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THE Art OF evolving!
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Against the Grain
GARVIT - PRIYANSH

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TURNING PRESENCE INTO PURPOSE
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grace of becoming
WALUSCHA DE SOUSA

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THE SOUND OF FOREVER
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THE WOMEN ARE THE STORY!
The BANANA Labs

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POPP DAPP | EDITOR'S NOTE



> *"The real challenge is not keeping up—it's growing without losing yourself along the way.*

Hi,

If there is one thing life has taught us, it is that standing still is rarely an option. Trends change, industries transform, algorithms rewrite the rules overnight, and what feels impossible today somehow becomes ordinary tomorrow. The real challenge is not keeping up—it's growing without losing yourself along the way.

That spirit runs through every page of this issue.

Our cover star, Tulsi Kumar, knows a thing or two about longevity. In an industry famous for fleeting moments and fast-moving trends, she has mastered the art of evolving while staying unmistakably herself. It is a rare skill, and perhaps one of the reasons her voice continues to resonate across generations.

Elsewhere, Kathy Davison reminds us that growth is rarely linear, while Waluscha De Sousa proves that grace and strength are far more powerful than noise. Nidhi Suresh and Sabrina Siddiqui take us into the world of journalism, where asking the right questions remains just as important as finding the answers. Through Vital Roots, we explore a refreshing idea: wellness might have less to do with perfection and more to do with connection.

From the creative journeys of Rishita Kothari, Kanika Maheshwari, Axe.Shay, Smiti Malik, Garvit and Priyansh, to the innovative perspectives of Raman Garg Nagpal, Shivaang Chandna, and The BANANA Labs, this issue is filled with people who are building meaningful futures instead of simply chasing headlines.

So, whether you're here for inspiration, insight, creativity, or a welcome distraction from your unread emails, we hope these stories stay with you long after the final page.

Happy reading!

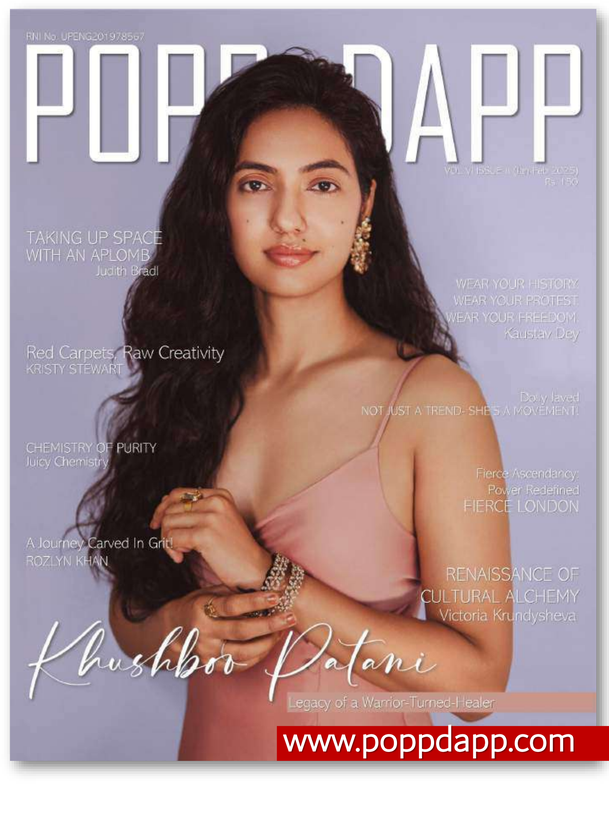


ANUJA MATHUR
Editor-In-Chief, POPP DAPP
www.poppdapp.com









THE Art OF evolving!

Kathy Davison

There is a particular kind of woman who defies easy categorisation. She moves through the world with the fluency of someone who has lived in several of its chapters simultaneously — the creative, the entrepreneur, the traveller, the observer. Kathy Davison is precisely that woman. Known across social media as @naziadavison, she has cultivated a following not through algorithmic precision but through something far rarer: genuine intentionality. We sat down with her for an extended conversation about identity, reinvention, and the quiet courage it takes to build a life that is entirely your own.



ON AUTHENTICITY IN AN AGE OF PERFORMANCE

In an era when the word "authentic" has itself become a branding strategy, Kathy Davison offers a more nuanced definition. "Authenticity isn't about being unfiltered all the time," she says, settling into the conversation with the ease of someone who has thought deeply about this. "It's about being honest within what you choose to share."

The distinction matters. For Davison, the question she asks before posting anything is not *will this perform well?* but rather *why am I sharing this?* It is a deceptively simple filter, yet one that separates those who create from those who merely produce. "I'd rather have a smaller, real connection with my audience than build something that looks perfect but feels empty." In a landscape saturated with polished facades, that commitment reads less like a philosophy and more like a quiet act of resistance.

THE PIVOT THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

Davison's journey from content creator to entrepreneur was not the result of a calculated strategy. It was, by her own admission, born from vulnerability. "I wasn't really doing well as an actor, and I badly wanted a success somewhere else." There is something disarming about that honesty — the willingness to name the wound before describing the healing.

What followed that admission was not retreat but reinvention. Entrepreneurship gave her what the audition room had temporarily withheld: confidence. And in a turn that surprises even her, the business world fed back into her creative life. "Honestly, I'm much more sharp, groomed, and well-versed even as an actor now." The two worlds, rather than competing, became complementary. Whether she is designing a restaurant concept or preparing for a role, she is fundamentally doing the same thing — telling a story, just in different languages. "Whether it's a restaurant, a space, or a concept — it's storytelling in a physical form." That framing reveals the connective tissue of everything Davison builds. Her ventures are not transactions. They are environments with intention, experiences with narrative architecture.

"Honestly, I'm much more sharp, groomed, and well-versed even as an actor now."

THE EDUCATION OF TRAVEL

Ask Davison about her greatest influences and she does not name a mentor or a book. She gestures, broadly, at the world itself. Travel has been her most consistent teacher — not the kind that produces content, but the kind that quietly rewires how you see.

"Every place has a different rhythm, a different way of living," she reflects. "That really expands how you think — not just creatively, but personally." For an actor, this translates into a deeper understanding of human behaviour across cultures. For an entrepreneur, it becomes something more tactile — an instinct for what people feel when they enter a space, how cultural nuance transforms into sensory detail. There is a school of thought that travel broadens the mind. Davison lives that axiom, but she takes it further. She does not merely observe cultures; she absorbs them, stores them, then expresses them through her work. The result is a creative vocabulary that is genuinely international — rare in a media landscape that still too often defaults to the familiar.

WHAT THE HIGHLIGHT REEL HIDES

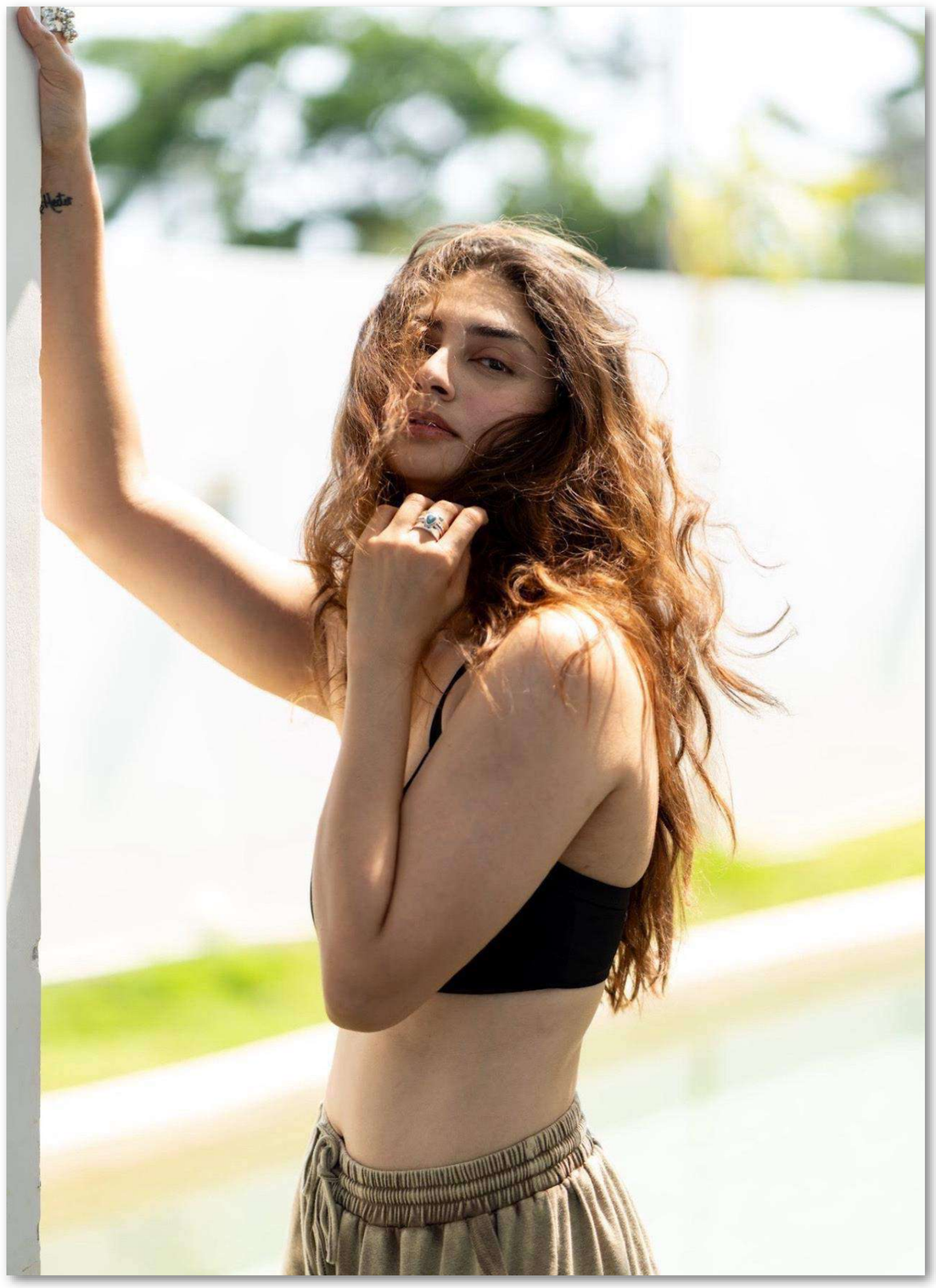
Influencer culture has attracted its share of scrutiny, and Davison is candid about its complexities. "People often see the output, not the process," she says. "It looks easy from the outside, but there's a lot of thought, pressure, and consistency behind it."

What distinguishes her approach is a deliberate choice to show growth rather than perfection — to share the journey as it evolves, including the uncertainty. In a world where vulnerability is frequently performed, Davison's version feels earned. She has sat with real disappointment, real recalibration, and chosen to let that texture into her work rather than smooth it away. "I think that's more valuable than just showing highlight reels." It is the kind of statement that sounds obvious until you consider how few people actually live by it.

STYLE AS PERSONAL SYNTAX

On the subject of fashion and personal style, Davison is refreshingly unbothered by trend cycles. "Style, for me, is energy," she says simply. "It's not about what's trending — it's about what feels aligned with you in that moment."

She describes her aesthetic as fluid rather than fixed — structured on some days, effortless on others — and sees no contradiction in that range. "Both are equally me." It is a philosophy that extends well beyond clothing. It speaks to how she moves through every domain of her life: not with rigid consistency, but with a coherent inner logic that adapts without losing its core. She does not follow fashion so much as translate it — taking what is culturally present and filtering it through her own sensibility until it becomes something distinctly hers. >>



THE DATA IN DISAPPOINTMENT

No portrait of an ambitious woman is complete without reckoning with failure, and Davison speaks about hers with the precision of someone who has genuinely processed them. As an entrepreneur, she has built ventures that looked right on paper — strong concepts, careful execution — only to find the market response fell short. As an actor, she has given her best in audition rooms and walked away without the role.

Her conclusion, drawn from both experiences, is one of the more mature perspectives on setbacks available in contemporary culture. "Don't take setbacks personally — take them as data. Adjust, refine, move forward." The language is analytical, but the wisdom is deeply human. She is not cold about failure; she is curious about it. That distinction is everything.

This recalibration also led her to outgrow a belief she held early in her career — that hard work alone guarantees results. "You first need to have an opportunity to work hard," she observes. "There are factors you can't fully control — timing, luck, the right people crossing your path." What she has arrived at is not resignation but a more sophisticated relationship with effort and outcome. She still works hard. She simply no longer conflates effort with entitlement to a particular result.

