodiment of a lifestyle where elegance meets ease. With a commitment to comfort, versatility, and contemporary sophistication, this collection invites you to embrace a fashion journey that seamlessly blends the carefree spirit of Boho with the timeless allure of florals. Discover the essence of 'Modern Elegance' with Tara-C-Tara – where every outfit tells a story of freedom, style, and individuality. Elevate your wardrobe, redefine your style.■

EMBRACE BOHEMIAN INSPIRED CHIC

Embracing sustainability, the brand is set to repurpose leftover materials for accessories, ensuring minimal waste and a step towards a more sustainable future!

As the summer sun reigns supreme, pastel shades and breathable cotton have become staples for fashion enthusiasts in India. Cotton garments offer cool comfort, while pastel hues evoke a serene charm. Intricate embroideries elevate the attire with chic sophistication, suitable for any outing or event.

Aadews, the renowned Jaipur-based clothing brand known for its blend of comfort and style, introduces its latest collection designed for the modern Indian woman and the Indian climate. From classic to contemporary dresses, Aadews offers versatile options crafted from breathable cotton, ensuring comfort and elegance in any setting.
The collection features a variety of midi dresses, each with pockets and designed to accommodate the dynamic lifestyles of women. With a delightful array of pastels and summer-cool hues, the palette captures the essence of summer, keeping you cool, comfortable, and effortlessly stylish.

The collection emphasizes inclusivity with a wide range of sizes and styles, including varying necklines, lengths, and co-ord sets. Pastel hues dominate casual summer wear, while darker tones offer options for formal occasions. Bold motifs and delicate embroideries add glamor and versatility to each garment.

Aadews' eclectic designs and impeccable craftsmanship have won over hearts across all age groups, with celebrities like Aahana S Kumra, Shamita Shetty, Vidya Balan, and more, loving their outfits. From vibrant patterns to comfortable fabrics, it has become a wardrobe staple nationwide, equally adored by people and celebrities alike, allowing individuals to express their unique personalities while staying effortlessly chic.

Embracing sustainability, the brand is set to repurpose leftover materials for accessories, ensuring minimal waste and a step towards a more sustainable future. By prioritizing eco-friendly practices, it aims to reduce environmental footprint while offering fashionable choices aligned with conscious consumer values.

Drawing inspiration from past triumphs, Aadews unveils its latest range of bohemian-inspired embroidered dresses, blending contemporary twists. Affordable yet stylish, each style is priced under 1999/-. With a blend of timeless elegance and modern flair, Aadews invites you to explore this chic ensemble.

Commenting on the collection launch, the owner of Aadews, Ayushi Dewan expressed their gratitude to customers, stating, "This collection is a testament to our dedication to listening to our customers and delivering on their desires. We are thrilled to offer a range that encompasses everything our audience has ever asked for, from versatile styles to intricate details, all while maintaining our commitment to affordability and sustainability."

Emphasizing versatility and comfort, Aadews invites feedback, ensuring each piece resonates with diverse preferences. This collection truly belongs to the audience, embodying their input.■

IN FULL BLOOM

"Loneliness inspires me. It is such a uniquely personal experience we all go through and such a big part of our lives and all our decisions"
- K. VAISHALI

I am an author, activist, and inclusion advocate based in Hyderabad, India. My memoir titled Homeless: Growing Up Lesbian and Dyslexic in India was published by Yoda Press and Simon & Schuster in 2023. I was recently recognized as an ambassador for specific learning disabilities by the Government of India and the Government of Goa and as an inspiring queer Indian who has made a mark in business, technology, and society by egomonk.

STORY: I was diagnosed with Dyslexia and Dysgraphia at the age of 20, around the same time when I realized that I am a lesbian. It felt like I finally had a name, an identity, that explains all the experiences I've always gone through—from not being able to tie shoelaces, to not being able to read easily, and feeling odd when all the girls had crushes on boys and I didn't. The next few years I spent learning more about myself, advocating for myself when I did not get my family's support and I was failing multiple Bachelor's degrees, and finally writing about my experiences and publishing it—it has been quite a journey.

POPP DAPP: An author, activist, and inclusion advocate – how do you balance it all?
K. VAISHALI: I am an author, activist, and inclusion advocate—and I have a full-time job in a tech company! I have not been very intentional about balancing it and blocking time in my calendar for it or anything. Each work lets me wear a different hat: at my job, I am strategic, as an author I am creative, as an activist I am empathetic, and as an inclusion advocate, I am a courageous communicator. I find that I crave one outlet when I am doing too much of the other so I pick things up when I feel like it. Of course, there are deadlines in each of the work that make it tricky, but everyone in my life, my partner, my co-workers, my publishers—they are understanding, accommodating, and encouraging of the work I do. I get a lot of strength from their encouragement to keep at it.

PD: What is the story behind 'Homeless'?
KV: I was writing a book as a distraction from the anxiety I felt starting a Master's degree again. I was trying to write fiction that explored similar themes as the issues I was going through living without my parent's support and making my way in the world. This fiction book that was supposed to be inspired by certain events in my life started reading more and more like my life, like non-fiction—maybe I felt this irresistible urge to tell my story and it was coming out of me. I started writing in 2016 but when I was editing in 2020 and deciding if I should make changes to make the book fiction or a non-fiction memoir, I found myself with a lot more freedom to take risks. Section 377 was written down by the Supreme Court in 2018 so telling the world that I am a lesbian was not as dangerous as it would have been in 2016. I was also doing better in life, moving from the university hostel to purchasing a home and living in it with my partner who I met at university—I did not have a lot to lose by coming out. So, I decided to take the plunge and own the "non-fiction" fiction that I had written and rewrite it as a memoir. The story still holds a fiction-like flavor to it which helped convey the various tensions in my story. That is how 'Homeless' happened.

PD: Indian society is still navigating its way towards inclusion and acceptance. What is your take on that?
KV: We have a long way to go towards inclusion and acceptance, but there is a lot of positive change. It starts with structural change and there we have new laws and court rulings that favor greater tolerance and inclusion. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act passed in 2016 recognizes 21 disabilities replacing the earlier law that only recognized 7. Section
377 which criminalized homosexuality was written down in 2018 by the Supreme Court of India. The transgender persons bill was passed in 2019 and the women reservation bill was passed in 2023. The state of Bihar also recently published a caste census. These are welcome structural shifts toward inclusion that will promote representation, visibility, and protection of minorities. For our society to change we must include marginal voices in mainstream media be it news, TV, movies, or books. This is happening as well, we are seeing many mainstream movies, books, and TV shows showcase authentic queer representation, for example. We need to do more of this, more authentically and in regional languages as well.

PD: What do you think is the solution for a late diagnosis of neurodiverse conditions in children?
KV: Training the teachers goes a long way. Especially primary school teachers who have access to children for a big chunk of the day and can see how children cope in classrooms, with their friends socially, and with the coursework. Teachers must be trained to detect neurodiverse conditions in children, it should be a core subject in their B.Ed courses. It should be compulsory for schools to have a qualified psychologist and a special education teacher. They also should have routine access to the children to notice any symptoms of neurodiversity. Testing for neurodiverse conditions needs to be more easily accessible. Right now, only a handful of government hospitals in each city are officially designated to test. The government should create more testing centers and increase testing capacity.

PD: Anxiety & depression are one of the primary outcomes of suppressed issues, non-acceptance, and constant inner struggles. What is the way out?

"Celebrate your differences and the differences of others in your life! It is our differences that add flavor and variety—it makes life so rich!

KV: Creating safe spaces is the way out. Schools and colleges should be safe spaces where nobody is bullied or ostracized for being different. We should feel accepted in our families. We should be able to be our true selves at workspaces without worrying about what others would think. It is a long road, but we can start by being more open about what we are going through and what we need.

PD: Was writing always the plan, or did that happen over time?
KV: I started writing at the age of 8 when I did not have anyone to talk to. Adults blamed me for not doing well in school and called me lazy even though I was trying my best. My girl-friends were boy-crazy and I could not relate to them. When I did not have anyone to talk to, writing was my safe space where I could write about things I could not talk about. I could just write about how I felt without feeling invalidated or questioned. This habit stuck when I was discovering my identity and needed a safe space to deconstruct my childhood memories and experiences. I have Dysgraphia which is a writing disorder so writing has always been a challenge. However, I have always enjoyed writing so much that I wanted to intentionally get better at it. I went to several workshops and wrote stories and novels to learn. The challenge and fun of writing were also an engaging distraction from the trainwreck my life was hopping from college to job to college without finishing a degree or holding down a job for more than a few months. Once I gained more stability in life, I wanted to take more risks with writing and that is how I wrote an experimental memoir about being a lesbian and dyslexic person in India.

PD: As a writer, what inspires you?
KV: Loneliness inspires me. It is such a uniquely personal experience we all go through and such a big part of our lives and all our decisions. I always find myself writing when I am most lonely. Writing has given me companionship when I am feeling my lowest, and naturally, loneliness is a theme in all my writings. It energizes me to talk to friends who are honest about their loneliness and to watch a movie or read a book that explores it. Sylvia Plath's book *The Bell Jar,* François Truffaut's film *The 400 Blows*, Federico Fellini's film *8 1⁄2*, and Audre Lorde's book *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* are some of my favorite arts that explore loneliness.

PD: What are your future plans?
KV: I do not know. I am open to trying something new, but I do not know what it is yet. It is exciting to work on something, but it is also exciting to work on nothing. I am so present and grounded; I pay so much more attention to everything that is happening around me. My favorite things right now are playing video games and badminton with a queer women group in Hyderabad and I can only see doing that more soon and nothing beyond it.■

A nature's
child!
"We need to stay true to our human nature, connect physically with Earth, with each other. Otherwise, there is no difference between us and robots!"
- PIA TRIVEDI

Born and brought up in Mumbai. Known fashion model, channel V VJ, actor, participant in many reality shows, and entrepreneur. I have loved animals since when I was a little girl. Trained classical kathak dancer and an adventure junkie!

POPP DAPP: Share a bit about your association with Kalote Animal Trust.
PIA TRIVEDI: I am a trustee at Kalote Animal Trust. We are placed in a little tribal village just 60 km out of Mumbai. We are home to 600 plus rescued animals. My founder is Sameer Vohra who lives on the property and I bring in the donations for the trust.

PD: What is the story behind the conception of 'A Sweven Village'?
PT: 'A Sweven Village' is the brainchild of me and my girlfriend Shweta Salve. 10 years ago we moved from the urban city life in Mumbai to the shores of Goa. At the time goa was still very much a village but barely any internet connectivity let alone deliveries. We wanted to bring a little of the city fashion to the shores of Goa as there was a great community of like-minded people living there but no access to shopping or fashion products. We decided to launch Sweven which is a brand that supports homegrown labels and gives them a platform in different cities of India. We are a traveling pop-up market.

PD: Cruelty-free, green, and faux leather is not only a novel idea but also the need of the hour. What inspired you to create 'Pia's Faux'?
PT: Yes, it is the need of the hour as we first hand are witnessing the global impact climatic conditions are having. It has been 6 years for my animal trust so now I felt like I needed to open one more avenue to raise awareness towards the cruel treatment of animals. We have 25 plus rescued horses and ponies, 6 rescued camels, 60/70 rescued cows and bulls, and the same for donkeys. While we rescue them from traumatic and severe conditions, coming from the fashion industry, I know that someone like me can make a positive impact on the leather industry by finding my voice and using alternatives that are classy, fashionable, and yet affordable. People are honestly looking for a sustainable product and maybe just do not have the right avenues. I want to be the person who not only introduces the fitness of using faux leather but also contributes back to my shelter through the slogan " purchase for a cause " with PIAS faux.

PD: You are also working on breathwork teaching. Please talk a bit about that.
PT: Yes. I am a facilitator of conscious connected breathwork. It is a beautiful tool that helps you first understand how powerful your breath is and then helps u deal with any stuck trauma in your body. It also helps you be in the moment. Relaxes your mind, reduces blood pressure, helps you get good sleep, helps you with panic attacks and anxiety amongst many other benefits.

PD: What inspires you in life?
PT: Nature is my biggest inspiration. Trees and animals, the flora and fauna, the sky, the earth, the seasons, the stars, the moon, the sun, and the ocean... is not it just marvelous how it all just flows?

PD: Managing all these multifaceted roles in your professional life – how do you stay motivated?
PT: I look at life and I see people. People work hard to make ends meet. I observe people, I like to hear their stories. I live in a village on the outskirts of Mumbai and just observing this village I realize there is so much to be grateful for and that gratitude keeps me motivated.

PD: Animal shelter, green fashion, or breathwork teaching, there is one thing in common in all these – love. Whether it is love for animals, nature, or self. How important do you feel compassion and love are in times when people are getting lost in unreal worlds and realities?
PT: People are losing their sense of love. Everything seems so technical now, almost robotic. Basic things like that 1 phone call versus a text msg, the 5 minutes spent physically together compared to a video call. We need to stay true to our human nature, connect physically with Earth, with each other. Otherwise, there is no difference between us and robots.

PD: What are your future plans?
PT: I do not like to live too much in the future. I try my best to stay in the moment now. and right now, I am loving life, rescuing as many animals as I can. Choosing my choices wisely and being the change, I want to see in the world. Now one bag and one rescue at a time :)

Hope you enjoy this article and I hope it helps propel whatever change you can within your comfort zone!■

HER STORY HER GLORY

"My father would do his riyaz (practice) every single day and I have had the privilege to have heard most of it since I spent more time with my parents than my sisters who were married and settled!"

- TEJASWINI KOLHAPURE SARASWAT

I have had a very long journey from sports to Ad films to catwalk to Miss India to TV to theatre to film to OTT. It has been a very exciting one.

POPP DAPP: You started your career with modeling and then acting, was that always the plan, or did that happen over time?
TEJASWINI KOLHAPURE SARASWAT: I always wanted to imitate my mother. I wanted to be in the airlines like her. I even joined it but I did not enjoy it at all so I got into acting. I wanted to at one point study for my MBA and do law but that did not happen. I eventually realized that acting was my calling.

PD: Spending over 2 decades in the entertainment industry, how do you think the industry has evolved in all these years?
TKS: Honestly although I have been around it has been sporadic. It has changed tremendously I remember a time when actresses were not accepted if they were married forget kids - it was a big no to be married. So lots of times marriages were hidden now it is flaunted and it is fantastic. Earlier on there used to be no managers and now there are agencies. There was no concept of social media, so much of my work is unseen and I do not even have any record of it.

PD: Coming from an artistically rich gene pool, how has that affected your upbringing?
TKS: I have had a very normal upbringing nothing special about it and that is how all of us have been brought up. My parents had exposed me to art from a young age and insisted on education too but eventually let me follow my dreams. The one thing that all of us have grown up listening to is classical music. My father would do his *riyaz* (practice) every single day and I have had the privilege to have heard most of it since I spent more time with my parents than my sisters who were married and settled.

PD: How has theater ripened you as an actor?
TKS: My advice to every young actor who wants to sharpen their craft is to do theatre. Today everyone wants the easy way out but you must understand that there are no shortcuts. During theatre rehearsals, you get time to try variations, work on voice, and performance etc. The theatre has helped me get over stage fright. Repetition results in magic. Eventually it becomes easier to perform in front of the camera.

PD: As an artist, what inspires you?
TKS: People inspire me. I feel nothing is impossible; one just must be consistent.

PD: What is the story behind 'A Flea by the Tree'?
TKS: I love visiting popups and I have been doing that for many years. The products one gets at exhibitions, you do not get off the shelf, in stores, or your *kirane ka Dukan*. After my daughter was born, I was looking for a lot of homemade, sustainable, recycled, and organic products but I could not find many, so one day I decided to start a pop-up that had products like that. I do not encourage plastic or leather goods in my flea.

PD: Share a bit about your association with 'Veena Vardayani'.
TKS: 'Veena Vardayani' is a trust that was started by my father Pandit Pandharinath Kolhapure in my grandfather's memory along with my uncles and my sisters but after him, I have taken over the mantle and along with my sisters work towards promotion of classical music and most importantly the Rudra Veena. We recently had an event with IGCNA in association with the Ministry of Culture in Mumbai.

TEJASWINI KOLHAPURE WITH SHAKTI KAPOOR

SHIVANGI KOLHAPURE, PADMINI KOLHAPURE & TEJASWINI KOLHAPURE (L to R)

"There are no shortcuts, just be at it!

PD: How crucial is Indian classical music for you as a person?
TKS: It keeps me close to my father!

PD: What are your future plans?
TKS: Growth.■

One&Only
ONE ZA'ABEEL
Dubai
One&Only
ONE ZA'ABEEL
Dubai

Channelizing passion into purpose!

NANDITA MAHTANI

The epitome of suave, timeless couture, and the fashion industry's most seasoned designer - Nandita Mahtani. Let's celebrate this pioneering and leading lady in fashion!

There is something about descript opulence, fashion, and lifestyle that feels like a well-kept mystery, decipherable only to those who are in the know. The epitome of suave, timeless couture and the fashion industry's most seasoned designer, Nandita Mahtani, shares in her chatter with Popp Dapp about one of her first disclosures to the world of fashion. She says, "I come from a family where everyone was very particular about the way they dress up, not necessarily designer clothing – it is the whole presence that we took a note of. I was 18 when I got into fashion and designing spaces, as I always wanted to do something imaginative.

To explore my creativity, I moved to Delhi and started working for Abu Jani and Sandeep Khosla. After getting some hands-on experience, I opened Delhi's first western-wear multi-designer boutique with my friend Simran Kanwar. Then I worked with my sister (Anu Hinduja), who started a beachwear brand called 'Ananya' in the UK, had a couple of stores in London, and supplied to over 300 boutiques all over the world. With her, I started designing and manufacturing. Eventually, I started my multi-designer store in Mumbai with 'Ananya' in it as well. From there, one step led to another, and I started my brand."

Though it is almost incomprehensible to squeeze a 20-year-long journey into a section, we tried to brush it off a bit! Nandita shares, "It has been a tremendous journey of over 2 decades (with completing 20 years of my designer label). Starting my journey at 18 years of age, I decided to do a collection of *Pashmeena* shawls with embroidery and handbags matching that. I did a couple of pop-ups in London to keep myself busy, having fun, and making pocket money! Though it was my first tint into the fashion world, as I was studying business back then - it was not something I thought I would do!".

Her recent collection talks about 'nostalgia and innovation,' which is quite the essence of the future of fashion—a flawless blend of inventiveness and usefulness. To this, Nandita shares, "I was celebrating my 20 years of being in the industry, it was a celebration of my experiences and the people who had been there and supported me in my journey. The collection was an ensemble of my best pieces from the archived collections. We even had a piece from our very first collection in the show! I get to hear this a lot, 'your couture & design timeless'—and I will always strive to do that. As we put in lots of love, dedication & effort in envisioning & creating couture - we expect the client to wear it for decades!". >>

<< Speaking of carousals and occasions in the country of celebrations certainly stands out a mile. Nandita Mahtani's designs are the epitome of fashion for resort and cocktail wear in India. But something that adds another feather to her grandness is the longevity of her designs. To this end, she says, "Since we do 1-2 collections a year (as opposed to 3–4 collections for other designer brands), we are very mindful about what we are creating. We try our best to support the craftsmen with hand-embroidered pieces and make them sustainable by using natural fabrics. Our pieces have longer shelf life, occasion wear, customizable, be-spoke, & custom-made - one can wear them persistently. As far as trends are concerned, we might pick up a trending color, embroidery, or motif, but we stick to our look and feel because they need to look like Nandita Mahtani's."

Reputed for oozing jazzy magic and magnificence, Nandita's designer wear belongs to the faction of luxury. Nandita is one of the seasoned designers in India, having spent almost a couple of decades in the fashion, entertainment, and film industries. When we asked her about her take on the evolution of industry in all these years, she said, "Enormously! There are amazing brands, designers, and global fashion weeks happening periodically - people have become mindful of fashion. Though there is still scope and potential for a lot more to happen, we can see fashion and retail in India are growing expeditiously."

The global fashion industry has seen a complete metamorphosis with the advent of social media and swifter ways of disseminating information. A collection getting launched in Milan Fashion Week—wuff! It is on your mobile the very next moment. On being asked about the influence of the high-speed social media bandwagon on the Indian fashion industry and designers, Nandita explains, "The impact is ambivalent. From fashion shows to industry trends, you have access to everything in the palm of your hand. But so much of access has deserted the surprise element."

"There is still scope and potential for a lot more to happen, but we can see fashion and retail in India are growing at a good speed!

"He is a very humble, down-to-earth, and easy person to work with. It is always a great experience!

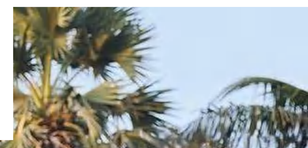
No journey comes with a velvety roadway plan; it has its potholes and speed breakers! "My roadblock was my own. Sometimes you limit yourself, think you cannot achieve something or are not able to do something. I still get nervous before a show. Roadblocks and limitations are self-imposed." Nandita shares. Artists are like sponges, and they soak everything that they meet for inspiration. For Nandita, inspiration is "anything for me, but traveling is a big part of it. Music, different cultures, festivals, museums, and artworks are different for each collection."