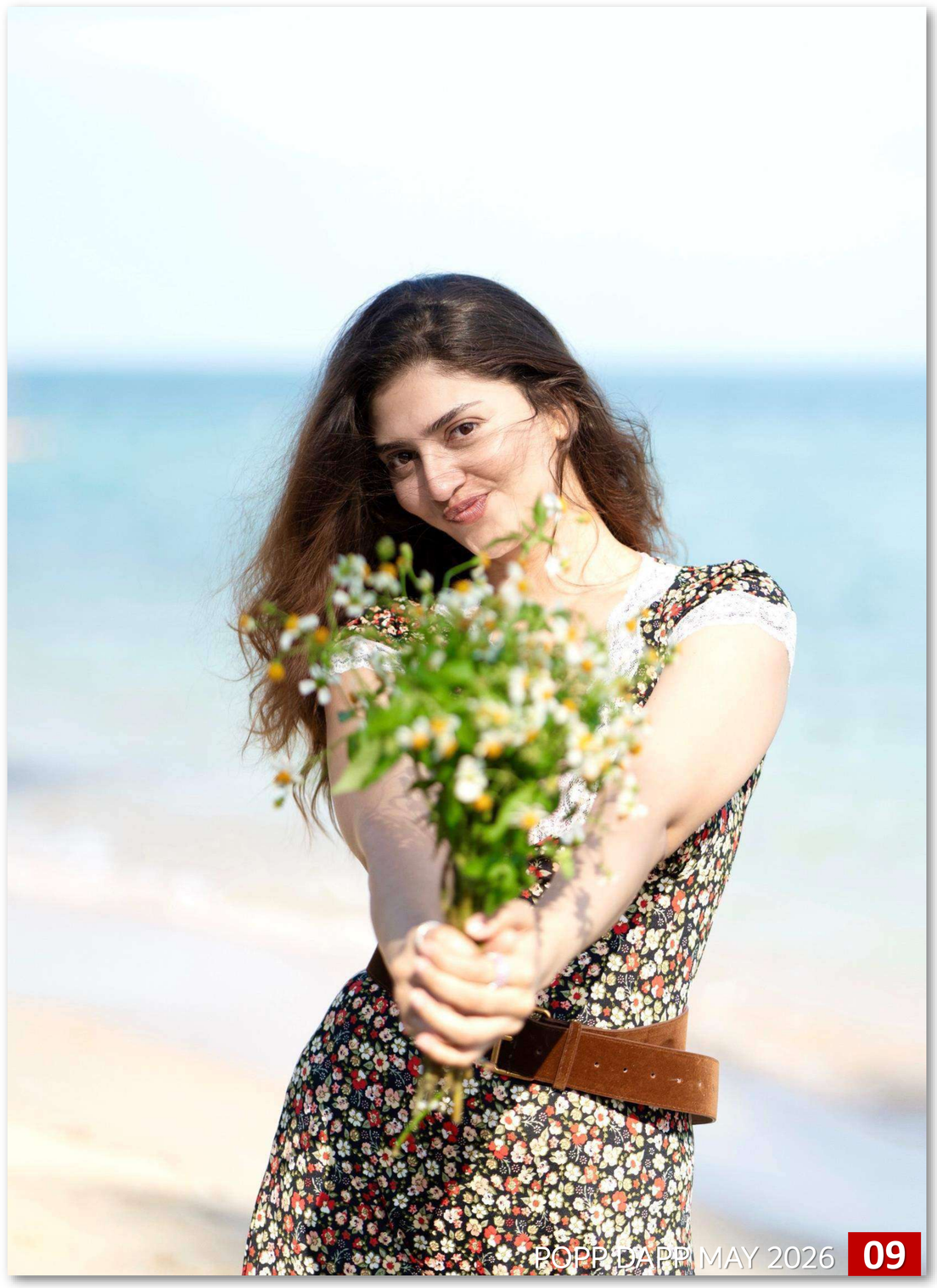
TWO SPEEDS, ONE MIND

There is a duality at the heart of how Davison understands herself. She describes living at two speeds — one outward and active, one inward and analytical — and sees both as essential. Her interior life, marked by reflection and careful observation, is not separate from her professional output. It is, in fact, the engine of it. "A lot of my creative direction — from storytelling in marketing to how I position my spaces — comes from that quiet processing." It is the kind of intelligence that does not announce itself but shows up consistently in the texture of the work.

WHAT COMES NEXT

As for the future, Davison is thinking boldly. As an actor, she is open to crossing borders — different industries, different languages, different modes of storytelling. She is even considering creating her own projects rather than waiting for opportunities to arrive. As an entrepreneur, she is drawn to building brands that are story-driven rather than transactional: "Spaces that feel like experiences, not just businesses."

There is a throughline in all of it — a commitment to meaning over momentum, to depth over volume. In a world that rewards speed and scale, Kathy Davison is quietly making the case for something more enduring. She believes in luck, she says. In destiny. In the moments when the wind blows in your direction. But spending time with her, what becomes clear is that she has also done the interior work to recognise that wind when it arrives — and the courage to open the sail.



architect of atmosphere

RAMAN GARG NAGPAL possesses a rare gift: she walks into an empty room and already understands its story, its potential, what it demands. An event curator and lifestyle content creator operating at the intersection of access, cultural insight, and human intuition, Nagpal has transcended the business of building a name. Instead, she has spent years architecting spaces—both physical and emotional—where moments of meaning unfold. Not rooms in the literal sense, though the rooms themselves are often extraordinary.

What Nagpal curates is something less tangible and far more durable: the feeling that something genuinely rare is unfolding, that the people gathered belong to a moment that cannot be replicated or scrolled past. In an era defined by relentless visibility, this is perhaps the most difficult thing to manufacture. Which is precisely why she doesn't manufacture it at all. We sat down with Nagpal for an extended conversation about the philosophy of exclusivity, the psychology of the guest list, and why the future of luxury is being written not in grand spectacle, but in emotional precision.



THE NEW GRAMMAR OF EXCLUSIVITY

Ask Nagpal to define exclusivity and she pauses before answering, which tells you something immediately. This is not a woman who reaches for rehearsed answers. "Exclusivity today is no longer about restriction alone," she begins. "It's about relevance and intentionality." She describes an evolution that mirrors a broader cultural shift: the old luxury was about closing doors, about the velvet rope as symbol and statement. The new luxury is something more nuanced and, arguably, more demanding to achieve. "True exclusivity lies in creating moments that feel emotionally rare and culturally significant.“

What changed, she argues, was not the appetite for exclusivity but the literacy of the audience. Social media democratized visibility so thoroughly that the image of luxury became available to almost everyone. And in doing so, it revealed just how hollow image alone could be. "The most exclusive spaces today are the ones that cannot be replicated through a screen." It is a line worth sitting with. In a culture that treats documentation as a form of proof, Nagpal is quietly insisting that the most powerful experiences are precisely the ones that resist it.

THE ECOSYSTEM OF THE GUEST LIST

There is a persistent myth that assembling a high-profile guest list is a matter of status arithmetic: add enough famous names and the equation balances itself. Nagpal dismantles this gently but completely. "A guest list is never just a collection of names," she says. "It's an ecosystem." Every person in a room, she explains, contributes to its mood, its credibility, and its cultural temperature. The curation process involves three distinct considerations: alignment, influence, and chemistry. Alignment means genuine resonance with a brand's identity, not merely its profile. Influence, she is careful to note, has become multidimensional in ways that traditional metrics still fail to capture.

"It's not only follower count, but also social capital, credibility, and conversational value." And chemistry, perhaps the most intuitive of the three, is also the most essential. "The goal is always to create a guest mix that feels aspirational yet effortless." This is a deceptively simple ambition. The effortlessness, as anyone who has sat in a room that felt wrong will know, is the hardest thing to engineer. Which is why Nagpal frames it not as engineering at all, but as understanding. Human energy, social compatibility, cultural nuance — these are not spreadsheet variables. They require a different kind of intelligence. "Too much familiarity can make a room feel stagnant," she observes, "while too much unfamiliarity can make it feel disconnected." The space between those two failures is where great curation lives. "The magic lies somewhere in between.“

CINEMATIC ARCHITECTURE

Nagpal describes her approach to event narratives with an analogy that reveals her sensibility instantly: she thinks in film. "Every event begins with a story. Before thinking about décor, entertainment, or logistics, I ask: What should people feel when they leave?" From that single question, every element flows. The invitation, the venue, the musical arc of the evening, the pacing of interactions — all of it becomes part of a larger emotional journey. "I approach events almost cinematically," she says, "where each detail contributes to an emotional journey." Execution is then about consistency: ensuring that each touchpoint remains faithful to the central narrative, that the evening never breaks its own spell. This cinematic approach also explains her relationship with spectacle. >>

Visual impact, she concedes, attracts attention. But she is frankly skeptical of spectacle for its own sake. "Authentic value comes from how people feel during and after an experience — whether meaningful conversations happened, whether genuine connections were created." Luxury, as she articulates it, is moving away from excess and toward depth. "Spectacle alone fades quickly; emotional memory lasts." It is a philosophy with the confidence of someone who has watched enough spectacular events disappear without a trace.

THE CURRENCY OF TRUST

In industries built on access, the question of trust is unavoidable. How does one build and maintain relationships in ecosystems where every introduction carries weight and every misstep reverberates? Nagpal is characteristically direct. "Trust is everything in this industry. Access may open doors initially, but consistency, discretion, and integrity are what sustain relationships long term." She speaks about this not as strategy but as conviction, returning repeatedly to the idea that people remember how you make them feel and whether you protect the value of their trust. In high-access networks, she argues, reliability ultimately matters more than visibility.

Her approach to personal branding reflects the same philosophy. "In luxury spaces, credibility is built on trust and restraint." She maintains a digital presence that expresses her aesthetic and personality without violating the privacy that premium collaborators require. "Not every moment needs to become content." And in a sentence that encapsulates something larger about the current cultural moment: "Discretion itself has become a form of luxury today.“ It is a remarkable observation, and one that cuts against much of what the attention economy rewards. At a time when the instinct to document is nearly reflexive, the choice not to share has become its own form of sophistication.

MEASURING THE IMMEASURABLE

The question of return on investment in experiential marketing is one that the industry continues to negotiate awkwardly. Traditional metrics — reach, impressions, conversion — struggle to account for what the best luxury events actually produce. Nagpal is comfortable in this ambiguity. "The real ROI often comes from the quality of conversations generated, the networks formed, the long-term brand perception created, and the emotional association people develop with the experience." She notes that some of the most impactful luxury events produce no viral moment, no spike in metrics, no identifiable single measure of success.

And yet their influence on perception can be profound and lasting. "Brands are measuring cultural relevance as much as numerical reach," she says. "Some of the most impactful luxury events may not go viral immediately, but they influence perception in ways that are far more lasting." For brands navigating this landscape, Nagpal represents something valuable: a curator who can speak both languages, who understands the intangible without abandoning accountability.

THE FUTURE BEING WRITTEN NOW

Looking ahead, Nagpal sees a luxury events landscape in meaningful transition. The shift is not merely aesthetic but philosophical: away from scale and toward intimacy, away from performance and toward genuine meaning. "Luxury events are becoming more intimate, immersive, and culturally intelligent," she says. The emerging priorities, as she maps them, include community-driven experiences, wellness integration, private social ecosystems, and niche curation of extraordinary precision. Sustainability and intentional design, she adds, will move from afterthought to expectation.



For the next generation of curators and lifestyle creators, her counsel is clear-eyed and demanding. "Luxury is no longer only about scale. It's about emotional precision, storytelling, and the ability to create experiences people genuinely remember."

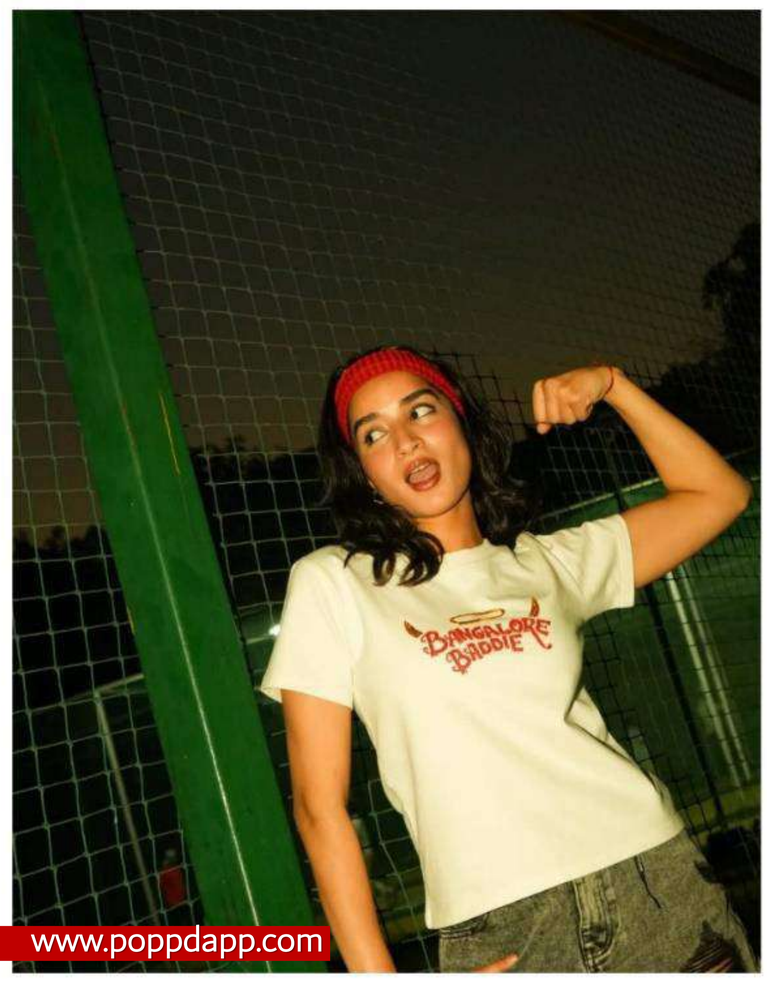
The tools available to emerging professionals are remarkable. The access to inspiration, to platforms, to audiences, is unprecedented. What cannot be downloaded or algorithmically acquired is the thing Nagpal has spent years developing: a genuine understanding of what makes a moment matter.