Certain people come with a very robust yet modest personality. One of such names is Virat Kohli, the king of cricket. Nandita has styled Virat on most occasions over the past 9 years. She talks about how Virat's vibe and attitude come across in every look, whether it's an advertisement, an event, or a casual day out. When we asked Nandita about her experience styling Virat, she said, "He is the easiest and most fun person to work with. He has the persona, body language, and attitude—he can carry any look. He is a very humble, down-to-earth, and easy person to work with. It is always a great experience! Any styling assignment must be a mix of the director's vision as well as the talent's style." Nandita has also designed a jewelry line for Farah Khan, which was promulgated in Dubai and London and is coming to India in the near future. She also talks about the deep reverence she has for jewelry and her passion for creativity.

ANU HINDUJA

NANDITA MAHTANI

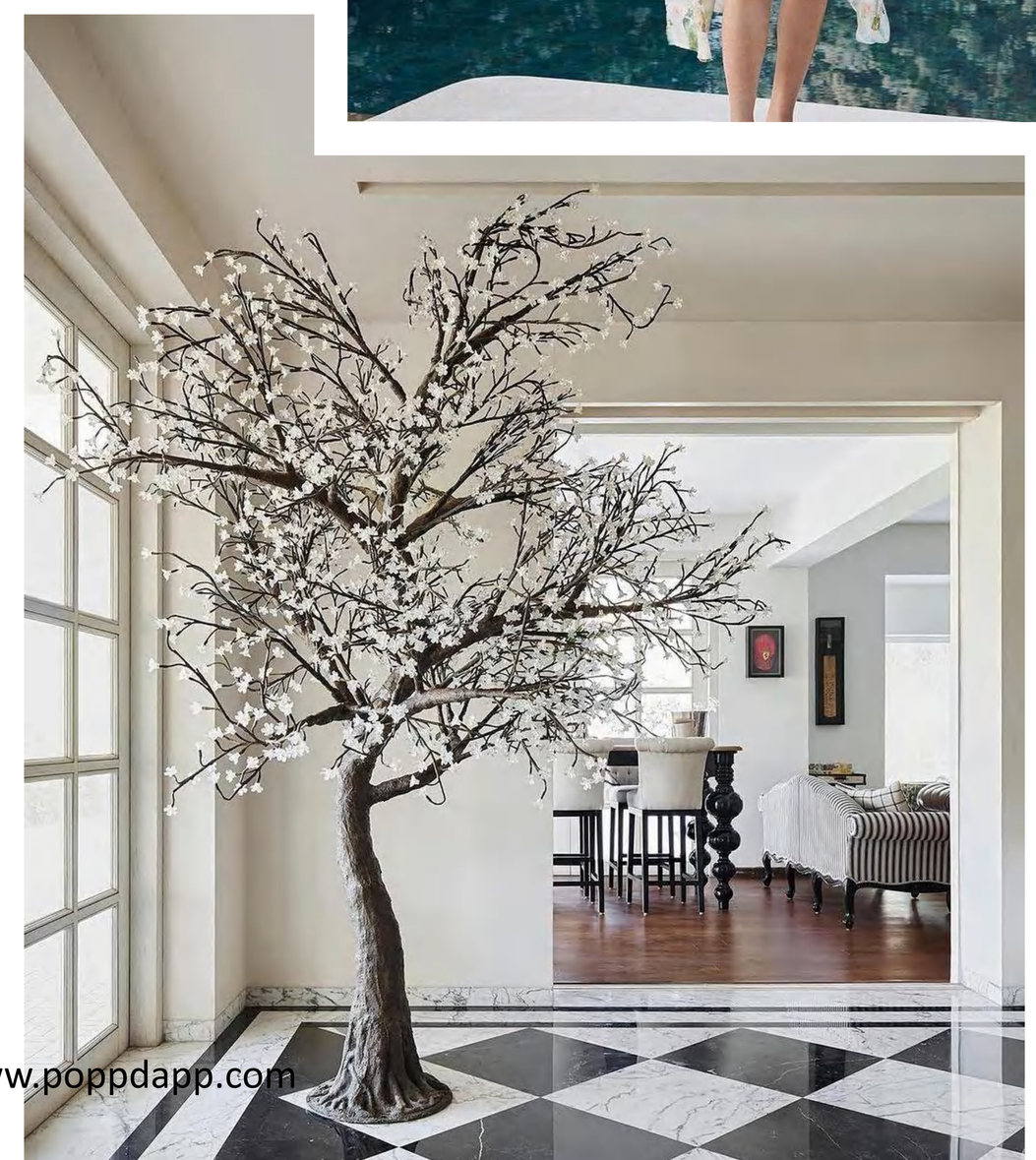
The Alibag Project



<< Our journeys, experiences, failures, and successes change, or rather evolve, us as a person. “It has made me a lot more confident. I had a lot of stage fright and fear of public speaking growing up. Being in this industry has made a huge difference. Speaking to the media on a large platform has never been easy for me, but I have gotten used to it now.” Nandita says. This wisdom comes with time as well as the situation one deals with. So, when we asked Nandita to advise her 20-year-old self, she said, “Ask for what you want (because I did not do that a lot before). Do not take anything for granted, because what is here today can be gone tomorrow. Make the most of it and appreciate what you have! I would also advise the younger generation to have the courage to do what they want. Work hard and smart, no matter what everyone says; nothing pays off like genuine hard work. Be passionate. Do what you love and love what you do.”

Nandita’s multi-faceted career involves interior decoration, which got its wing with her passion project, ‘The Alibag Project.’ She renovated her Alibag house, unaware of the treasure box it was going to open for her future as an interior designer. Nandita says, “Though it was my second project since I was doing my own house, I went all out! I never thought of it as a career option, but that led to one person seeing my home and recommending me to someone else. It spread through word of mouth, and I got a lot of work as an interior designer. I am very passionate about interior designing.”

Concluding her talk by breaking the news about getting into her Formula-1-inspired brand ‘AN-Y1’co-founded by her sister, Anu Hinduja. And she says, “That is the focus now, and we want to see that grow globally!”■



DIOR

DRIVEN, DEDICATED, & PURPOSEFUL

"I am an actress who has played the lead in seven films, three with National Award-winning directors. I started my career with five years of theatre in Delhi to learn the craft of acting and then was launched in the South in an action film where I played the wife of the megastar Mammootty in a film by Jayaraj, who is a seven-time National Award winner."
- SHEENA CHOHAN

After a bag full of experiences in web series, south films, ads and a recent music video, Sheena Chohan will now be seen in her Bollywood debut as the female lead with Subodh Bhave in Sant Tukaram - a historical biopic!

She embodies class, strength, beauty, and wit, while also championing humanity. She symbolizes integrity, the kind of person to bring change: driven, impactful, yet empathetic and vulnerable. But Sheena's goal extends beyond personal success; she aims to inspire through her performances. Each role she undertook is an opportunity to showcase her talents and aesthetics, leaving audiences spellbound and craving for more. Her performances aren't just about entertainment—they ignite the imagination and spark a change. In the world of cinema, Sheena is a force to be reckoned with—a beacon of authenticity and a catalyst for positive transformation. With unwavering confidence, she continues to rise, leaving an indelible mark on the silver screen and in the hearts of many. For an actress who is also an ambassador for United for Human Rights, a brand represents not just her acting prowess, but also her commitment to promoting human rights and social justice. It embodies her values, integrity, and passion for making a positive impact on society. Her brand is a powerful platform through which she can amplify important messages, raise awareness, and inspire change, both on and off the screen.

POPP DAPP: What techniques do you use to make your character development more believable?
SHEENA CHOHAN: The most important thing is complete conviction to character - I do deep research to fit into and understand each character and then must be a blank page for my director to let them take my research and form it into the performance they need for the film. For example, when I was filming my role of Jasmine in The Trial where I played alongside Kajol, my character was a Christian girl, so I spent every Sunday for a month visiting the Catholic churches in Bandra, firstly just to observe the young women there, and eventually to meet them, spend time with them and even visit their homes, all so I was able to observe their mannerisms, to bring that to my character. For my upcoming Hindi film launch where I play the lead female role alongside Subodh Bhave, I spent so much time with the village women who my character was like - even joining them at 5 am when they were doing their work on the fields - the point is that one must create a character and the best way to do that is to spend time with real people like that character.

PD: Share a bit about your experience as the South Asia Ambassador - Human Rights.
SC: It is a role I have fulfilled for over a decade now which has the purpose of spreading awareness and education of basic rights and equality. The organization I am ambassador for, humanrights.com, is the world's largest non-governmental human rights education program and our entire program is shaped towards helping people to know their basic rights, both from the United Nations and the Indian Constitution. I was given the Hero Award at the UN in New York for initially spreading awareness of rights to 32 million people and getting human rights education into 32 universities in Asia, but then in Lockdown my podcast had guests like Sonakshi Sinha, Preity Zinta, Raveena Tandon, Imtiaz Ali, Sonu Sood and more and we reached over 100 million people in India in one year.

PD: How do you think the Indian Entertainment industry has evolved in the past 10 years?
SC: I have been so happy to see the constant strength of women-led entertainment growing in ever larger numbers. Crew was the highest-ever opening for a female-led film in Indian cinema history, and I am so proud to have been part of two series that exemplify this change - The Trial with Kajol and The Fame Game with Madhuri Dixit. Of course, the Me-Too movement made a big change for women too with various systems now in place on set to detect and prevent inappropriate behavior and just the mindset greatly changed in that respect because men who were inclined to treat women badly saw what happened to those who were exposed by Me Too. Apart from that, there have been various changes, like the power of the South growing and the Hindi industry realizing that it needed to get its focus back onto the story and into the mindset of the vast area of India, not just cosmopolitan city dwellers.

PD: Last piece of content you consumed that made you cry?
SC: I was invited to the premiere of *Chamkila* and that made me cry - it was such a beautiful film. I have known Imtiaz Sir's family for a long time, I am friends with his wife Preety and I taught his daughter and helped her win a poetry award from the Times of India when she was a child. So, to see Imtiaz back to his top form with a story of so much passion and understanding for the life of an artist - it connected deeply with me and I am so thrilled for him for the response he is getting.

PD: Was acting always the plan, or did that happen over time?
SC: It was the plan since my first performance on stage when I was a baby of less than a year old! I was interested in many arts in school, even martial arts, but it was acting that was and is my main love and I never considered any other career choice.

PD: How do you define beauty?
SC: Beauty has a lot to do with health and the quality of long life - we naturally see that which is healthy or in good condition as beautiful because they are desirable conditions. Plastic surgery is not beautiful because it stands out as unnatural - I find the result of exercise, good nutrition, sleep, and lots of water what produces beauty, as it produces health and happiness and those things are beautiful, however old you are or your genetic makeup.