As the conversation draws to a close, she returns, almost inevitably, to that foundational question she asks at the beginning of every project. What should people feel when they leave?

It is a question that sounds simple until you try to answer it honestly. And in that gap between the asking and the answering, the real work of curation begins.


Delhi
Diva
MUMBAI
Mirchi




BANGALORE
BIDDIE



Past The Obvious

HOW SHIVAANG CHANDNA IS REWRITING THE MODERN INDIAN NARRATIVE THROUGH PAST MODERN

Fashion brands are often engineered around virality before vision, Shivaang Chandna represents a rarer kind of founder. The kind who thinks deeply before speaking loudly. The kind who understands that culture is not content, heritage is not aesthetic, and craftsmanship is not a trend waiting to be monetized for a season. At just twenty months into building Past Modern, Shivaang is already shaping conversations that extend far beyond clothing. His work sits at the intersection of identity, storytelling, contemporary Indian aspiration, and the preservation of handcraft in an increasingly automated world.

Yet what makes his perspective compelling is not simply his ambition, but the clarity with which he approaches it. There is a noticeable intellectual rigor in the way he speaks about fashion. For Shivaang, garments are not isolated products. They are cultural documents. They are tools of memory. They are vehicles through which India can reclaim authorship over its own visual language in a global creative economy that has long borrowed from the country without always acknowledging it.

DISTANCE THAT STRENGTHENED IDENTITY

His journey from India to the University of Michigan and back again appears to have sharpened rather than diluted his relationship with his roots. While many young founders look outward for validation, Shivaang's experience abroad pushed him inward toward a more layered understanding of what modern Indian identity could become. "Distance has a way of sharpening identity," he reflects thoughtfully. "The further I was from India, the more I began to understand it, value it, and lean into it." That shift became foundational to the philosophy of Past Modern.

The name itself carries a deliberate contradiction. It suggests movement between timelines, a dialogue between inheritance and reinvention. Shivaang does not see "modern" as a rejection of history. Instead, he sees it as the act of making history relevant again. To him, modernity is not novelty for novelty's sake. It is interpretation. It is taking something culturally rich and translating it into a language that resonates with the present moment.

RECLAIMING INDIA'S CONTEMPORARY VOICE

India, he believes, has always possessed one of the world's most influential aesthetic vocabularies. The issue has never been lack of depth. The issue has been positioning. "Our culture, craftsmanship, and visual language have influenced global aesthetics for centuries," he says. "Yet we are rarely positioned at the center of contemporary fashion conversations."

That observation cuts deeper than fashion commentary. It reflects a larger cultural tension that many emerging Indian creatives are beginning to confront. For decades, "global" was often synonymous with westernized. Aspirational imagery flowed predominantly in one direction. Indian consumers were taught to admire themselves through external frameworks. Past Modern attempts to reverse that flow. Rather than romanticizing heritage through nostalgia, the brand approaches craft with strategic contemporary relevance. It is less interested in preservation under glass and more interested in evolution through participation. Shivaang speaks often about "engineering relevance," a phrase that feels particularly revealing. It captures his understanding that culture survives not by remaining static, but by continuously finding new forms of expression.

BUILDING A BRAND, NOT A PERSONALITY

There is also an unusual restraint in the way he navigates visibility in today's creator-driven economy. At a time when founders are increasingly encouraged to become personalities first and entrepreneurs second, Shivaang maintains a different philosophy. He does not view personal branding as the end goal. Instead, he sees his public voice as a natural extension of the systems and ideas he is building. "The brand is the product," he explains. "I exist in service of it." That distinction matters.

In a digital landscape saturated with performance, there is something refreshing about a founder who is more interested in creating institutional longevity than algorithmic relevance. His online presence feels less like self-promotion and more like documentation of thought. He shares selectively, often guided by whether a lesson or insight could genuinely help someone navigating similar questions. It reflects another important characteristic of his approach: intentionality. >>

Not everything, he believes, needs to be shared in real time. Some ideas need silence before articulation. Some processes require distance before meaning becomes clear. In an era addicted to immediacy, that patience feels increasingly radical.

DELHI: A CITY THAT MIRRORS THE BRAND

Much of this mindset has also been shaped by Delhi, the city that continues to influence both his worldview and the identity of Past Modern itself. Shivaang describes Delhi as a city of coexistence. Old Delhi and New Delhi. Heritage and hyper-modernity. Disorder and precision. The city's layered contradictions mirror the philosophical foundation of his brand. "You could step out of a highly polished modern space and within minutes find yourself in a setting that carries centuries of history," he says. That coexistence has made him more comfortable with ambiguity, faster in decision-making, and more willing to take calculated risks. Delhi, like entrepreneurship itself, rarely rewards hesitation.

WHY COMPLEXITY BECAME AN ADVANTAGE

Beneath the conceptual language and larger cultural observations lies a very operational understanding of business reality. One of the most interesting aspects of Shivaang's perspective is his rejection of startup orthodoxy. While the contemporary business ecosystem glorifies optimization, speed, and frictionless scaling, he argues that inefficiency can sometimes hold creative value. Working with handcraft is inherently unpredictable. It is slower. It resists standardization. It cannot always operate within the neat frameworks of industrial scalability. Instead of forcing efficiency onto craft, Past Modern chose to build around its natural complexity. That decision eventually became one of the company's biggest strengths. The brand faced numerous operational disruptions along the way, from supply chain interruptions to artisan shortages and production slowdowns. But rather than treating those moments as isolated failures, Shivaang approached them as signals revealing where the system needed reinforcement. A particularly defining moment arrived when demand for Past Modern's hand-beaded products surged unexpectedly.

The company was not initially structured for that level of scale. Yet instead of compromising on quality or reducing the integrity of the craft, the response was to expand the ecosystem itself. More artisans were brought into the fold. Relationships with craftspeople deepened. Processes became more collaborative rather than more industrialized. That shift fundamentally changed how the company approached growth. "We stopped thinking in terms of linear scaling," Shivaang explains, "and started thinking in terms of ecosystem building."

THE HUMAN COST BEHIND CRAFT PRESERVATION

Perhaps the most powerful part of Shivaang's vision emerges when he speaks about artisans. While conversations around craftsmanship are often romanticized within fashion circles, Shivaang approaches the issue with realism. He recognizes the economic fragility surrounding many traditional craft ecosystems in India. Artisans are leaving their professions because the work no longer guarantees stability for future generations. Skills refined over decades risk disappearing within a single generation if they cannot sustain modern aspirations. For Shivaang, this is not merely an industry issue. It is a cultural emergency.

One particular moment remains deeply personal to him. The khaka master working with Past Modern recently bought a small house for himself. For Shivaang, that achievement carried more emotional weight than conventional markers of business success. "It was a direct reflection of what we're trying to build," he says. That perspective reveals the larger ambition behind Past Modern. The company is not simply attempting to modernize Indian craft aesthetically. It is trying to make it economically viable again.

BUILDING CONTINUITY BEYOND COMMERCE

Looking ahead, Shivaang's ambitions extend beyond products entirely. He speaks about creating foundations, training systems, and educational structures that could help sustain craft communities for future generations. The long-term vision involves continuity rather than momentary relevance. He understands that machinery will always dominate scale. But machinery cannot replicate intention, irregularity, or the emotional texture of handcraft. "The beauty of handcraft lies in its imperfection," he reflects. "Its care, and its human touch." That belief sits at the center of everything Past Modern is attempting to become.

"We don't believe in nostalgia for the sake of it. We believe in engineering relevance. The past is our foundation, but modernity is our responsibility."

In many ways, Shivaang Chandna represents a new generation of Indian founders who are no longer interested in simply participating in global culture. They want to shape it. They want to author it. They want to reclaim ownership over narratives that have too often been outsourced, diluted, or externally interpreted. Past Modern may still be early in its journey, but its foundation already feels larger than fashion. It feels like a quiet cultural movement in the making.

THE WEIGHT OF BEARING WITNESS

Journalist NIDHI SURESH on archives, accountability, the politics of language, and why long-form reportage remains the most radical act in an age of noise.



There is a particular kind of courage that does not announce itself. It does not arrive draped in the vocabulary of heroism or the grammar of self-congratulation. It is quieter, more stubborn, more expensive — the courage of someone who chooses, again and again, to stay in the room when the room becomes unbearable. Nidhi Suresh is that kind of journalist.

Her work has appeared across The Newsminute and Newslaundry weaving between the velocity of international newsrooms and the depth-seeking demands of Indian long-form reportage. But what strikes anyone who reads her closely is not the breadth of the terrain she covers — crime, sexual violence, the slow machinery of justice — it is the quality of attention she brings to every word, every source, every moral implication of a sentence placed on a page.

We met Suresh to talk about all of it: the discipline of asking better questions, the loneliness of holding space for other people's grief, the political charge of language, and the one story that broke her open and rebuilt her simultaneously.

BEGINNING

The origin story is, by her own admission, unglamorous in the best way. "What first pulled me towards journalism is really the fact that I enjoyed telling a story and I enjoyed meeting new people," she says, with the directness of someone who has learned to distrust ornamental answers. "Even till date, I think this is at the very core of why I like doing what I do."

That simplicity is harder to sustain than it sounds. India in 2026 is not a comfortable country in which to practice independent journalism. The legal vulnerabilities are real, the financial precarity is chronic, and the physical risks that accompany certain beats are not abstract. Suresh does not romanticize this. She acknowledges the conditions plainly — that it does not feel safe, legally, financially, physically, or emotionally — and then continues anyway, because the alternative is a world in which those stories simply do not get told. Her particular niche has sharpened around crime and its social reverberations, especially sexual violence: private in its trauma, devastating in its public consequences. "It's trying to understand the layers and nuances of these kinds of crimes," she says, "that has really helped me stay in the profession."

"The value of the work and the power of the work lies in the documentation, in the language we use to write our stories. We may not see a change immediately. But the archival value of the storytelling will prove its worth."

CROSSING WORLDS

Working across both global and Indian newsrooms has given Suresh a particular clarity about the difference between explaining a country to outsiders and explaining it to itself. The two are not the same thing, and she has made her peace with which she prefers. International organizations, she observes, come with their own editorial gravitational pull — a pressure toward accessibility that can, in subtle and not-so-subtle ways, flatten the complexity of a story rooted in the granular realities of Kerala, or Uttar Pradesh, or any place whose textures resist easy translation.

"You have to simplify an experience for an international audience," she says, with more weariness than bitterness. "How much ever I write with a certain integrity or truth to where I come from, one has to negotiate a lot more with international organizations." It is a negotiation she undertook for years before arriving at her preference: Indian newsrooms, for all their resource constraints and institutional vulnerabilities, permit a different kind of depth. They allow her to write at the length and with the complexity that her stories demand, for the readers who carry the cultural knowledge to receive them fully. "To tell a story in all its multitudes and nuances," she says, "I needed to be able to tell the story to my own people."

QUESTIONS

In an era that rewards the rapid and the declarative, Suresh has built her practice around a more unfashionable discipline: reading. "I think we kind of forget how much of literature is out there, how much of history has been repeated already," she says. The act of reading deeply — not scrolling, not skimming, but genuinely dwelling in other minds and other centuries — is what keeps her questions from becoming reflexive. Being humbled by the breadth of human thought, she argues, is one of the best defenses against the trap of believing that a person is only their worst or most newsworthy moment.

The second discipline is curiosity about people as people, not merely as subjects. She reports primarily on crime, which means she arrives in a community during its most fractured hour. But she resists the reduction that journalism can sometimes perform on its own sources — the tendency to make someone a symbol of a category rather than a human being shaped by circumstance. "I see crimes and situations and violence as a sum of people's circumstances," she explains. "To be curious about those circumstances, to be curious about how a person was led to that one particular moment of extraordinary violence in their life — that is what keeps me asking deeper questions."

RESISTING THE ALGORITHM

Her response to the virality economy is not a lament but a philosophy. Long-form reportage — stories that run fifty, sixty pages and take months to report — is structurally incompatible with the attention economy's preferred unit of exchange. And yet she has found that it endures, that it accumulates a readership of a different kind. "Of course, as a journalist, I would love my work to reach as big an audience as possible," she concedes. "But it will be dangerous for me to operate from a place where virality is the reason for my work."

She has reoriented around a different value: the archive. Journalism as documentation. The discipline of laying down an honest account of a time and a place, trusting that this record will matter even when the news cycle has long moved on. "I believe in the importance and value of archiving a certain time in society," she says, and the conviction in the phrasing is not grandiose — it sounds more like something she has argued herself into slowly, against considerable pressure. The metric she has replaced virality with is engagement: long emails from readers, thoughtful criticism, genuine feedback. "I feel that holds a lot more value than reaching the eyes of a hundred people who might be passively scrolling.“ >>



ENDURANCE

Suresh does not present her survival strategies as wisdom. She presents them as systems — unglamorous, non-negotiable, built over years. Four years of therapy. A consistent exercise practice, because mental agility, she has found, is directly correlated with physical agility. A morning ritual of coffee and reading and note-taking, whether she is at home or in the field — a small architecture of selfhood that she rebuilds each day before the work consumes her. "They may all seem like very small things," she says. "But over time, it shows up, because the efficiency of your work is very much related to how you take care of yourself."

There is also, she acknowledges, a kind of discernment she has had to develop: the knowledge of when to walk out of a room, out of a situation, out of her own emotional entanglement with a story, before it becomes something she cannot set down. This is not detachment. It is the opposite — it is what makes sustained, caring attention possible across a career.

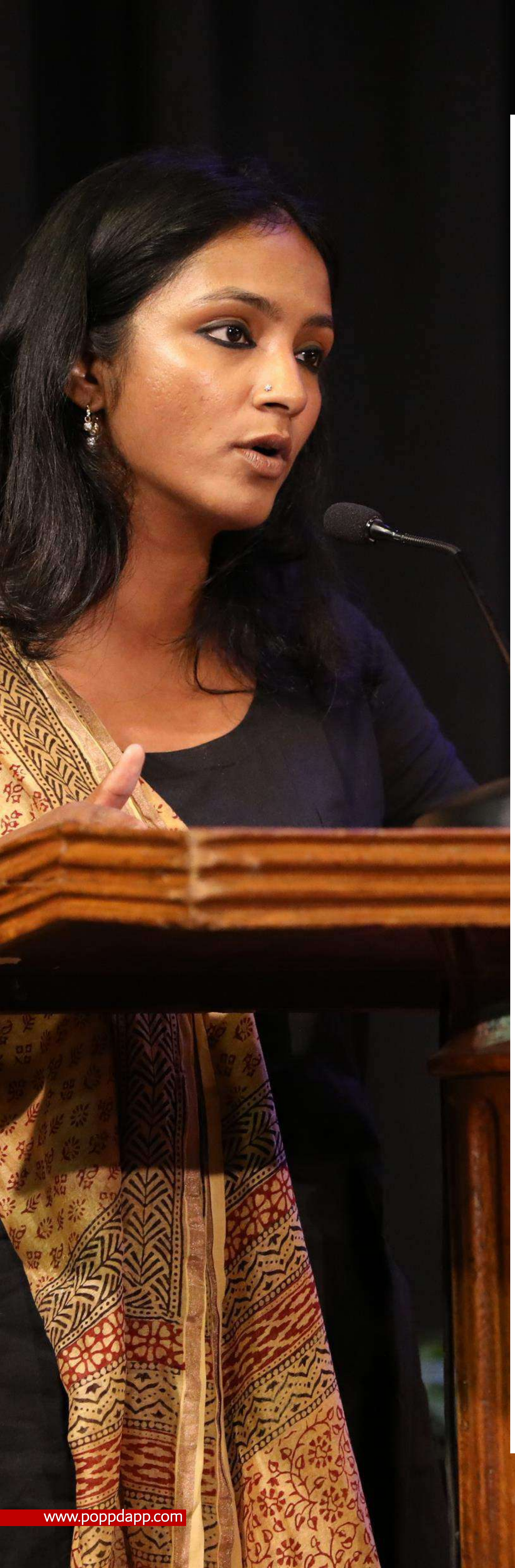
LANGUAGE AND POWER

Much of Suresh's reporting is conducted in Malayalam and written in English — a translation that is never merely linguistic. It is political. The readers who speak only English will, in many cases, not be the people being written about. The people being written about may never encounter the English-language record of their own lives. This is not an abstract concern for her; it is a structural problem she carries into every assignment, seeking translations, reading aloud to sources, doing what she can to close the distance that language opens between a story and the people it is drawn from.

On the question of political power — the opacity of the current government, the thinning of press access — she is neither resigned nor naive. She has accepted that journalism in this climate may not bring governments down or change policy in visible ways. What it can do is contest the monopoly on narrative. "The archival value of the storytelling will hold," she says, "to be able to look back and say that this also happened, to lay different narratives alongside each other, and know that history wasn't shaped by just one particular line of reporting."

THE READER

She thinks about the person being written about most carefully of all. In cases of sexual violence, this means holding an acute awareness that the survivor is still alive, still part of a community, still carrying the weight of what happened — and that a journalist's sentence, carelessly written, can add to that weight. "I am tempted to write the extent of the brutality because I feel it's important for people to know," she admits. "But in that process, to not lose sight of the fact that the person I'm writing about may not want the extent of that violence to be written." This thoughtfulness extends even to the accused. "At the end of the day, everybody has a family, everybody has to continue living in society." >>



LITERATURE

Books Between Us, the reading project run by Suresh & Sonia Sabnis, is an extension of a belief that literature is not supplementary to the work of journalism — it is foundational to it. "Everything that we experience has been experienced by someone else in some capacity," she says. "The beauty of that is that someone else has described it, and there is a way to relate to the world and to not feel as lonely." In a media landscape where the dominant mode is the platform voice — authoritative, directive, telling you what to think — she sees books as one of the last spaces of genuine imaginative freedom: "a certain ethical freedom to really find a sense of your own morality and your own emotional landscape."

STORY THAT CHANGED HER

She has reported many difficult stories, but one haunts her in a different register. For a year, she engaged with the man who had raped an actress in the South Indian film industry — a case that ignited what became Kerala's own iteration of the MeToo movement, years before it reached the global stage. The central accused was a prominent film industry figure. The perpetrator she interviewed was someone else: complicit, convicted, and willing to talk.

The challenge was not information. It was self-knowledge under pressure. "As an interviewer, when I meet him, I'm not just meeting a criminal, but a person," she says. "To keep that in mind — that was the challenge." More specifically: how to remain honest about her own disgust and disapproval during the interview without surrendering the trust required to let the conversation continue. How to work from a place of moral clarity without letting it become moral performance. "I have to make sure my language wasn't revealing any complacency or complicity," she says. "That's where I really had to pay attention." She speaks carefully about the anxiety that came with the assignment — and about why she now understands it not as a problem to be solved but as a productive condition. "To produce work from a certain amount of tension has been important. This story pushed it to the limits." There is something in this formulation that resists the contemporary cult of the frictionless workspace. Some work, she seems to be saying, carries its difficulty in its DNA. The discomfort is not incidental. It is where the truth lives.

FUTURE OF JOURNALISM

To imagine the future of journalism with Nidhi Suresh is to arrive somewhere neither utopian nor defeated. She would preserve rigor and the archive — the stubborn, unglamorous discipline of recording what actually happened. She would abolish the conditions that force journalists to choose between their conscience and their security. And she would reinvent the relationship between a story and its source community, closing the linguistic and economic gaps that too often mean the people most affected by journalism are the ones least able to read it.

What she embodies, in her person and in her practice, is something the industry rarely talks about because it cannot be quantified: the decision to remain trustworthy in an untrustworthy time. To write with accuracy not just about the world, but about oneself within it. To understand that every sentence carries the possibility of harm or of justice — and to take that weight seriously, every single time.



THE SIGNAL IN THE NOISE

Wall Street Journal national politics reporter SABRINA SIDDIQUI on credibility, courage, and the relentless pursuit of truth in an age of fractured information!

There is a particular kind of clarity that arrives only after years of standing in rooms where the powerful speak in careful half-truths, where the gap between what is said and what is meant stretches wide enough to swallow entire news cycles. Sabrina Siddiqui has spent more than a decade developing precisely that clarity — an instinct for the signal beneath the noise, the consequence hiding inside the press release, the human story embedded in the policy brief. As a national politics reporter at The Wall Street Journal, she has covered three U.S. presidencies, navigated the fractures of a deeply polarized democracy, and brought to the briefing room a perspective that is, by any measure, overdue.

GETTING IT RIGHT BEFORE GETTING IT FIRST

In a media environment defined by the relentless pressure to publish before a story has been confirmed, Siddiqui operates by a principle that sounds almost radical in its simplicity: accuracy precedes speed. "I want to be the first one to break news whenever possible," she says, "but all that hard work can easily be undermined if a story is inaccurate." It is the kind of statement that sounds obvious until you watch how rarely it is honored.

This is especially true on the politics beat, where sources carry their own agendas and narratives are shaped before they reach the newsroom floor. The discipline she describes — rigorous sourcing, multi-channel verification, transparent acknowledgment of what remains unknown — is less a professional technique than a moral stance. It is the difference between journalism that serves the reader and journalism that merely reacts to the moment. Our mandate as reporters, she explains, is to confirm information through as many channels as possible and to be clear with readers about what is still not known. Speed matters, she is quick to acknowledge, but it does not outweigh credibility and trust.

REPORTING ACROSS THE DIVIDE

Trust in media, Siddiqui acknowledges, has eroded in ways that are now deeply entangled with political identity itself. The role of the press has become contested terrain, a culture-war battleground as much as a professional vocation. Yet she resists the temptation to let that external pressure alter the foundational purpose of the work. The core responsibility of journalism has not changed, she says plainly: to report fairly, rigorously, and independently, regardless of who is in power.

Her ability to hold that line comes in part from direct, sustained contact with the country she covers. The most valuable reporting usually comes from spending time on the ground, she explains, close to real people and real consequences, at a deliberate distance from the abstract political theater of Washington. She has seen how exhausted many Americans feel, battered by the pace and tone of contemporary political life, and yet how hungry they remain for information they can trust. Meeting that hunger requires discipline: sticking with facts, explaining the machinery of decision-making, making clear not just what happened but how it touches ordinary lives.



THE ONLY ONE IN THE ROOM

There is a passage in Siddiqui's account of her own career that lands with particular force. She describes growing up watching the news in her family's home and seeing no one who looked like her or whose name resembled hers. That absence, quiet and pervasive and assumed as natural, is the kind of structural invisibility that shapes both who gets to tell stories and which stories get told at all. For Siddiqui, entering journalism was in part a response to that gap. Her South Asian heritage, her Muslim background, her name — these are not incidental details but the foundation of a perspective that has proven, time and again, to alter what questions enter a room and which voices are sought out for answers.

She is careful to distinguish between lived experience as a lens and bias as a distortion. The distinction matters. She does not believe that acknowledging her background is at odds with being unbiased and fair. If anything, she sees it as an asset. She has sat in the White House briefing room as one of the only South Asian or Muslim reporters present. Sometimes the only one. In those moments she has come to understand something essential about the relationship between who occupies space and what gets surfaced. The questions that get asked in those rooms, and the follow-ups that never come, are shaped by the assumptions of the people asking them. Her presence disrupts those assumptions in ways that ultimately serve the reader. There is power in being in that room, she reflects — not because it is some box to check, but because it can change the tenor of the questions being asked, and sometimes whether they get asked at all.

WHEN GAS PRICES TELL A FOREIGN POLICY STORY

Covering three presidencies has given Siddiqui a long view of a question that grows more urgent with each passing year: where does domestic policy end and foreign policy begin? The honest answer, she suggests, is that they rarely have a clean boundary. Decisions that originate in domestic political calculation send shockwaves through global markets. Voters who believe they are casting ballots on kitchen-table issues suddenly find themselves affected by wars, tariffs, and supply chain disruptions that loop back to decisions made in capitals far from their own.

Voters might not fully appreciate why global geopolitics impacts them, she observes, until they see their gas prices rise because of a war or their supply chains disrupted by overseas tariffs. Making those connections legible — tracing the line from an Oval Office conversation to a grocery receipt — is among the most important and undervalued services political journalism can provide. Her experience watching presidents simultaneously navigate public opinion, congressional pressure, economic anxiety, and international relationships has given her a sophisticated map of those competing forces. Her goal is to share that map with readers. >>



WHEN TRUTH ARRIVED THROUGH A SCREEN

Asked to identify a moment that fundamentally shifted her understanding of power and truth, Siddiqui points to the Biden administration's handling of the war in Gaza. It stands as a case study in the limits of narrative control in the age of ubiquitous visual documentation. Governments have always sought to manage the stories told about their wars. What changed was the information environment. People could see what was happening with their own eyes, through videos and images on social media that were picked up by news outlets. That visual evidence — unmediated, immediate, impossible to quarantine — drove a generation of journalists to challenge official accounts in ways they might not have otherwise. The ripple effects, she notes, continue to fracture the Democratic coalition to this day.