PD: If you made a documentary, what would it be about?
SC: When I visit schools across India and occasionally abroad as a human rights ambassador, I show a 15-minute documentary on the history of human rights and, even though I have seen it at least five hundred times, it never fails to make me cry. I would only choose to make this documentary, as it is the most powerful thing I have ever seen or believe I ever will see.

PD: Share a bit about your current projects.
SC: I recently completed my dubbing for Aditya Om's Sant Tukaram, with Subodh Bhave, so I am excited for it to release. It is a Hindi historical film where Aditya Sir spent so much attention on making sure the religious sensibilities of Sant Tukaram's followers were respected, and that each piece of history and information was correct. I took it upon myself to hire someone to read me the original ancient Marathi texts - we made sure that I fully understood my character and portrayed her in the greatest respect, so I cannot wait for that to be released. I also did a short film with National Award and Filmfare Award-winning director NAME and my recently released music video Marziyan has gone viral. Lastly, I have a Hollywood film called Nomad by the brilliant director Taron Lexton which is soon to be released.

PD: What are your future plans?
SC: In terms of human rights, the major goal we have is to make human rights education mandatory in India, and in terms of my films - I have some offers on the table that I cannot discuss, but it is very exciting - interesting characters, which is what I care most about.

PD: Message to the youth of today?
SC: Make sure to look up from your phones - it is so easy to get trapped by the entertainment on social media, but it is harmful to stare at a screen for too long. Make sure to put your phone down and go for a walk daily and do not think - just look around at things and give yourself space. For your mental health - it is important!■

Hi! I am Kaveri and I am an actor. I am from New Delhi, currently living in Bombay which I love. I have spent some time in the US which was educational. I have been drawn to the creative since I was young - dance and design being my core interests for a long time. I spent many years doing what I loved (dance), till I did not. And then I had many years of feeling lost and looking for what it was that spoke to me. I worked as a dancer and choreographer, a stage photographer, and a lighting designer. Which led me here - I have now been acting in films for some years and it has been an exciting ride so far. I am sometimes too strong for my good, but I am also always good to people around me. I think too much, I want to read more. I love all things fashion and design, and I believe there is more to life than all that I do.

POPP DAPP: 'Gulmohar' is such a refreshing treat for the audience. How has your experience been working with acting veterans like Sharmila Tagore and Manoj Bajpayee?

KAVERI SETH: Gulmohar has been a very special project to be a part of. It was made with a lot of love, with an extremely talented and intelligent set of people and we had a blast making it! And the fact that the audience felt for the film is everything we could have hoped for. The entire ensemble was fantastic - Rahul the director and Dilip , Sanjeev, and Prashant who did the casting brought on such good actors that from a craft perspective there was always something to learn. Getting to work with Sharmila ji and Manoj sir has of course been memorable, to say the least. Their vast experience is apparent in all that they do, and just getting to share scenes with them and see them work their magic has been a blessing. They were both extremely welcoming from the get-go, allowing us to observe their craft closely and always open to all our questions and conversations. And honestly, they are both to thank for always making sure that we were eating the best food and having the best time on set and off it!

"Acting however was not something I ever even dreamt of doing, it found me and I am so grateful for it!"
- KAVERI SETH

You are more than what you do!

"Find what you love, and do everything in your power to realize it - and remember to have fun along the way.

KAVERI SETH WITH DIRECTOR MIRA NAIR

KAVERI SETH WITH CAST OF 'GULMOHAR'

PD: Was acting, dancing, and choreography always the plan, or did these happen over time?
KS: Acting was never a part of the plan. I started dancing when I was seven years old. My mother had always wanted to learn as a child but never got the chance to so she encouraged me to join a dance class. Thankfully, I loved it from the start! I learned Bharatanatyam for over ten years, trained in Jazz and Contemporary, and spent most of my waking hour's dancing. In school, my best friend and I would take any opportunity to choreograph and perform, and college at Delhi University was all about my choreography society Terpsi Chorean, and competing all over India at different dance festivals. Dance and choreography have been my biggest love and passion,
and yes were 'the plan' from very early on. Acting however was not something I ever even dreamt of doing, it found me and I am so grateful for it! I chanced upon an audition for a play, went for it just to try something new, and well here I am now - sitting in my home in Bombay that I love, reflecting on how I found my way here. Acting has of course taken its course; it has by no means been as straightforward as my journey with dance. It has taken time and learning, as it should and I am here for all that I am yet to explore and experience!

PD: What techniques do you use to make your character development more believable?
KS: There is of course the research on your character, building a back story, understanding the director's vision, and aligning that with what you see and feel. I have found that finding real-life references for the character or aspects of the character helps me - channeling people that I feel are close to the character. But through anything and everything, the goal always is to find ways to be completely truthful. To find ways to truly be present in each moment, to listen, watch, and feel your co-actors
and your environment. Because when we can do that, any character development will be believable. This of course is not always easy - but those few moments that I feel absolutely and completely truthful, present, and surrendered in a scene are the moments I am doing this for!

PD: How would you define yourself in three words?
KS: Sensitive, resilient, and grounded.

PD: What is inspiring you in life right now?
KS: The freedom of stepping out of the boxes I have put myself in through the years has allowed for newer inspirations in my life right now. And sunsets. Really. They inspire me.

PD: The best piece of advice you have received?
KS: You are more than what you do.

PD: How do you define beauty?
KS: Beauty for me is kind, fierce, and honest.

PD: If you made a documentary, what would it be about?
KS: Animal cruelty - I would love to remind people that being compassionate towards animals is an active choice, and an important one, made easier when we
choose compassion over desire.

PD: Last piece of content you consumed that made you cry?
KS: Past Lives by Celine Song

PD: Share a bit about your current projects.
KS: I recently finished shooting for a series with a very fun and experienced ensemble cast. It's a drama comedy where I play the 'keep me out of it' daughter of the family who wants no part in all the family drama but is looking for every way to find her way into the family business, much to her parent's disapproval. It should be released later this year!

PD: What are your future plans?
KS: I have always loved creating - through dance, design, photography, food. No specific plans yet but I think I am getting ready to create again to have something to say and share.■

MAKING WAVES

'You have to be honest in front of the camera, if you are not honest – the audience would know.'
- SAMARA TIJORI

I was born and brought up in Mumbai. I went to boarding school for 2 years at Mayo College (Ajmer, Rajasthan) and grew a lot there. After that, I did a BA in Psychology from Saphire College Mumbai. I started auditioning in 2016 and got my first project, 'Bob Biswas', in 2020. After that, I got a show called 'Masoom' on Hotstar.

I started working at 17 years of age in events like IIFA (handling artists's shoots in Florida). After that, I got into assistant direction, with my first project being 'Dishoom,' directed by Rohit Dhawan. After this, I realized that acting is something that I want to do, so I got into training as an actor for 6 months. Following that, I performed a play titled "Charlie and the Tin Can." After that, I got into assistant direction again with 'Bhoot-1' by Dharma with Vicky Kaushal in it, and two songs and a poster shoot for 'Good News' as an AD. All this made me realize that I need to aggressively start auditioning and get my first project in January 2020.

POPP DAPP: How was the experience getting trained in Jeff Goldberg's acting studio? And how has that ripened you as an artist?
SAMARA TIJORI: It was amazing and very important for me because, since school, I have always been more into singing and dancing than acting and plays. So, I needed to train before I decided to do this. Being a part of Jeff's studio changed the way I looked at emotions.

We as people try to control too many things and have everything in our hands – that is just not possible. So, just let go! Be ok with letting it be.

<< As a society, the normality is to suppress your emotions vs. acting, where you need to have your emotions right up there available to be used. Jeff taught me techniques to get to certain places in a scene, emote in certain ways, and let go of the inhibitions you have. And as an actor, you cannot be in a shell and be inhibited.

PD: Learning dance forms like Kathak, Jazz, and Contemporary gives a dancer a lot of depth and fluidity. How have these art forms transformed you as a person?
ST: I started dancing (kathak) when I was 11 years old, and that was my base, though now I have not practiced in years as I moved on to other dance forms. As a child, it taught me a lot of discipline, and I learned to emote through my body. For me, dancing is a release; I cannot dance. Whenever I am busy with shooting and work and cannot find time to dance, I crave it badly. I am still working on a lot of different ways to move and styles of dance. It does shape you as a person a lot, as it teaches you to be fluid, which comes out in your personality. It also teaches you to express yourself differently than just talking.

PD: Coming from a family of such a celebrated and staggering actor as your respected father, how was it growing up in that environment?
ST: It was not as glamorous as people would assume. That is also because I was not interested in acting even a bit. I remember being 4 years old and my father telling me, “You would act!” and I said, “No! I would not.” And when, at 17, I went to him and said, “Maybe I want to try acting," he just laughed at me. As he stepped away from the industry for a while, I did go via the normal route. The only thing that I had and am thankful for was having a home in the city. I did not have the stress of finances, bills, rent, etc. I did go through multiple auditions and started with an open audition for Sprite. And my hands were shaking, holding on to the slate of my details, because I was so intimidated. However, I did go to the set occasionally when my father was shooting because I was so starstruck by the other actors on the set! Growing up around my father has also taught me how unstable work is in this industry, and you need to be patient and resilient to get going. At once, there is so much work, and then there is a waiting of 6-7 months. I did not understand the stresses of that gap back then, but now I do.

PD: What is the best career, life, or acting advice you have gotten from your father?
ST: I need to be patient, make my mind very strong, and believe in myself when it comes to work. Because you get a lot of rejections, there are some points when you feel like you are not going to make it. It is important to have that belief in yourself. Another thing that he has always said is, ‘You have to be honest in front of the camera; if you are not honest, the audience will know.’

PD: Was acting always the plan, or did that happen over time?
ST: Acting was not always the plan; I wanted to do criminology, which is why I studied psychology and wanted to apply abroad for post-graduation. But while in college, I realized that I wanted to pursue modeling or events. Since I was a bit confused about what I wanted to do, I decided not to go for post-graduation abroad. Along with college, I was doing modeling and events (IIFA). While doing IIFA, I decided to give acting a shot. After becoming an assistant director, I realized that this is something that is holding me back from psychology. While on set, something made me comprehend that this is the world that I belong to! I used to stalk the directors and actors for the processes and nuances of the creative process. I realized that I wanted to be in front of the camera, and something made me believe that I could. Though it took years to materialize, when I shot my first film, I realized how happy I am and how much love I have for this craft!

PD: Growing up around the film fraternity, how do you think Bollywood has evolved in all these years?
ST: I did not grow so much around the film fraternity; I was not as exposed to it—that was more my decision than anyone else’s. I was a Bollywood fanatic, and I still am! I loved everything Bollywood; I attended 2-3 Bollywood-themed birthday parties when I was young. Though I was hugely in awe of Bollywood, I never wanted to be around filmmaking for a very long time. I have seen a massive change in the films that were made earlier and that are being made now. We are evolving as an industry into a more realistic, raw, and relatable space now, and the audience is helping us do that. Initially, it was a lot about stars, who is in the film, and what the songs are like; now people do want to see the performance. Everybody is now getting to explore things that they would not have 20 years ago—we are evolving for the better.