It is a portrait of journalism doing exactly what it should: using access, verification, and persistence to hold power accountable, while acknowledging that some of the most important accountability now arrives not through reporters alone but through the raw, distributed testimony of people living through history in real time.

PACKAGING WITHOUT STRIPPING

Siddiqui has watched the media landscape transform across the decade-plus she has been working the politics beat. When she started, Twitter was still finding its shape as a news distribution platform. Instagram Reels did not exist. Newsrooms treated social media with justified caution, wary of the distortions that come with compression and de-contextualization. Now those same newsrooms are racing to meet audiences where they already live — in fragments, in swipes, in short video loops. The challenge is not to abandon depth but to create entry points. A well-crafted reel or social post is not the story; it is an invitation to the story. Thinking visually, incorporating graphics that can stand alone, finding ways to make complexity navigable without making it false — these are the practical skills the moment demands.

Her wariness about what gets lost in translation is nonetheless palpable. Nuance is always the first casualty when attention spans compress. Her answer is not to refuse the new formats but to inhabit them with the same rigor she brings to a long-form Journal feature — to find, even in condensed form, a way to preserve the context without which readers understand the headline but miss the meaning entirely.

THE DECADE AHEAD

Political journalism is entering a period of structural disruption that makes the previous decade look almost stable. Artificial intelligence is accelerating both the production of information and the proliferation of misinformation, creating an environment in which readers must work harder to distinguish the authentic from the fabricated, the reported from the generated. The formats of journalism have already been reinvented once in this generation and are likely to be reinvented again in ways that are difficult to anticipate.

What Siddiqui holds onto, across all of this, is the stubborn persistence of a single need: trustworthy reporting. Not merely fast reporting. Not entertaining reporting. Not algorithmically optimized reporting. Reporting that is, at its core, deeply sourced, independently verified, and genuinely in service of the people who read it. The more the volume of information grows, she says, the greater the need for reporting that is deeply sourced and trustworthy. That is less a prediction than a conviction — the kind that carries a person through a decade of press briefings, election nights, global crises, and the accumulated weight of watching the world in real time. The challenge she sees most clearly ahead is not technological but human: how journalists and the institutions they work within sustain the trust of audiences who have every reason to be skeptical, and who deserve, nevertheless, every reason to believe. Sabrina Siddiqui is still building that case, one verified fact at a time.



ROOTED IN THE REAL

A particular kind of exhaustion has begun to define modern life — one no supplement can cure and no wellness retreat can fully articulate. It arrives quietly, somewhere between endless productivity hacks and the season's latest self-optimization craze, carrying a question that lingers beneath the surface of it all: is this really all there is? It is out of this very silence — and the willingness to sit with it honestly — that **VITAL ROOTS** was born. Founded not as a brand in the conventional sense but as a philosophy made tangible, Vital Roots occupies a space that the wellness industry frequently talks about but rarely inhabits: the intersection of ancient wisdom and modern living, navigated with discernment rather than dogma. The platform curates retreats, workshops, and shared experiences that ask participants not to transform themselves, but to remember who they already are.

"Authenticity is honestly one of the biggest challenges in the wellness space today," says the founder. "Every time we curate something, we go back to the drawing board and ask ourselves — who are we creating this for, what is the intention, is this genuinely going to benefit our community, or are we doing it simply because it's trending?" In an industry built on aspiration and urgency, that pause is radical. >>

WHEN SCIENCE MEETS THE SACRED

The conversation around wellness has long been framed as a binary — ancient or evidence-based, intuitive or clinical. Vital Roots refuses that false choice. Its philosophy rests instead on the recognition that many ancestral practices are not alternatives to modern science; they are its older siblings. Ayurveda's emphasis on living in rhythm with nature, for example, finds its contemporary mirror in circadian science. The mapping of the chakra system carries unexpected resonance with emerging research on the vagus nerve. These are not coincidences to be exploited for marketing copy; they are invitations to slow down and appreciate the intelligence embedded in knowledge systems that predate our current vocabulary for them.

This understanding deepened significantly for the founder through study at Navdanya Earth University under Dr. Vandana Shiva, where food systems, ecology, and traditional knowledge converged into a single, deeply interconnected conversation. "My perspective shifted significantly," she reflects. "I came to appreciate how deeply our traditional knowledge systems were woven with ecology, food, lifestyle, and wellbeing — and how much science already existed within them, even if it wasn't always framed in modern language." Credibility at Vital Roots is not a certificate on a wall. It is earned through direct experience — facilitators are personally engaged with before collaboration, their work witnessed firsthand, their communities consulted. A long conversation, the founder notes, tells you far more than a polished Instagram page ever can.

COMMUNITY AS THE PRACTICE

Something quietly profound happens in the spaces Vital Roots creates. People arrive looking for wellness practices and discover something they did not know to name: the need for belonging, for rooms where performance is unnecessary and honesty is welcome.

"People today are deeply connected digitally but at times emotionally disconnected in real life," the founder observes. What she has found, across retreats and workshops and the intimate architecture of shared experience, is that community does not form in the space between organiser and participant. It crystallises between the participants themselves — in the laughter that outlasts the itinerary, the phone numbers exchanged on the last morning, the relationships that arrive uninvited and stay long after checkout.

The most defining moments for the Vital Roots founder have not been programmatic milestones. They have been the retreats where participants could not bring themselves to leave. The messages that arrived weeks later. The person who said, simply, "If you're curating this, I trust it enough to come again." That trust, she says, means everything — and it is not manufactured. It is grown, slowly, through consistency of intention.

"At Vital Roots, credibility comes through intentional curation."

THE RETURN THAT REQUIRES NO ESCAPE

There is a widespread misconception about what it means to return to one's roots. Popular imagination locates that return somewhere remote — off-grid, screen-free, radically simplified. Vital Roots proposes something both more modest and more demanding: conscious balance, practiced inside ordinary life. The return begins with small recalibrations. Seasonal food. Listening to the body rather than overriding it. Time spent outdoors without agenda. Intentional consumption. A ritual that takes five minutes and anchors the day. A single honest conversation that quietly rearranges something inside you for weeks.

"Wellness is far more fluid than we've been told," the founder reflects. "I used to think it meant yoga, meditation or organic food. Now I think it can just as easily mean laughter, music, rest, friendship, movement, or community. Anything that genuinely helps someone feel more connected to themselves and to life around them — that's wellness too." The return, understood this way, is not a destination with a fixed address. It is a series of small, conscious choices made inside the texture of the everyday. That is precisely what makes it possible.

SUSTAINABILITY AS A WAY OF LIVING

Vital Roots does not wear sustainability as a badge. It embeds it as a practice — in the food that shapes retreat experiences before any other element does, in the goodie bags curated with Postscript for the Nirvaara Leadership retreat, where fewer items each carried a story, and one piece was fashioned from reclaimed wood sourced within Karnataka. Less volume, more meaning. "Sustainability becomes meaningful only when it moves beyond branding and becomes a lifestyle decision," the founder says. In her own life, that philosophy is unglamorous and entirely real: eating the way her ancestors did, sourcing locally, supporting nearby farmers, building consumption around what grows naturally in her surroundings rather than around what is fashionable.

The longer arc is more ambitious — culturally immersive retreats, farming experiences, community marketplaces that sustain authentic knowledge holders and small producers. "We're still early in this," she acknowledges with the kind of candour that has become Vital Roots' signature. "There is a lot more we want to build." That honesty about incompleteness is, in its own way, a form of integrity. >>

A COLLECTIVE TURN

The shift underway in wellness — from individual optimisation toward collective wellbeing — is one that Vital Roots understands as both cultural and urgent. "You can meditate every morning," the founder says, "but if your relationships, communities, food systems or environment are disconnected, that imbalance eventually catches up with you." India holds an extraordinary inheritance here. Its ancestral frameworks of collective living, seasonal ritual, community, and ecological interconnectedness offer living models for what integrated wellbeing actually looks like. What is beautiful about this moment is that younger generations are approaching these roots with genuine curiosity — not nostalgia, but relevance.

Globally, the conversation is converging. There is growing recognition of the depth that India holds in food, plant medicine, movement, and ways of living that sustain rather than deplete. The European tradition of slowness — longer meals, protected rest, time as a value rather than a resource — is seeping into how people across cultures are beginning to reimagine what a good life means. Vital Roots aspires to be a bridge in that broader becoming: between ancient and modern, urban and rural, those who hold wisdom and those who are seeking it.

THE FUTURE, HONESTLY

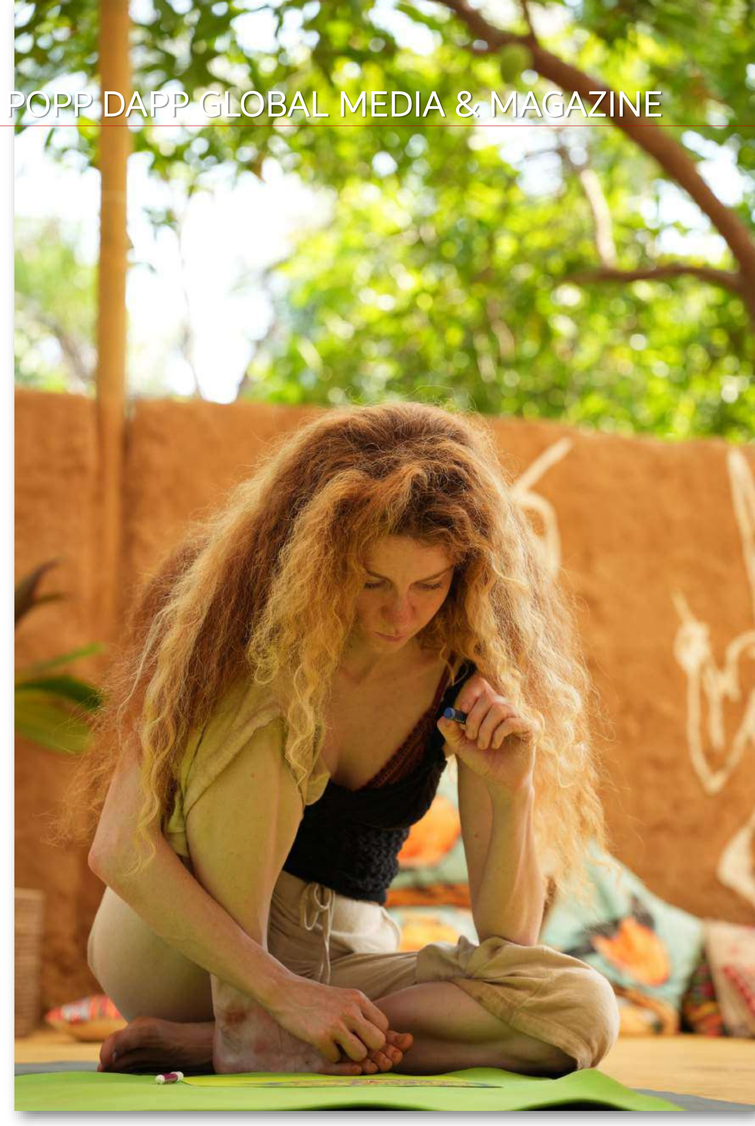
The founder of Vital Roots does not speak about the wellness industry's future without also speaking about its risks. The next decade will see wellness integrated into everyday decision-making at a scale not seen before — and that is largely a positive development. But alongside that integration come patterns worth naming honestly. The first is wellness as escape rather than integration: experiences that open people emotionally without the safeguarding presence of facilitators who know how to hold that space. "Healing is not a deliverable," she says plainly. "You cannot promise it on a brochure, and the industry needs to reckon with that." The second risk is the stripping of ancestral wisdom from its context — traditions reduced to trends, sold without ethics or lineage.