PD: What inspires you as an artist?
ST: It is my friend circle around me. They are all actors, but not from the industry. I learned to be someone who was so determined and got what I wanted—through them. I saw them giving 6-7 auditions a day and tried to make it work consistently; it inspired me a lot. Also, I love watching the actors do the work that they do. They mold themselves into outstanding characters; it is so believable, makes you feel so many things, and is starkly different from their previous characters. This inspires me to be at that level.

PD: What kind of roles do you aspire to play in the coming future?
ST: I want to do everything.

PD: Share a bit about your current projects.
ST: A thriller and something that is going to be amazing.
PD: What are your future plans?
ST: A lot of traveling, winning a lot of awards, giving performances that make a difference in the world, doing something internationally, being a part of global cinema, and making a lot of money to open a massive shelter for stray animals.■

There is a voice within you that is truly yours. It does not prescribe to anything society says it should. It is all whacky ideas, crazy dreams, and novel perspectives. That voice is begging to be found, so find it. Do something with it. Because the thing that can come only and only from you - that is the thing that will change your life
"I want to work at the intersection of human-computer interaction and creativity. I do not see why I cannot do all these things!"
- SUKHNIDH KAUR
All things creative!

POPP DAPP: Why do you call yourself a multidisciplinary artist?
SUKHNIDH KAUR: I am a creative. I produce and engineer records, handwrite songs, do editorial portrait
photography, record, and edit videos, draw, and illustrate. Mediums do not define me - the act of creating - generating something where there once was nothing - does. Over the years, social media has forced us to templatize and commodify art. We are told that repetitive, predictable content in a singular niche will drive eyeballs toward us. But expression is liberation, right? I want to be liberated from that idea. I want to show myself and other people that you can fight pigeonholing. That is why I choose, consciously, to identify as a multidisciplinary artist.

PD: You often post about mental health.
SK: The very broken ways of the world lend themselves to an anxious, hyper-alert baseline in our day-to-day lives. We are overwhelmed with the compulsions of success, recognition, and meaning. I know this because I have been there. More importantly, I have come out of that dark place with some ideas. The point of life is to just witness it. It is a gift, and all we must do is accept it, by touching, feeling, hearing, and seeing. We do not have to do anything more. And we are better off being as authentic, brilliant, and daringly unique as possible. I want to shout these ideas off rooftops to anyone who will listen, so I try to post about them whenever I can.

PD: As an artist, what inspires you?
SK: A single line has piqued my interest for as long as I can remember: "There are no rules." We can have green
skies, and lavender seas, and microtones that do not conventionally belong within chord structures. This boundlessness enamors me because it expands the possibilities of how beautiful and complicated this world can be. I am a bit of a rule follower - I find it difficult to break free. So, to try and do exactly that, to rebel against my instincts, is a good use of my time.

PD: A corporate job, photography and videos on Instagram, music - how do you balance all these roles?
SK: There is this word - 'entelechy.' It means to strive to fulfill what is otherwise merely potential. This is a core principle of my life. Also, I never force myself to do anything. I take as many breaks as I like. Less pressure, more work done, and joyfully at that.

PD: What is the story behind your song, 'One Woman Band'?
SK: It is a super simple song about the struggle to accept that maybe you do want to be loved. And that the hyper-independence of your early 20s fades away when you realize that this world is big and bad and complicated and that experiencing it with a partner sound like a great idea. I have grown as an artist since OWB, and am excited to share some fresher music in 2024.

PD: What are your future plans?
SK: God, so much. When I stopped pressuring myself about running out of time, I realized that there are so, so many years to do what I want to do. So, I want to write a book about dealing with anxiety around success. I want to direct a surrealistic music video. I want to photograph editorial fashion. I want to live in a different country for some time and see more nature. I want to work at the intersection of human-computer interaction and creativity. I do not see why I cannot do all these things!■

A KNACK FOR COLORS

"Sometimes when the wider perspective does not work out for you, tunnel vision is the way to go. Hyper fixation, though used negatively if used wisely can sometimes help overcome blocks of many kinds!"

- TANYA CHATURVEDI.

Tanya Chaturvedi is a 25-year-old visual artist, a storyteller, a cross-cultural collaboration enthusiast, and an occasional exaggerative narrator based between Delhi and London. In the journey of self-discovery and evolution, her interests lie in telling stories of deep-rooted culture from India and positions relative to the world. Her passion for exuberant colors from her heritage and social order is reflected throughout her practice of invoking thought through tech in her audiences. Featured in Cosmopolitan, Harpers' Bazaar, and Brides Today In, Tanya is also a patron of experimental music and storytelling. Tanya started as a student at NIFT and went on to pursue her master's at the Royal College of Art in the Digital direction that dealt with the future of storytelling and how culture and history can be documented responsibly in Tech.

POPP DAPP: 'Art and culture' seem deeply embedded in the soul of your work. How important are these factors for you as a content creator & curator?
TANYA CHATURVEDI: As a content creator and curator, art and culture serve as the heartbeat of my work, imbuing it with depth, vibrancy, and meaning. Engaging with art and culture allows me to create content that resonates with diverse audiences, bridging gaps and fostering empathy. As they say 'personal stories are the most impactful' and being an art enthusiast myself, I wish to bring myself out there authentically, where art and culture are both apart.

PD: What inspires you in life?
TC: I am deeply inspired by Indian heritage as I grew up in a household of avid readers. We would have healthy debates and look at our counterparts objectively, which has helped me understand my heritage and take it forward. I have always had a knack for colors and that is something personal to me. And while this is one side, I have always been very keen on upcoming tech so to bridge this in my practice I often try and experiment with ways of integrating technology for cultural stories.

PD: Art is ever-evolving, but aesthetics is a must for lifestyle. What aspect of the fashion & lifestyle world attracts you the most and why?
TC: I am extremely driven by the work aesthetics and the work it takes to keep up. I feel reading is the part where I find myself most attracted as you have multiple pedagogies that exist and you can make sound decisions and pick and choose what fits you the best.

PD: What is your take on sustainability in the world of lifestyle?
TC: In essence, embracing sustainability in the world of lifestyle requires collective efforts from individuals, businesses, and governments. By fostering responsible consumption, circular design, education, and innovation, we can work together to create a more sustainable and equitable world for future generations. So, my take is that sustainability remains a must but it is a collective goal and present in all around us. If we are to think about data sustainability it must be rooted in the idea of being.

PD: What is fashion for you?
TC: Traditionally I was told fashion is an expression of self. It pretty much stays the same only now for me it is an expression of self while making a statement. Who you are.

PD: How would you define your sense of style?
TC: I have an eclectic personal style; you will see me in the brightest of colors and many of them. I am not a huge experimenter; I wish to be comfortable in the play that I create.

PD: What are your future plans?
TC: Well apart from the book written professional growth, I'd like to collaborate with global communities and expand my practice as an individual artist that has had a halt for some months.■

Up iN ThE ClOuDs!

"What excites me is that fashion is a marker of its time, an incredible part of the zeitgeist, and capable of starting conversations – it is linked to everything!"
- SAUMYA VOHRA

I am an author, writer, and an Editor. I started at Cosmopolitan Magazine almost 10 years ago as a features writer and walked my way up as a Features Editor. Then I went on to running LBB Delhi, editorially; after which I worked at GQ. Now, I write for several publications like Vogue, GQ, and The Voice of Fashion. I came out with my very first debut novel last year about sex, sexuality, and female friendship, and published by Pan Macmillan. I wear many writing hats but love them all equally.

POPP DAPP: Fashion & lifestyle journalism makes you meet different people and listen to their stories. How enriching has that experience been?
SAUMYA VOHRA: It is a big part of why I enjoy journalism so much – I am a true people person. I am an extrovert, enjoy meeting new people, and love listening to their stories. Whether I can write about them or not, I enjoy the act of engaging with new people. That feeds into my work because to be a successful journalist in fashion & lifestyle, you must be that person. And if you enjoy it, it makes that so much invigorating.

PD: Every coming-out is not a one-day activity; it is a journey altogether. How evolving has that been for you?
SV: I do not believe that people ever need to formally come out. Since straight people do not have to announce their sexuality, we would be in a truly equalized culture if queer people did not have to do that either. Coming out is deeply personal and happens in multiple ways. For me, it happened in many stages. Firstly, to myself; secondly, to my partner; thirdly, deciding to talk to my friends and family about it; and finally, choosing to talk about it publicly. The reason I chose to talk about my bisexuality publicly is that although I was in a relationship with a heterosexual man, I did not even realize it until I started writing the main character of my book as bisexual. Then I realized that we needed to have a conversation about bisexuality in a larger forum. I was lucky to have people around me who were kind and supportive, which made the process a lot easier for me. The only thing that matters in any coming-out journey is making peace with yourself, who you are, how you see yourself, and being comfortable with yourself; everything else is non-relevant.

PD: 'Freeing yourself by subscribing to a label' is something that you have said in one of your recent podcasts. How liberating and important do you feel this freedom is for people to lead a happy life?
SV: Freedom is the biggest luxury of all. If you are free to be who you are, do the things that you want to do, care about the things that you want to care about, and be with the people you want to be with who are happy, confident, honest, and respectful of other people's feelings, that is the ultimate liberty. It is the most exciting and invigorating thing that anyone can hope for. Freedom means different things to different people. What happens in a lot of liberal spaces is that, surprisingly, the idea still has one definition of freedom. Freedom is just an assessment that you make for yourself about what would make you truly happy. If you allow yourself to belong to a particular label, it can create a sense of community—that is how it worked for me.

PD: 'Disruption' is the hardest part of any social setup to undergo. How far do you feel Indian society has come with inclusion, acceptance, and disruption?
SV: It is a mix. On one hand, it has come incredibly far (especially in the lifestyle and media space), as the world we grew up in in the 90s is completely different from the world we live in now. It is also true that inclusion, acceptance, and diversity are very much seeped in privilege; they exist for a particular segment of society—the middle segment—and rural India is dealing with a different set of circumstances (there is no place for us to comment until we know better). But yes, the India that we live in now is far more inclusive and accepting than the India we grew up in in the 90s. Still, there is a long way to go.

PD: What role does education play in creating safe spaces in our societies?
SV: Education plays an incredibly pivotal role. The sooner and more cohesively you start educating children about everything (equalizing genders, sex, and sexuality) in a healthy way that allows interactions, curiosity, interactions, a way that does not judge, a way that comes with no preconceived notions, a space that is inclusive and comfortable for kids to ask questions—it would be crucial for the generations that we churn out in the future. Education comes from everywhere: parents, interactions with people in society, asking questions, and being curious.

PD: Were journalism and writing always the plan, or did these happen over time?
SV: The answer is both yes and no. I always knew I would be a writer because I loved it so much. I was that kid who got the best marks in English, and that was my favorite teacher to talk to at a PTA meeting. Though writing came naturally to me, I did not know what form I would pursue it in. I spent almost a year of my life writing across various platforms like films (interned with Anurag Kashyap), radio, advertising, etc. I did a lot of things before I realized that the place where I feel happiest writing is journalism. I enjoyed every part of it—research, conversations, the thrill of putting together a piece, and the rush in a newsroom or magazine office. Being an author was always a pipe dream, and I was not sure that it would happen. I decided to try and try at it during the second pandemic—that is, when I wrote 'One Night Only.' I was lucky enough to find an incredible agent and three publishers (after a lot of rejections) who made offers for the book, which restored my confidence in it.

PD: What inspires you as an artist?
SV: It is the other arts—reading, watching, or looking at something incredible. It could be on the wall of a museum or the street—it does not matter. That is why an artist needs to engage in different forms of art—so that the mind is constantly moving, learning, processing, and creating.

"Do have conversations with yourself. We do not question things that we grew up wanting and things that we want now. Difference between the things that we were told to want and the things that we want. We do not question who we were 5 years ago and who we are today. It is very important to keep regularly checking in with yourself!

PD: What's fashion for you?
SV: It is an incredible expression of yourself, your style, and your aesthetic. For me, fashion is moving art and culture. What excites me is that fashion is a marker of its time, an incredible part of the zeitgeist, and capable of starting conversations—it is linked to everything. Fashion is much more ubiquitous and percolates into society more than people realize.

PD: What are your future plans?
SV: To just write more. Write fiction and article pieces for magazines I write for as well as for magazines I have not yet written for. The goal is to expand my length and breadth as a writer. Travel and see how that seeps into my identity as a writer.■

LIGHT & THE SHADOW

"Life is all about accepting the light with the shadow within yourself. It is about peeling all the layers of yourself one by one and accepting yourself in its entirety!"

- POOJA BHAMRRAH

Never shy away from hard work and discipline. When motivation fades, discipline with get you through!

Who am I? In the past, I have answered these questions in terms of the fact that I was born and raised in Mumbai, an engineer in biotechnology, stumbled upon modeling, and eventually got into acting and anchoring. Then, with time, I realized why these are the first things that come to mind when I am asked about myself. Probably these are the major identities that we hold on to in our lives; it is the way we are wired. But along the way, you realize that you are so much more than these facts about your life; there is a whole gamut of things that we hold within ourselves.

There is a cosmos that exists within us, but unfortunately, we are only conditioned to accept the good about us, disowning the bad qualities like anger, ego, and jealousy. Not realizing that we are everything—the good as well as the bad. Some days I will be happy, some days I will be sad, some days I will be nice to people, and on other days I might hurt people even if I do not want to. Life is all about accepting the light and the shadow within yourself. It is about peeling all the layers of yourself one by one and accepting yourself in their entirety. It is something that I have been trying to consciously do. The entire credit of this discovery would like to go to this profession of acting. The things that I have discovered about myself are unbelievable and so hard to accept at times.

POPP DAPP: How was the experience? working with the Indian entertainment industry's biggest actors like Tabu, Kareena Kapoor, and Kriti Sanon in Crew?
POOJA BHAMRRAH: It was an absolute delight. Kriti's sincerity and zeal towards her work, Kareena Ma'am's effervescence, and Tabu Ma'am's effortlessness were all mighty inspiring. There is so much to learn from them.

PD: Was acting always the plan, or did that happen over time?
PB: Acting was never a choice, not even the slightest, growing up. Modelling, sure! But academics always took precedence. Modeling did happen eventually, much later in life, while I was preparing for MBA exams. I came across the art of acting very superficially while I was modeling. I did a few workshops, got a glimpse of the enormous depths of this craft, and dived right in.

PD: What strategy do you use to make your character development more believable?
PB: Different things work for different characters. The approach remains highly subjective to the nature of the script and the character that we are dealing with. Many times, the director's handholding is required to understand the character's journey through the story. But if the character being played is closer to the kind of person I am in real life, the character choices become a lot easier.

PD: How would you define yourself in three words?
PB: I am still trying to figure myself out, but for the sake of answering
This question, Seeker, is sincere and hopeful.

PD: What is inspiring you in life right now?
PB: Everyday reminder to myself that it is this one life we are given and we have got to make the most of it, and when that does not work, it is all about sticking to the basics, not trying to achieve anything or get any where taking each day as it comes. Journaling helps!

PD: What is the best piece of advice you have received?
PB: Let go! I am still trying to act on it, albeit in vain. But as they say, try till you succeed.

PD: What was the last piece of content you consumed that made you cry?
PB: THE BEAR! It is a series on Disney Hotstar. Oh, I have bawled, and how right from the 1st episode.

PD: Share a bit about your current projects.
PB: I am currently rehearsing for a new play. I am pretty excited to explore and see where it takes us since it is quite relevant to the times we are living in. And as for screen projects, auditions, auditions, and more auditions, A short film I did The New York Film Academy has been doing the rounds of festivals globally. It is called IPSA. May I be a little braggadocio here and mention that I have been awarded the best actor for the film at a few of the festivals?
Along with being an actor, I am also a host. This year started with a travel show for Goodtimes, which just released this month, and there is another one in the pipeline.

PD: What are your future plans?
PB: Here we go with another question that terrifies me! But not as much as the first one. Working on myself, working on my craft, doing kickass projects, and growing as a team with my managers at Reliable Media. Essentially, the plan is to get better each day in everything the but just at I do.■

In the style moment!

"There is no technique as such. It is just a lot of hard work, finding solutions to problems, and trying your very best to pay attention to detail!"
- MEAGAN CONCESSIO

I think one important thing to remember while striving to be a stylist is that, often, things will NOT go your way. There will be moments when everything seems to be going wrong or unexpected problems come up and it is not giving up in those situations that build character.

I have been in many situations where I have cried to my mom or my fiancé about just wanting to quit and I am so grateful that I had the patience and the strength to keep working towards my goals.

There is also always a chance to work harder and go that extra mile for your work, do it. Be the person who is the hardest working person in a room, no one can ever take that away from you.

My journey so far has been turbulent as well as joyful. There have been plenty of moments that make it all worth it. It has truly been a journey with many learnings, as well as unlearning so much. It has been 5+ years of working independently.

POPP DAPP: What do you think is the most important aspect of styling?
MEAGAN CONCESSIO: Styling has many aspects that I believe are all equally important. There is one side where you must be up to date with current trends as well as know and understand fashion history. There is understanding your client and their needs and preferences. There's client servicing as well as maintaining relations. There is the back end of styling which is managing your accounts and expenses.

PD: Who are some of your favorite designers?
MC: Currently - Daniel Roseberry at Schiaparelli, Pieter Mulier at Alaïa, Christopher John Rogers, Tamara Ralph, Simon Porte @ Jacquemus, Alexis Bittar, Patricia Von Musulin, Anamika Khanna, Rahul Mishra, Tarun Tahiliani.

PD: What are the biggest pros and cons of styling a star?
MC: The pros would be the credibility and validation that comes with it, the exotic places you get to travel to, and the designers that you get to collaborate with. The cons would be the immense pressure of working with a star.

PD: What is your technique for creating a memorable and dapper outfit?
MC: There is no technique as such. It is just a lot of hard work, finding solutions to problems, and trying your very best to pay attention to detail.

PD: What do you think are the biggest challenges you face when styling?
MC: The biggest challenges would be how expensive it is to import designer looks internationally as well as the time it takes to make it happen. It can also be very stressful when things come up last minute and the turnaround time to produce the looks and source the jewelry and accessories for it is not long.

PD: What are some of your favorite places to shop for clothes?
MC: I enjoy shopping second-hand and vintage. I do not have a favorite but I normally research the best thrift and vintage stores in every place I travel to and explore. I have been enjoying shopping from Oysho and Lululemon for my travel and loungewear looks. In India for casuals, I love Sand by Shirin and Saphed.

PD: What are some of your go-to pieces when putting together a last-minute outfit?
MC: When it is for someone, I am styling, there is no go-to as it all depends on the occasion and then the person who will be wearing the clothes. Every outfit is unique special and curated then itself. If it is for me, my go-to is a white shirt, black belt, blue denim, and black loafers.

PD: What is that one fashion accessory that one can never go wrong with?
MC: I have seen people go wrong with all kinds of accessories but I would say a good quality handbag with no branding on it paired with a blazer and trousers would be foolproof.

PD: Was getting into styling always the intent, or did that occur over time?
MC: Yes, styling has been my intent since the age of 17 when I did my first internship with L'Officiel Magazine.

PD: Share a bit about your current projects.
MC: I cannot reveal too much about what is coming up but I am working on projects with five different artists and it is a mix of appearances, songs, and a very special project out of India next month. Eternally grateful to be doing what I love.

PD: What are your future plans?
MC: I plan to get married next year so my life right now is pretty much trying to find a balance between personal and professional commitments.■

THE CREATIVE DYNAMO

"Just keep reading. Leave your phones aside, spend time in nature, observe, and observe everybody around you. The world is filled with pain, you have a purpose, and everybody is here to help somebody – just figure that out!"
- NITYA MEHRA

It has been a long journey of 20 years from being a PA to now being a creator, director, and writer. It is not an easy journey at all, but I would not swap it for anything else. And you can look at everybody in that position when you are the one driving the ship. I have had a beautiful journey, and though there was so much pain, there was a lot of joy.

POPP DAPP: Start your career by assisting one of the legendary directors like Ang Lee, Mira Nair, or Farhan Akhtar. How has that impacted your creative approach?
NITYA MEHRA: I never went to a film school, so these filmmakers were my film school. It was very early in my career, and after doing a couple of projects that I did not enjoy, I realized that I must somehow make it to the people that I admire. I never did a Bollywood movie till I got approached by Excel to be a second AD on 'Lakshya.' When I was in college, I was inspired to see Farhan Akhtar making movies like 'Dil Chahta Hai', and he is the voice of Bollywood. Once I did 'Lakshya' I realized that I must work with the people I admire so that every breathing second on the set would be learning for me. This is what tells the current generation of aspiring movie makers that even if you are the fly on the wall of highly creative people's sets and are in the company of creators, directors, and writers, you decide how much you want to soak that in. Farhan Akhtar taught me what being extremely meticulous in shot-taking was. From Ang Lee, I learned to dig deep into my heart, mind, and soul as an individual—it will come out on screen. From Mira Nair, I learned what texture your roots can lend to the lens that you make films with.