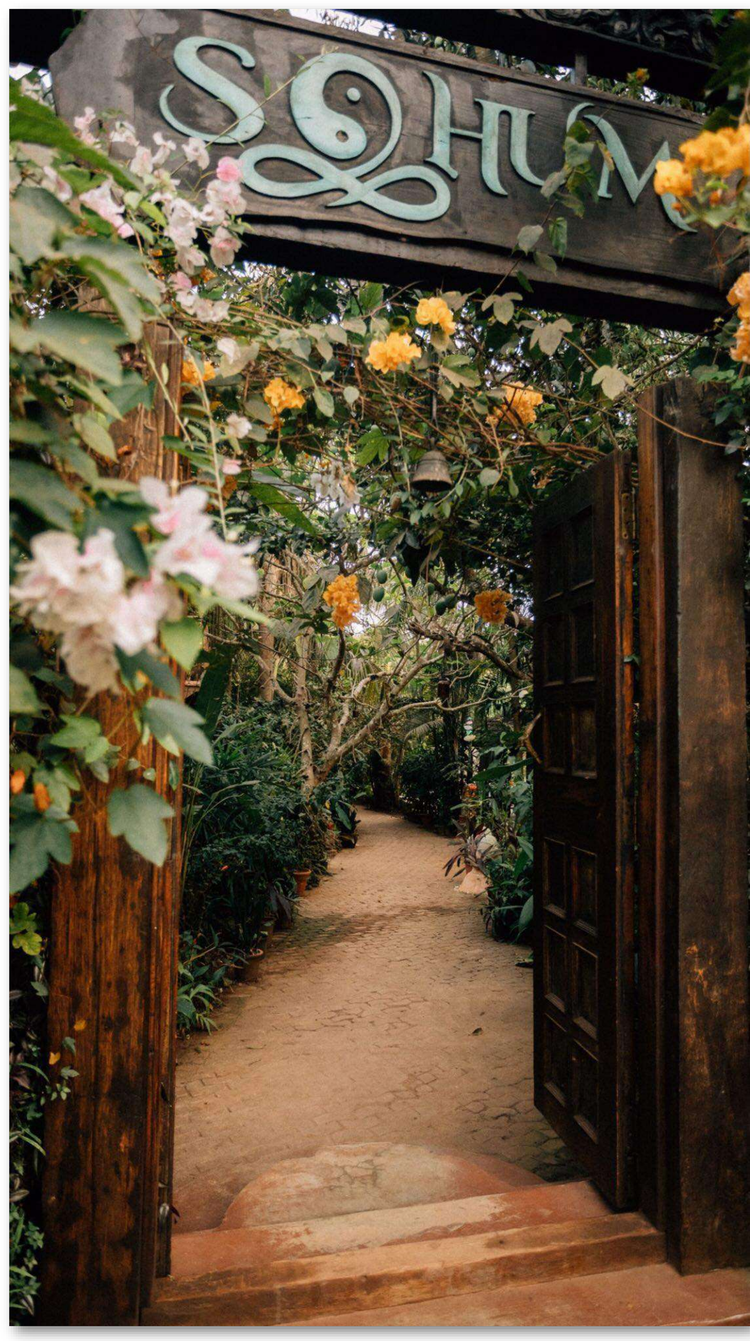
What holds her hope steady is the generation now arriving. GenZ, she observes, is choosing themselves in ways previous generations were not permitted to. They are talking about mental health openly, protecting their time, gravitating toward nature and community, and beginning to ask whether the relentless optimisation of the future is actually making anyone happier. In that questioning, she recognises something essential.

THE SIMPLEST TRUTH

The most transformative insight the founder carries — the one that shaped Vital Roots at its foundation and continues to inform every decision made within it — arrived, as the truest things often do, in the form of a simplification rather than a discovery. Wellness is not complicated. At its core, it is connection. With yourself. With nature. With the people around you. With the food you eat and the world you are already part of. Most of what feels like suffering, she has come to believe, originates in some form of disconnection from one of these things.

She speaks of permaculture — the design philosophy that good systems create benefit for everyone within them, not just for a single part — as a guiding framework. It is an elegant way of describing what Vital Roots ultimately is: an ecosystem designed so that every element supports every other, where the goal is not profit extracted from wellness but nourishment that flows through it. "If Vital Roots can play even a small role in helping someone feel more connected to themselves, to others, to the life already around them," she says, "that feels like enough." In a world that rarely believes anything is enough, that sentence lands like a quiet revolution.









grace of becoming

WALUSCHA DE SOUSA

on performance, meaning, and the art of living deliberately!

There is a kind of fearlessness that comes not from the absence of vulnerability, but from a lifelong understanding of discipline. **WALUSCHA DE SOUSA** carries this quietly. In a career that has demanded she inhabit multiple identities—the model on the ramp, the actor before the camera, the sports presenter in the arena of live television—she has remained steadfastly rooted in something far more grounded than the glamour surrounding her. That rootedness is, perhaps, her most defining performance of all.

When we speak with her about what performance means in her life today, we encounter not the polished rhetoric of someone trained to speak to cameras, but a philosophy forged in the discipline of a sporting family. Performance, for Waluscha, is not about perfection or the curation of an image. It is about presence, about the relentless act of competing with oneself. Born into a family where excellence was a language spoken daily, where fathers and grandfathers and aunts played for state and country, she absorbed early the lessons that would define her: how to achieve excellence, how to accept failure without fracturing, how to bring your whole self to the moment in front of you. And crucially, how to move forward. >>

"I think personal performance is really you competing with yourself at every stage and every level of life," she reflects, "and a constant need to improve and better yourself." This is not the language of ambition in its conventional sense. This is the language of someone who has learned that true mastery is intimate, personal, and relentless. Each day is another opportunity to be better than you were yesterday. And if you fail, tomorrow is another day to try again.

THE EVOLUTION OF MANY SELVES

This philosophy becomes especially poignant when we consider the multiple faces of her career. When does reinvention become simply the natural progression of evolution? Waluscha resists the idea that any single phase defined her more than another. On the ramp, she found the electrifying energy of movement and presence; before the camera, she discovered the profound liberation of exploring emotions entirely removed from her own self; and in sports presenting, she found a space where passion and background converged into something deeply satisfying. Each realm offered its own kind of mastery, its own set of skills to perfect.

The energy of the ramp was pulsating and unlike anything else. The camera as an actor offered the freedom to explore emotions and bring different characters to life. And sports presenting became a completely different ball game altogether—one rooted in presence and in the unfolding moment of sport itself. To understand the mentality, the discipline, and the requirement of athletes across every arena, from tennis to cricket to paddle, has become deeply inspiring. But to say that one phase defines her more than another would be incorrect. She simply enjoys every phase of her life with equal intensity.

THE PARADOX OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

But what strikes most acutely is her honesty about the difference between being on camera and being before the media. For someone who lives so publicly, she harbors an almost contradictory private nature. In front of the camera as an actor or sports presenter, she finds freedom and joy. Before the media glare off-camera, she freezes. She becomes uncomfortable. There is an irony she does not shy away from: she is most confident when she is playing a role or in the moment of live broadcast, and most awkward when expected to simply be herself for public consumption.

This is not a contradiction in her character; it is an honest reckoning with what it means to perform versus what it means to exist.

The media glare, she admits, takes every ounce of her energy. It is taxing in every way. Unlike being in front of the camera as an actor or sports presenter, where she finds freedom and joy, this space is the opposite. It is almost like a job that needs to be delivered. So she does what feels natural: she avoids it. She moves on with her life and keeps it private. This is not evasiveness. This is clarity about the boundaries between her work and her self. >>



REDEFINING SUCCESS

This distinction becomes clearer when we understand what grounds her. Home is not a luxury or an afterthought in her life. Home is the centre. The life she has built, deliberately and with intention, revolves around her three children, now young adults, and the friendship she shares with each of them. As a single mother, she has constructed something quietly revolutionary: a life where the most significant performance of all is simply being present for the people who matter. Success, she tells us, means being a mother. It means providing for family. It means finding success in the smallest things.

"I think personal performance is really you competing with yourself at every stage and every level of life..”

This reframing of success is quietly radical in an industry that measures achievement in box office numbers, television ratings, and social media followings. For Waluscha, success is internal. It is relational. It is the daily work of showing up for the people you love and building an ecosystem where you can be at peace. The byproducts—the accolades, the visibility, the opportunities—are secondary. They are not the point. The point is meaning. She has always chased meaning in everything that she does. Success is a byproduct, and it means different things to different people. For her, it is the wholesome, beautiful, simple life she has built with her children at its epicentre.

AUTHENTICITY IN THE AGE OF CURATION

And what of authenticity in an age of curation? The answer is almost disarmingly simple: she stays away from the need to display or broadcast a life constructed for public consumption. She maintains a life under the radar. She refuses to confuse the performance that is her work with the performance that social media demands. This is not the answer of someone struggling to maintain authenticity. It is the answer of someone who made a choice long ago and has stayed the course.

Staying true and authentic to herself, maintaining a life under the radar, is in keeping with who she is and who she has always been. She understands that in a time of curated perfection, the simplest path to authenticity is to stay away from the compulsion to display. There is profound freedom in this choice.

POWER BEYOND THE WARDROBE

This simplicity extends to her fashion sensibility. Bold, minimal, striking—these adjectives describe her approach, but they mask a deeper principle. Fashion is an extension of personality. Her approach has always been clean cuts, simple silhouettes, muted tones. She feels most herself in this space. But when asked what power dressing means to her, she answers with characteristic insight: it has nothing to do with style. Power dressing is about the knowledge and wisdom you carry, and the way you present that to the world. The clothes are almost incidental. The substance is everything.

THE UNGUARDED SPACE

Her entry into sports presenting, a space historically dominated by men, required not a different skill set but the same set she has always possessed: passion, love for the work, a willingness to constantly challenge herself, and the humility to be a learner for life. Confidence, she observes, when backed by genuine love and passion, is a winner. This is not confidence born of arrogance or of position. It is the earned confidence of someone who has done the work, who understands the sport deeply, and who respects the moment unfolding in front of her.

Yet sports presenting is where she feels most vulnerable—and simultaneously most seen and most heard. There is no character to hide behind, no script to lean on. There is only her, present, speaking truth about a moment as it unfolds. This vulnerability is also where she finds her greatest strength. It is the same vulnerability that acting offers her liberation in its opposite form: the freedom to be someone entirely other than herself, to explore emotions and dimensions of human experience that would otherwise remain unexplored. Both come with their complete separate skills and requirements, but both offer her something irreplaceable

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DOROTHY'S JOURNEY

The woman who would choose Dorothy from The Wizard of Oz as a character representing her inner world is making a statement about her philosophy of life. Dorothy faces an adventure, takes life head-on, finds beauty in everything—even in the tin man and the scarecrow—and tells a story of belief, magic, and dreams that take flight. The story Waluscha wants to tell, and in many ways already is telling through her life and work, is exactly that: a story of belief. Not in Hollywood endings or industry standards, but in the power of showing up fully, in remaining true to what matters, and in the quiet magic that comes from living deliberately.

When the cameras switch off and the applause fades, Waluscha De Sousa returns to the life she has built with intention and care. She is not chasing success in its conventional sense. She is chasing meaning. And in an industry that often confuses the two, that distinction is everything. She moves through the world with the discipline of an athlete, the artistry of a performer, and the wisdom of someone who has learned that the greatest performance of all is simply living authentically, loving completely, and remaining present for the people and moments that truly matter.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF POISE



An Exclusive Conversation with ANMOL GOEL, Founder of Louis Stitch

In an age of infinite choice and manufactured urgency, clarity has become the rarest luxury. This is precisely what Anmol Goel, founder and CEO of Louis Stitch, has built his brand upon — not the noise of trends, but the signal of intentionality. The modern professional, he argues, should never have to choose between looking sharp and feeling comfortable. That singular observation became the genesis of Louis Stitch, a footwear brand that has quietly redefined what it means to dress for ambition in the contemporary world. We sat down to understand the philosophy, the craft, and the careful architecture of purpose that defines this emerging global brand. >>

THE SOUL OF A BRAND: WHERE CLARITY MEETS CONFIDENCE

The founding insight behind Louis Stitch emerged not from a design studio, but from a gap in lived reality. "In the early days, I kept seeing one clear problem," Goel reflects. "Men were choosing between looking sharp and feeling comfortable. Rarely both." Professionals today exist in perpetual motion — meetings stack into travel, travel bleeds into long hours, and footwear, that most practical of accessories, had simply failed to evolve with their lifestyle.

The defining moment came when Goel recognised something deeper. "We're not just selling shoes, we're shaping how a person shows up in their day," he explains. This realisation shifted everything. Louis Stitch became less about footwear and more about presence, confidence, and identity. "When you feel right, you perform differently," he says, articulating what became the brand's foundational philosophy: Bold. Brave. Beyond. These are not marketing slogans imposed from above. They represent a mindset embedded into every design decision, every material choice, every campaign. The brand's DNA speaks directly to the modern working professional — someone who respects the rules but isn't afraid to redefine them. As Goel puts it, "From product to communication, everything reflects that duality: precision with personality, discipline with disruption." What gives this philosophy global resonance is its universality. Ambition, confidence, and self-expression transcend borders. The core remains unchanged across markets precisely because it speaks to a timeless human desire.

THE DELICATE ART OF HONORING TRADITION WHILE PIONEERING TOMORROW

Many brands claim to balance heritage and innovation. Few achieve it with the nuance that Louis Stitch demonstrates. The tension that other designers struggle with, Goel reframes entirely. "For me, it's not a tension — it's a necessary balance," he says, distinguishing between those who weaponise heritage as marketing and those who genuinely evolve it. Craftsmanship forms the foundation. The materials, the detailing, the finishing — these are where credibility originates. But contemporary consumers don't inhabit the past. They move through today's world, and design and comfort must reflect that reality. "We don't treat heritage as something to preserve; we treat it as something to evolve," Goel explains. Innovation enters through StepQ™ technology, lighter builds, and all-day comfort engineering that makes the shoes practical for the professional who travels between continents and between meetings with equal frequency.

The philosophical approach is elegant in its simplicity: "The outside respects tradition, the inside delivers the future." Classic silhouettes carry contemporary proportions. Traditional finishing techniques pair with sharper, more modern aesthetics. The consumer Louis Stitch addresses values legacy but refuses to look dated — and the design methodology responds precisely to that psychology. Every product becomes a balance of both: timeless in appeal, thoroughly relevant in experience.

AUTHENTICITY AS A DISCIPLINE: FINDING VOICE IN A CROWDED CONVERSATION

In fashion, authenticity is perhaps the most overused and least understood concept. Brands drape themselves in the language of authenticity while pursuing the logic of algorithm. Goel approaches it differently, starting with what he calls clarity. "We don't try to speak to everyone; we speak to a very defined mindset," he insists. That selectivity — choosing who you are not — paradoxically becomes the foundation of genuinely reaching those you are designed for. The guiding editorial voice is built around the same triad: Bold. Brave. Beyond. It functions as an internal filter. If something doesn't feel bold, doesn't challenge, doesn't move forward, it doesn't get communicated. Trends emerge and disappear with seasonal regularity, but Louis Stitch focuses on behaviours and aspirations that prove more durable. "The tone is always confident, composed, and slightly disruptive — never loud for the sake of it," Goel describes the brand voice.

What distinguishes this approach is the editorial discipline behind it. Every campaign, every line, every visual passes through the same lens: does it reflect the person we design for? There is no waste, no clutter, no over-explanation. This consistency is what allows relevance to scale globally. "Trends fade, but clarity of voice scales globally," he notes. Staying relevant means not reacting to market whims but remaining steadfast to a clearly articulated core.

LOUIS STITCH
nest Quality | Heartcrafted Perfection

THE MUSES THAT SHAPE INTENTION: FROM ALI TO HENDRIX

Every creator draws from somewhere. Goel's inspiration moves across disciplines with the fluidity of someone who understands that great ideas rarely stay confined within their original fields. He doesn't point to a single muse but rather a collection of personalities and mindsets that have shaped the aesthetic and philosophy. Muhammad Ali represents one pole — "unapologetically bold, but deeply self-assured." In cinema, Goel is drawn to characters of sharp self-control: Michael Corleone in The Godfather, Daniel Craig's James Bond. These figures possess minimal expression but extreme presence, power exercised through restraint rather than volume. Italian design philosophy — where precision, proportion, and restraint create something timeless — has fundamentally shaped the product approach. >>

Music provides another layer of inspiration. Miles Davis embodies restraint and control; Jimi Hendrix channels bold expression. "That contrast is something we relate to as a brand," Goel observes. In sports, Michael Jordan's obsessive excellence and drive to push beyond limits resonate. But perhaps most importantly, Goel studies modern culture closely — observing how today's professionals blend structure with individuality, how they navigate between following rules and rewriting them.



The common thread across all these influences is intentionality. Nothing feels forced; everything feels considered. "If I had to define our muse, it's really the modern individual who understands presence — someone who knows when to follow the rules, and when to rewrite them," he concludes. That's the energy channelled into Louis Stitch: inspired by people who carry themselves differently, not by trends.

RESPONSIBILITY AS ARCHITECTURE: BUILDING SUSTAINABILITY INTO THE FOUNDATION

Sustainability in luxury has transcended optional status. Goel approaches it not as a statement to be made but as a responsibility inherent in building something designed to endure. The framework operates across three layers: design, sourcing, and lifecycle. At the design level, the philosophy prioritises longevity over disposability. True luxury, in Goel's understanding, isn't about excess but about endurance and relevance across time. A shoe designed to last a decade carries more authentic luxury than one engineered to trend. In sourcing, Louis Stitch consciously moves toward better materials and processes — responsible leather, improved adhesives, reduced waste. The EarthQ™ framework provides structural approach, incorporating biodegradable elements and eco-conscious packaging systems.

Operationally, the brand manages excess and discarded inventory with ethical intent, ensuring smarter production planning. Yet beyond product sits mindset. "Creating a culture where responsibility is built into every decision, not added later," matters as much as the technical innovations. Goel doesn't claim to have solved sustainability entirely. Rather, he emphasises committed continuous progress, executed with honesty and intent. "In the future of luxury, how you build matters as much as what you build."

THE CREATIVE RITUAL: HOW CLARITY EMERGES FROM OBSERVATION

Breakthrough ideas, Goel suggests, rarely emerge from the expected places. Creativity doesn't start at a desk; it starts with observation. He spends considerable time simply noticing — how people move, how they carry themselves, particularly in real, everyday situations. Most ideas originate from patterns rather than flashes of inspiration, something observed repeatedly until it crystallises into understanding.

Stepping away proves essential to thinking clearly. Some of his best insights emerge during travel or in quiet, uninterrupted time. There's a distinct process: absorb, disconnect, simplify. Once an idea forms, it gets stripped to its essence. "If it's not clear in one line, it's not ready," he insists. Music plays a functional role in perspective-shifting — sometimes the structured minimalism of Miles Davis, sometimes the raw energy of Jimi Hendrix. What finally emerges isn't merely a product but a point of view translated into design. The creative ritual, then, isn't about awaiting inspiration but about staying aware enough to recognise it when it arrives.

THE GLOBAL CONVERSATION: REDEFINING PROFESSIONAL DRESSING

In the global fashion landscape, Louis Stitch positions itself as a clarifying force in a crowded conversation. Its role is to redefine footwear for the modern professional, creating a space where style, comfort, and performance are no longer presented as trade-offs. Globally, the brand advocates for a more intentional way of dressing — less noise, more purpose.

The core conversation is straightforward but radical: you shouldn't have to choose between how you look and how you feel. Beyond that lies a deeper ambition: to build a brand representing confidence with substance, not mere fashion but how one shows up in the world.

THE FIVE-YEAR HORIZON: VISION AND LEGACY

Five years forward, Louis Stitch will be a globally present footwear brand with sharp focus on the modern working professional. The priority remains consistent: serving a defined audience that values structure, ambition, and self-expression. Growth happens, but focus only sharpens, never scatters.

From a product perspective, evolution continues constant — refining and advancing offerings to match changing consumer expectations across design, comfort, and performance. Every iteration is driven by relevance, not mere change. The footprint expands not just through geographic reach but through deep penetration in existing markets, building stronger presence, deeper recall, and consistent brand experience across digital and physical channels.

The ambition is to be recognised not just for what Louis Stitch makes but what it represents: a mindset that is confident, composed, intentional. The legacy being built is rooted in clarity and consistency — a brand that knows exactly who it is, who it serves, and how it delivers, sustained across time. Because ultimately, brands that remain clear in their purpose are the ones that endure.

Against the Grain

GARVIT AND PRIYANSH'S RADICAL APPROACH TO INDEPENDENT MUSIC

There exists a rare breed of artists who have mastered the paradox of our time: how to create deeply personal work while speaking to a global audience, how to experiment fearlessly while remaining grounded in tradition, and how to navigate the relentless machinery of social metrics without losing sight of genuine artistic expression. Garvit and Priyansh, the indie music duo redefining contemporary Indian soundscapes, embody this seemingly impossible balance with an ease that comes only from absolute clarity of purpose.

In conversation, what becomes immediately apparent is that their philosophy is not built on strategy or market analysis, but on something far more elusive and infinitely more powerful: the courage to create without overthinking. Since their inception nearly five years ago, they have maintained a singular, unwavering intent with every single song they produce. That intent is simple yet revolutionary in an industry obsessed with virality: they make music because it makes them happy. Everything else flows from this foundational truth. >>

THE FOUNDATION OF FLOW

When asked how they navigate the tension between authenticity and global resonance, Garvit and Priyansh offer an answer that challenges everything modern music industry wisdom preaches. They don't think much when they create. They go with the flow. This isn't carelessness or artistic laziness, but rather a deliberate rejection of the anxiety that paralyzes so many emerging artists. There is no obligation to target a particular region or demographic. There is no checklist of commercial viability. There is only the music itself and the authentic emotional core they pour into it.

This philosophy emerged naturally as they began their journey together, discovering that their individual skills complemented each other in unexpected and generative ways. Before meeting, they each worked as solo artists, each grappling with their own creative challenges. But when they converged as a duo, something transformative happened. The energies passed between them like electricity, creating a synergy that accelerated their creative output while simultaneously deepening its emotional resonance. They realized they could challenge each other to become better versions of themselves across singing, composition, writing, and production. The collaborative dynamic they've built isn't about compromise or dilution of vision. Rather, it's about elevation through intelligent friction. When one person brings a perspective and the other perceives a possibility for improvement, they challenge each other to extract the better version. It's a relationship built on mutual investment in craft excellence, not on ego or hierarchy. This mutual elevation extends beyond the music itself to their personal growth as artists, something both acknowledge with profound gratitude.

THE CLASSICAL POP FUSION

What sets Garvit and Priyansh apart in a landscape saturated with fusion experiments is their grounding in classical training combined with their reverence for the great film composers and singers who shaped Indian popular music. They grew up in the shadow of giants: Shankar Ehsaan Loi, Salim Sulaiman, and the illustrious lineage of Bollywood's golden age. But more importantly, both received formal classical training, an anchor that has shaped their aesthetic in the most authentic way possible.

Their sound, which they term classical pop fusion, isn't a calculated market positioning. It's an organic expression of their lived experience and their training. Classical music holds a big and important part in their music journey, and this classical vocabulary permeates everything they create. Layered over this foundation is the contemporary sensibility they've absorbed from global influences and the pulsing energy of current digital culture. The result is music that feels simultaneously timeless and urgently present. When they talk about their inspiration, the list extends globally: they admire Arijit Singh's emotional depth, Vishal Shekhar's innovative production choices, and countless other artists they continue to listen to and learn from daily. But the learning isn't passive consumption. Every song, every album, every experimental choice becomes data for their own creative evolution. They've realized that exploration of genres and soundscape is not a detour from their artistic identity, but rather the mechanism through which that identity becomes more refined.

THE AUTHENTIC HEART

In an era where trends dominate social platforms and algorithms dictate reach, their stance is refreshingly defiant. They don't make music thinking about virality, trending sounds, or what might garner the most engagement. Even discussing this requires them to emphasize multiple times that when they make music, they simply don't think about such things. This isn't false modesty or strategic positioning. It's a fundamental operating principle that has held firm for nearly five years.

Yet they're not naive about the role of social platforms in contemporary music distribution. Initially, both were aversive to social media, uncomfortable with the notion of self-promotion or personal branding. They've had to reconcile this discomfort with the reality that in today's ecosystem, a song's ability to find its audience depends partly on the artist's willingness to amplify it. What they've chosen to do is move that discomfort into productive territory. They create high-quality content around their music because they've recognized it as a necessary part of the contemporary music ecosystem, not because they've been conquered by it. The distinction they make is crucial: they don't think about metrics. If a song goes viral, that's wonderful. If it doesn't, that's equally wonderful. Their content strategy is guided by quality over quantity, by authenticity over algorithmic optimization. In the process, they've discovered that this approach actually serves them well on Instagram and across digital platforms. By refusing to chase trends, they've somehow become more interesting to a platform that allegedly runs on trend-chasing.

STORYTELLING THROUGH EMOTION

Music and storytelling are deeply intertwined in their work, but they don't approach this from an analytical perspective. They don't research how one feels in a particular emotional state and then attempt to translate that into melody and lyric. Instead, the emotions they explore—love, sadness, excitement—come naturally because these emotions are inherent to who they are. They are passionate people who love deeply, feel acutely, and are genuinely invested in people and human connection. >>

This emotional authenticity is what gives their work its universal resonance. The songs become vessels through which listeners can access their own unexpressed feelings. They've witnessed the power of this repeatedly. After a Bangalore performance, someone approached them who worked with individuals in a psychology hospital. This person wanted to use their songs as teaching examples for psychology students, recognizing in the music a map of emotional landscapes that could serve therapeutic and educational purposes. This convergence of art and healing points to something larger they're attempting to accomplish: in an age where so many people struggle to express their emotions, their songs offer a language. The social impact they hope to generate locally and internationally is rooted in this simple but profound mission: to help people feel less alone in their emotional complexity and to model what vulnerability and authenticity look like when expressed through art.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Looking forward, excitement radiates from both artists when discussing uncharted territories. They want to work in film, creating music for cinema that will expand their creative reach. They're currently on an extensive India tour called the kahe mose India tour, performing live and feeding off the energy that stage performance provides. There's something about the immediate feedback of an audience singing back to them, about the palpable exchange of energy in a room, that reminds them why they make music in the first place. They want to create an album, a substantial artistic statement that showcases the evolution of their sound and their growing sophistication as composers and producers. They want to collaborate with bigger artists and continue pushing into territory unexplored. But underneath all these ambitions lies the unchanging core: they want to create music because it makes them happy. Everything else is secondary.