PD: Do you remember the moment when you decided to direct your own project? Were there any second thoughts after that?
NM: I wanted to direct for a long time, but I did not get to. Because when I wrote the film, nobody wanted to make it—that script still sits with me. Abhinay Deo (with whom I worked as an AD) called me and said that they were doing the first season of '24' and it was time that I do a couple of episodes of that with Anil Kapoor, and I loved it. When you do television, you are directing 16 pages a day, and you understand some language—with '24', I was thrown into the deep end. But the film is very different. With 'Baar Baar Dekho,' I had no second thoughts. When Ritesh Sidhwani offered me the script, I was over the moon, as it was exactly something that I always wanted to do. I was getting to direct my first film with Excel; it was my dream come true.

PD: 'Made in Heaven' has been an absolute treat for the Indian as well as the overseas audience. What inspired you for the project and the story?
NM: Reema Kagti and Zoya Akhtar (creators of the show) came up with the idea of Indian weddings; that was it. When we started sitting with ideas in the room, I instantly knew the potential of the story. A commentary on the social fabric of the country, but told through the eyes of the wedding planners—I was confident that it was going to do what it has done. If we talk about the inspiration, then Reema and Zoya came to Delhi and stayed with me, and we were attending two Delhi weddings back-to-back—that was it! One of the exciting aspects of this story was us doing it in Delhi (I insisted on it). In Season 1, we tried to build the city (Delhi) as the character, trying to cover the vastness of it.

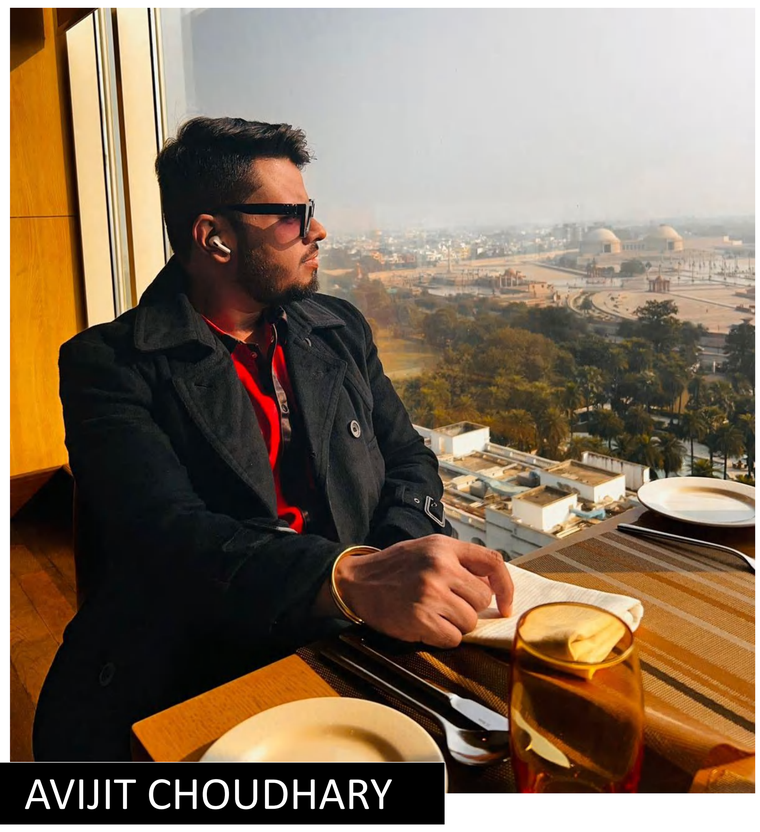
PD: All your projects have a fresh as well as disruptive perspective for society. Is that something that you consciously try to inculcate?
NM: No. I do not try to inculcate a disruptive perspective, but I am very observant of every place that I inhabit. It is that keen observation that makes its way into anything that I do, be it something like 'Chand Mubarak' (a short film I did in Covid for Amazon), 'Big Girls Don't Cry,' or 'Made in Heaven.' When I look at a person, I try to judge for myself where that person is from in India. You meet so many people in Mumbai, and most of them are not from the city. India is such a diverse nation, with languages changing every 30km. Trying to understand people's origins is very exciting for me, and it is a game that I play in my mind.

PD: Was getting into direction and screenplay always the plan, or did these happen over time?
NM: It was the plan; I always wanted to direct vis-à-vis writing; I am a very insecure writer. Even when I did not know much about the grammar and technicalities of filmmaking, I knew that I wanted to direct. And weirdly, I was always better at writing, but directing is what I fell in love with. It is still a struggle for me to write. I feel like I will collaborate with a writer, and then I think that if it is my film, it should have my voice in it.

PD: You have spent over a decade in the entertainment industry; how do you think that the industry has evolved in all these years?
NM: In many ways, it has evolved, and, in some ways, nothing much has happened. Earlier in time, when I used to walk into a set, there were such few women—they were not in positions of power, just in hair, makeup, or costume. Even in AD (Assistant Direction), we were just 2-3 PAs (Personal Assistants). And now, it has changed a lot (not saying that it has become equal). Earlier, there were no female cinematographers, and that has changed. If you walk onto my set, for example, the gender ratio is almost 50%. It is not coming from the point that I want to keep an all-female set—not at all. Everybody should get equal opportunity based on their talents, regardless of gender. The industry has evolved a lot when it comes to production decisions; people are a lot more sensitive. When I started, nobody cared if it was 2 a.m. and girls were trying to find a rikshaw to get back home or if they were working double and triple shifts. Now people care for their crew a lot more, unions are coming in, and rules are getting defined for the working hours and conditions. Though we are nowhere near how Western nations work, people here are becoming a little more conscientious.

PD: What does your creative process of putting together a story look like?
NM: E.g. I always thought that we had never had an Indian story about schools (especially told from the perspective of girls). My experience growing up in a boarding school in India, where you are always compared to boys, was a cocoon there; I found that unique. In my head, I always thought that if I became a filmmaker and people would give me a chance to make a film on this, I would. That was the inspiration for 'Big Girls Don't Cry.' When I wanted to do 'Chaand Mubarak,' I always found weird relationships between people that society would not put together. But people get along, even if you do not come from similar economic strata. Just putting two improbable people who usually would not meet because of societal norms together—I have always found that a good spot. So, when Amazon contacted me for an anthology based on COVID-19, I quickly took my idea and put it in there. The script that I am currently working on is something that I sat with three years ago, putting together three words (I cannot share those though). So, there are different processes for different stories.

PD: Share a bit about the current projects that you are working on.
NM: We have just finished filming an exciting six-part mini-series with Applause Entertainment. I am basking in the love we have for 'Big Girls Don't Cry,' which was released on Amazon on March 14th, 2024. We are so happy as there are messages of young girls coming in from across the country and a few abroad; they have enjoyed watching it. I am happy that they feel represented on screen.■



AVIJIT CHOUDHARY

Celestial Trailblazers

Welcome back, celestial trailblazers! Join us once again for another exhilarating edition of "Popp Dapp"! Step into the cosmic current as we fuse the enchanting world of tarot magic with the captivating allure of fashion charisma. Prepare to be dazzled by vibrant hues, intricate designs, and the irresistible pull of human connections.

For a personalized reading, dive deeper into the mysteries of the universe with Avijit Choudhary, founder of @yourtarotindia on Instagram. As a block chief of Nichiren Buddhism, Avijit brings solace and positivity to clients worldwide, guiding them towards self-discovery and empowerment.

Aries

- **Tarot Card:** The Emperor – Picture yourself as the bold leader of the pack, oozing ambition and confidence.
- **Fashion:** Rock those power suits like a boss, but don't forget to add a touch of sass with statement accessories.
- **Color:** Set the world ablaze in fiery reds and yellows that scream "Look at me!"
- **Relationships:** Pair up with a Leo for a steamy, passionate connection that ignites fireworks.
- **Friendship:** Team up with a Sagittarius for wild adventures and epic memories.
- **Situation-ship:** Ready for a spontaneous thrill ride? Buckle up with a Gemini for some hot and unpredictable fun.
- **Lucky Number:** 9 - Channel that inner strength and strut your stuff with confidence.

Taurus

- **Tarot Card:** The Hierophant – Embrace your inner wisdom and stability, but make it sexy.
- **Fashion:** Wrap yourself in luxurious fabrics and timeless classics that exude sophistication.
- **Color:** Earthy tones and greens, because you're grounded and oh-so-natural.
- **Relationships:** Lock horns with a Virgo for a connection that's as solid as a rock.
- **Friendship**: Cuddle up with a Cancer for cozy nights in and deep heart-to-hearts.
- **Situation-ship:** Craving security and sensuality? Capricorn's got you covered with stability and passion.
- **Lucky Number:** 6 - Find that perfect balance between luxury and comfort.

Gemini

- **Tarot Card:** The Lovers – Explore your curiosity and adaptability in the game of love and life.
- **Fashion:** Mix it up with versatile styles and vibrant colors that reflect your ever-changing moods.
- **Color:** Bright blues and yellows to match your sunny disposition and endless energy.
- **Relationships:** Get ready for some intellectual foreplay with an Aquarius who can keep up with your wit.
- **Friendship:** Laugh until your sides hurt with a Libra who shares your love for good conversation and even better jokes.
- **Situation-ship:** Craving excitement and passion? Dive headfirst into the flames with an Aries for a thrill like no other.
- **Lucky Number:** 5 - Embrace the freedom to be exactly who you are, no apologies needed.

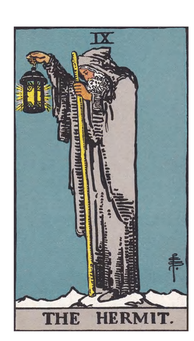
Cancer

- **Tarot Card:** The Chariot – Harness your emotional depth and intuition as you navigate the wild ride of life.
- **Fashion:** Wrap yourself in feminine silhouettes and soft fabrics that hug your curves in all the right places.
- **Color:** Dive into the depths of sea greens and silvers that mirror the ebb and flow of your emotions.
- **Relationships:** Dive into the deep end with a Scorpio for a connection that's as intense as it is soul-stirring.
- **Friendship:** Find solace in the empathetic arms of a Pisces who just gets you, no questions asked.
- **Situation-ship:** Seeking stability and security? Taurus will be your rock in the storm, offering comfort and unwavering support.
- **Lucky Number:** 2 - Trust your intuition and follow your heart, it never leads you astray.

Leo

- **Tarot Card:** Strength – Embrace your inner lioness, fierce, confident, and utterly irresistible.
- **Fashion:** Rule the runway in regal attire with luxurious fabrics and gold accents that command attention.
- **Color:** Bask in the warm glow of golds and oranges that highlight your radiant presence.
- **Relationships:** Team up with an Aries for a fiery connection that burns brighter than the sun.
- **Friendship:** Stand tall with a loyal Sagittarius by your side, ready to conquer the world together.
- **Situation-ship:** Ready for an adventure? Lock eyes with a Libra for a journey filled with passion and excitement.
- **Lucky Number:** 1 - Blaze your own trail and lead with confidence, the world is yours for the taking.

Virgo



- **Tarot Card:** The Hermit – Delve deep into your analytical mind and practical nature, but don't forget to indulge in some sexy introspection.
- **Fashion:** Keep it sleek and sophisticated with minimalist designs and clean lines that exude quiet confidence.
- **Color:** Ground yourself in earthy browns and greens, reflecting your down-to-earth vibe.
- **Relationships:** Find harmony and stability with a Taurus who appreciates your attention to detail.
- **Friendship:** Form an unbreakable bond with a loyal Capricorn who shares your work ethic and values.
- **Situation-ship:** Dive into the depths with a Scorpio for a connection that's as intense as it is mysterious.

Lucky Number: 3 - Organize your thoughts and manifest your desires with precision and grace.

Libra

- **Tarot Card**: Justice – Balance is your mantra, harmonious, diplomatic, and always seeking fairness.
- **Fashion:** Embrace your inner fashionista with elegant ensembles and pastel hues that showcase your refined taste.
- **Color:** Paint the town in soft blues and pastels, radiating peace and serenity wherever you go.
- **Relationships:** Find your perfect match with a Gemini who complements your need for balance and intellectual stimulation.
- **Friendship:** Share laughs and deep conversations with a charming Leo who brings out your social side.
- **Situation-ship:** Ready for an adventure? Link arms with a Sagittarius for a whirlwind romance that defies expectations.
- **Lucky Number:** 7 - Seek harmony in all aspects of life and let love guide your decisions.

Capricorn

- **Tarot Card:** The Devil – Ambition is your fuel, disciplined, practical, and unapologetically sensual.
- **Fashion:** Command attention with classic, structured ensembles that speak to your no-nonsense attitude.
- **Color:** Lose yourself in dark greens and browns, reflecting the depth of your desires.
- **Relationships:** Seek stability and sensuality with a Taurus who matches your determination and drive.
- **Friendship:** Form a powerful alliance with a reliable Virgo who shares your work ethic and values.
- **Situation-ship:** Dive into the depths with a Scorpio for a connection that's as intense as it is intoxicating.
- **Lucky Number:** 10 - Embrace your ambitions and pursue your desires with unwavering determination.

Scorpio

- **Tarot Card:** Death – Transformation is your middle name, passionate, mysterious, and always evolving.
- **Fashion:** Embrace your dark side with edgy ensembles and deep, sultry colors that captivate and intrigue.
- **Color:** Lose yourself in deep reds and blacks, reflecting the intensity of your desires.
- **Relationships:** Dive deep with a Cancer for a connection that's as intense as it is transformative.
- **Friendship:** Find understanding and trust with a compassionate Pisces who sees beyond the surface.
- **Situation-ship:** Ignite the flames with an Aries for a passionate encounter that leaves you breathless.
- **Lucky Number**: 8 - Embrace change and transformation, for it leads to rebirth and renewal.

Aquarius

- **Tarot Card:** The Star – Innovation is your gift, humanitarian, eccentric, and always ahead of the curve.
- **Fashion:** Stand out from the crowd with unique, futuristic styles that reflect your visionary spirit.
- **Color:** Illuminate the world with electric blues and silvers that shine like the stars.
- **Relationships:** Form an intellectual connection with a witty Gemini who stimulates your mind and your heart.
- **Friendship:** Find freedom and understanding with a Sagittarius who shares your love for adventure and exploration.
- **Situation-ship:** Connect on a deeper level with a charming Libra for a romance that's as magical as it is unconventional.
- **Lucky Number:** 11 - Embrace your individuality and let your light shine bright.

Sagittarius

- **Tarot Card:** Temperance – Adventure is your calling, optimistic, philosophical, and always seeking new horizons.
- **Fashion:** Embrace your free spirit with casual, bohemian styles that flow with your wanderlust.
- **Color:** Paint your world with purples and blues that reflect the vast expanse of the open sky.
- **Relationships:** Set sail with an adventurous Aries for a love that's as wild and untamed as the wind.
- **Friendship:** Find your kindred spirit in an Aquarius who shares your love for freedom and exploration.
- **Situation-ship:** Ready for an adrenaline rush? Take the plunge with a Gemini for a journey filled with excitement and discovery.
- **Lucky Number:** 4 - Embrace the spirit of adventure and let curiosity be your guide.

Pisces

- **Tarot Card:** The Moon – Intuition is your guide, dreamy, empathetic, and always in tune with the rhythms of the universe.
- **Fashion:** Float through life in flowy, ethereal ensembles that capture the essence of your watery nature.
- **Color:** Lose yourself in sea greens and lavenders that reflect the depths of your imagination.
- **Relationships:** Find solace and understanding with a nurturing Cancer who embraces your sensitive soul.
- **Friendship:** Dive into the depths with a stable Taurus who grounds you and supports you through thick and thin.
- **Situation-ship:** Lose yourself in the depths of passion with an intense Scorpio for a love that's as mysterious as it is intoxicating.
- **Lucky Number:** 12 - Trust your intuition and let your dreams guide your path.

Unveil your unique style as we decode the celestial messages woven into every fabric and thread. Let your inner mystic guide you as we embark on a journey through the realms of friendship and situation-ships.

Whether you're seeking cosmic insights or simply craving a dash of celestial charm, "Popp Dapp" is your passport to an unforgettable adventure. And don't forget to keep an eye out for your lucky number, guiding you through the cosmic maze of possibilities! Let's dive deep into the mystical depths together and emerge as cosmic connoisseurs of style and spirit!

ABOUT THE TAROT READER | AVIJIT CHOUDHARY

For a personalized reading, dive deeper into the mysteries of the universe with Avijit Choudhary, founder of @yourtarotindia on Instagram. With 17 years of experience as a seasoned tarot card reader, Avijit's journey into the mystical realm began in 9th grade, inspired by a TV series. Specializing in love, relationships, career, and even situationships, his holistic approach incorporates numerology, signature analysis, and palmistry. As a block chief of Nichiren Buddhism, Avijit brings solace and positivity to clients worldwide, guiding them towards self-discovery and empowerment.

MUA | **SNIGDHA SINGH** TALENT | **VANSHIKA SRIVASTAVA** | ART DIRECTION & CAPTURED | **HARSHIT GUPTA**

THE POWER PLAY

MUA | **SNIGDHA SINGH** TALENT | **VANSHIKA SRIVASTAVA** | ART DIRECTION & CAPTURED | **HARSHIT GUPTA**

"Stay inspired, love the craft that you are doing, stay motivated, be consistent, just enjoy fashion, do not take it too seriously, do not be afraid of making mistakes, and do not be afraid of fashion. Everyone should feel free to express themselves!"

- NAMITA ALEXANDER

STAYING ON THE PULSE

My journey so far has been very organic. One opportunity led to another. To evolve in the changing landscape of the Internet, social media, and fashion online and offline has been a continuous learning experience.

POPP DAPP: What first got you into fashion?
NAMITA ALEXANDER: It started very early in my life. My parents used to work for Air India, so they used to travel a lot. The only thing I used to ask them to get back to me was the latest issue of Vogue and Harper's Bazaar! I used to read and get inspired by that; it was my way of looking at an art catalog.

PD: What is the story behind 'My Almari'?
NM: Having worked in the fashion industry and seeing the number of garments produced and the amount of luxury consumption, I wanted to be part of something that is contributing to a more sustainable model of fashion. Though it is already being done in India, it is not getting done on a scale. I wanted to bring a very international feel to it, making second-hand luxury desirable. It was about bringing in less waste in the fashion industry, reusing things, and owing high-end second-hand luxury to customers who might not have the confidence or money to walk in and buy a brand-new product.

PD: As a stylist, how do you think your work affects the way people see themselves? NM: I am very geeky about this. Fashion is the first language one communicates with when entering a room. I can tell everything about a person putting themselves together. It does not have to be stylish or expensive; it is about knowing one's innate personality by the way they dress themselves. As a stylist, I like to know the person I am styling, their lifestyle, how they spend their free time, what their day consists of, what their likes and dislikes are, and their travel preferences. I incorporate these tiny details into their silhouettes.

PD: Was fashion always the plan, or did that happen over time?
NM: Fashion was always in me, but it was never the plan! I studied journalism and political science and intended to be in the media in some way. I started my career with NDTV as the most overdressed journalist! While the energy of a newsroom was always high-octane, and I genuinely believe I could contribute to some sort of change, it dawned on me that I might be better suited for something that required me to channel my creative energy more. Around this time, one of my best friends from college was on the brink of Bollywood stardom. While I was always helping her pick what to wear, she

one day asked me to style her for an event. I did it, and that look traveled well across social media. Because of the tag, designers and PR companies started to get in touch with me. I gradually took one day at a time, and six months down the line, I had the faith I could set up a styling company.
and styled by Namita Alexander, was born. While the news will always be my love, I do enjoy fashion just as much. It tells so much about the times we live in.

PD: How do you think the fashion industry will evolve in the next few years? NM: The industry is evolving so rapidly, and that has a lot to do with social media, innovation, and how to keep customers engaged. In the coming future, the industry is going to evolve toward a more sustainable approach. People must keep the environment in mind, and all the luxury brands are keeping this in mind.

PD: What are some of the most common misconceptions about fashion styling?
NM: People think that this is an ultra-glamorous job. While it does look glamorous, there is so much work behind it.

PD: What is your process for creating a unique and memorable look?
NM: A memorable look does not happen while you are creating it; it happens how you translate it. Whether it is Princess Diana's iconic look or any of the big stars's iconic looks, they did not realize it while they were creating it. It depends on the event, the time, and the confidence with which the person is wearing it.

PD: How do you adapt to changes in the fashion industry?
NM: One just must be very on the pulse. I also rely on social media. I like to read and look at the archived looks. The only way to adapt is to educate yourself!

PD: How do you keep up with the fashion shows, trends, and industry developments?
NM: Social media has made it very easy; if you follow certain people and handles, you will get a handle on things. Also, get on to the websites of Vogue US, see what is happening, and study the looks of the recent shows. I try to attend at least one fashion week a year, globally. I follow the fashion weeks in India and see what the designers are creating.

PD: What are your future plans?
NM: I like to live each day and in the present moment. I think hard work needs a little bit of luck and consistency. I have a vague idea of where I want to pivot. Design somehow marries journalism and fashion. I am excited about what the future holds!■

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