In a music industry that often mistakes complexity for depth and ambition for artistry, Garvit and Priyansh offer a different model. They make music with their whole hearts, they experiment fearlessly within their traditions, they challenge each other to excellence, and they trust that if they remain authentic, the right people will find them. They don't predict the future of independent music, but they're actively shaping it through their choices and their commitment to a vision that prioritizes soulfulness over strategy. This is what it looks like when artists lead with joy rather than fear, with authenticity rather than analytics. In doing so, they've created something increasingly rare: music that matters because it comes from a place that matters to the people making it.






BALENCIAGA
HOUSE

THE SOUND OF FOREVER

TULSI KUMAR

The Art of Staying in Tune with Time!

From chart-topping Bollywood anthems and independent pop successes to devotional music, entrepreneurship, and global artistic influence, TULSI KUMAR continues to redefine longevity in contemporary music.

A VOICE THAT REFUSES TO FADE

In an industry where musical trends change at lightning speed and digital platforms constantly reshape audience habits, sustaining relevance for nearly two decades is an achievement few artists can claim. Yet Tulsi Kumar has managed to do exactly that. Since making her debut in the mid-2000s, she has evolved from a promising playback singer into one of the most recognizable and enduring voices in Indian music. Her journey is not simply a story of commercial success but of adaptation, authenticity, and artistic growth.

At a time when careers are often measured by viral moments and fleeting online popularity, Tulsi has quietly built something far more substantial. Her voice has accompanied love stories, heartbreaks, celebrations, spiritual journeys, and personal memories for millions of listeners across generations. The remarkable aspect of her longevity is that it has never relied on reinvention for its own sake. Instead, she has remained rooted in sincerity while embracing change, proving that authenticity remains one of the most powerful currencies in music.

For Tulsi, the foundation of her enduring success lies in honesty. While genres, platforms, and audience behaviors have transformed dramatically over the years, she believes emotions remain timeless. Rather than chasing every trend, she has focused on creating music that resonates emotionally. This commitment to authenticity has enabled her to remain relevant in an industry that often rewards short-term visibility over long-term connection. Her philosophy becomes even more visible during live performances. Unlike artists who prefer audiences to remain passive spectators, Tulsi embraces participation. She believes music becomes truly unforgettable when listeners sing along, transforming concerts into shared emotional experiences rather than one-sided performances. That emotional exchange between artist and audience has become one of the defining elements of her stage presence. For her, the loudest applause is often not applause at all, but thousands of voices singing the lyrics back in unison. >>

DEFINING THE SOUND OF TULSI KUMAR

Every artist eventually reaches a point where their work develops a recognizable identity. For Tulsi Kumar, that identity is deeply connected to emotion. Her discography stretches across Bollywood playback songs, independent releases, devotional music, and contemporary pop, yet there is a common thread that binds them together. A Tulsi Kumar song today is one that feels emotionally relatable and melodically memorable. It is music that listeners can connect to during different phases of life—whether they are falling in love, healing from heartbreak, celebrating milestones, or reflecting on cherished memories. Her artistic evolution has allowed her music to become increasingly personal, reflecting qualities she values within herself: vulnerability, femininity, strength, softness, and simplicity.

Perhaps this explains why her voice evokes such familiarity among listeners. There is a comforting quality to her singing that transcends genre boundaries. While musical arrangements may vary, the emotional sincerity remains constant. It is this ability to create intimacy through song that has helped her establish a distinct artistic identity in an increasingly crowded musical landscape.

CARRYING A LEGACY WHILE CREATING HER OWN

Few artists begin their careers under the weight of expectations as significant as those surrounding Tulsi Kumar. As the daughter of the late Gulshan Kumar, the visionary founder of [T-Series](https://www.tseries.com?utm_source=chatgpt.com), she inherited a legacy deeply intertwined with the history of Indian music. Such a legacy can be both empowering and intimidating. Tulsi acknowledges that there were moments when those expectations felt overwhelming. When one's family name is associated with transforming an entire industry, comparisons become inevitable. Yet rather than allowing the pressure to define her, she chose to view it as a source of inspiration.

The love for music that shaped her father's extraordinary journey also inspired her own. His vision, values, and passion continue to influence her decisions today. However, she understood early on that honoring a legacy does not mean living in its shadow. It means building upon its foundation while finding an individual voice. That determination to earn her place as an artist through dedication and hard work has been central to her journey. Over time, she has transformed inherited expectations into motivation, creating a career that respects her roots while standing firmly on its own achievements.

THE EVOLUTION OF A VOICE

One of the most fascinating aspects of Tulsi Kumar's career is the evolution of her vocal approach. Like many young singers, she initially focused heavily on technical perfection. Early in her career, there was a strong emphasis on delivering every note with precision and accuracy. As her artistry matured, however, she discovered that technical excellence alone rarely creates emotional impact. Audiences may admire flawless singing, but they connect with vulnerability, feeling, and authenticity. This realization transformed the way she approached music. She began exploring nuances beyond technique, focusing on breath control, vocal texture, modulation, and the expressive power of silence. Rather than overanalyzing every phrase, she learned to trust emotion as a guiding force.

For Tulsi, true artistry lies in the coexistence of emotion and technique. One without the other feels incomplete. Technique gives a singer control, discipline, and consistency, but emotion gives music soul. The challenge is finding equilibrium between the two—allowing feelings to flow naturally while maintaining the craft required to communicate them effectively. One of the most significant lessons she had to unlearn was the habit of overthinking. With experience came the understanding that some of the most moving performances emerge when a singer allows emotion to lead rather than calculation. Today, her voice reflects that balance between skill and feeling, creating performances that resonate on a deeply human level.

THE DELICATE BALANCE OF PLAYBACK SINGING

Playback singing is one of the most unique art forms in cinema. Unlike independent artists who perform as themselves, playback singers must become extensions of fictional characters, helping audiences experience emotions through voice. For Tulsi, the process begins with understanding the emotional landscape of a story. Before recording a song, she focuses on the character's feelings, motivations, and circumstances. Only after establishing that connection does she begin to bring her own interpretation to the performance.

The challenge lies in maintaining individuality while serving the narrative. Her philosophy is simple yet profound: individuality should enhance the story, not overshadow it. The singer's role is not to draw attention away from the character but to strengthen the emotional experience for the audience. This approach has allowed Tulsi to create performances that feel authentic and personal while remaining faithful to the cinematic vision. It is one of the reasons her playback work continues to resonate long after films leave theaters. >>

UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A HIT AND A CLASSIC

In today's digital era, success is often measured through streaming numbers, social media engagement, and chart positions. Yet Tulsi Kumar believes there is an important distinction between a hit song and a timeless song. A hit song captures public attention in the moment. A timeless song becomes part of people's lives. For Tulsi, longevity carries greater meaning than immediate success. While chart performance is certainly gratifying, she values songs that continue to evoke memories years after their release. These are the tracks that become part of weddings, celebrations, personal milestones, and emotional journeys.

One of the best examples is "Tum Jo Aaye," a song that did not become an instant sensation upon release. Instead, it gradually found its audience over several months. What began as a slow-burning success eventually became one of the most beloved romantic songs of its generation. Even today, audiences continue to embrace the track with the same affection they felt years ago. Its enduring popularity serves as a reminder that true musical impact often takes time to reveal itself.

NAVIGATING A RAPIDLY CHANGING INDUSTRY

Having witnessed nearly two decades of industry transformation, Tulsi Kumar has experienced firsthand how dramatically music creation and consumption have evolved. One of the most significant changes, she believes, is speed. Songs are now produced, distributed, and consumed at unprecedented rates. The traditional music-making process has become increasingly digital, with technology streamlining every stage from recording to release. Audiences also expect constant content, creating a faster and more demanding environment for artists.

Despite these changes, Tulsi remains optimistic. She sees today's landscape as one filled with opportunities for experimentation and self-expression. Artists have greater creative freedom than ever before, while listeners are increasingly open to diverse musical influences. Modern audiences move effortlessly between genres and cultures, embracing everything from classical compositions and Bollywood soundtracks to global collaborations and independent releases. This openness has expanded artistic possibilities, encouraging musicians to explore new creative directions without abandoning their roots.

MUSIC IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The rise of short-form content has fundamentally changed how people discover music. Songs are often introduced through fifteen-second clips on social media platforms before listeners ever hear the complete track. For many artists, this shift raises concerns about the reduction of music into bite-sized moments. Tulsi views the phenomenon with a balanced perspective. While she acknowledges that short-form content can sometimes oversimplify artistic work, she also recognizes its tremendous ability to expand reach.

Social media has introduced countless listeners to songs they may never have encountered otherwise. Ultimately, she believes that truly meaningful music transcends platform limitations. If a song genuinely connects with audiences, they will seek out the complete experience regardless of how they first discovered it. This outlook reflects her confidence in the enduring power of emotional storytelling. Technologies may evolve, but genuine human connection remains the heart of music.

RECOGNITION BEYOND AWARDS

Throughout her career, Tulsi Kumar has received numerous accolades, including prestigious recognitions such as the IIFA Awards, Filmfare Middle East Awards, and the Dadasaheb Phalke International Film Festival Awards. Yet when she reflects on success, she speaks less about trophies and more about connection. Certain awards arrived during periods when she was quietly questioning herself as an artist. Those moments of recognition provided reassurance that audiences were listening and engaging with her work. However, some of the most meaningful validation has come from unexpected places.

Listeners from different countries, generations, and cultural backgrounds have embraced her music in ways she never anticipated. For Tulsi, that emotional reach often feels more significant than any formal honor. Awards acknowledge achievement, but emotional connection creates legacy.

BEYOND PERFORMANCE: BUILDING THE FUTURE OF TALENT

As her career has evolved, Tulsi Kumar has expanded her influence beyond performing. Through GKFTII and [T-Series Stageworks Academy] she has become deeply invested in nurturing future generations of artists. Her motivation stems from personal experience. She understands how challenging the entertainment industry can be for emerging talent. While India possesses extraordinary artistic potential, many aspiring performers lack access to mentorship, structure, and practical industry exposure.

Her vision for education extends beyond technical training. She believes future artists must develop emotional intelligence, adaptability, resilience, professionalism, and confidence. These qualities are often overlooked in traditional learning systems but are essential for long-term success in a rapidly changing industry. By investing in education, Tulsi is helping create stronger foundations for future talent while contributing to the evolution of India's creative ecosystem.


LOEWE



THE MANY DIMENSIONS OF VOICE

Beyond singing, Tulsi Kumar has also explored voice acting, an experience that has enriched her understanding of performance. Her long-standing role as the solo voice of the immensely popular T-Series Kids Hut platform introduced her to an entirely different world of storytelling, one that demanded constant reinvention through tone, character, and emotional range. For years, her voice became instantly recognizable to millions of young listeners, requiring her to shift seamlessly between playful innocence, warmth, humor, and dramatic expression. The experience deepened her understanding of vocal personality and expanded her creative instincts beyond conventional playback singing.

Voice acting differs significantly from singing because every emotion must be communicated through voice alone. Without melody to support expression, subtle changes in tone, pacing, and delivery become crucial. This experience has sharpened her awareness of nuance and taught her the extraordinary power of restraint. Sometimes a whisper can communicate more than a powerful note. That lesson has influenced her singing, making her increasingly attentive to conversational textures and emotional subtleties within songs.

THE NEXT CHAPTER

As she looks toward the future, Tulsi Kumar sees a path defined not by reinvention but by evolution. Independent music continues to excite her because it offers opportunities for personal expression and creative freedom. International collaborations also hold strong appeal, reflecting a music industry that has become increasingly borderless. At the same time, she remains passionate about mentorship, entrepreneurship, and creating opportunities for emerging talent. She envisions herself balancing multiple identities—performer, creator, mentor, educator, and entrepreneur—while keeping music at the center of everything she does.

Another important part of her future remains devotional music. Deeply influenced by the spirituality of her family and upbringing, she continues to feel a profound connection to this genre. For Tulsi, devotional music is not simply about performance; it is rooted in faith, family tradition, and emotional grounding. The spiritual environment she grew up in shaped her relationship with music from an early age, making devotional songs feel deeply personal rather than purely professional. That emotional and spiritual connection continues to guide her artistic journey today, offering balance amidst the fast-paced nature of the entertainment industry. It is not simply a musical category for her but an extension of personal belief, cultural heritage, and inner peace.

As Tulsi Kumar enters the next phase of her remarkable journey, one thing remains clear: her story is no longer just about success within music. It is about shaping the future of music itself. In an era defined by constant change, she stands as a rare example of an artist who has managed to evolve with the times while remaining true to her essence.

And perhaps that is the most enduring melody of all.



Rishita Kothari

TURNING PRESENCE INTO PURPOSE

The attention spans are shrinking and digital trends vanish almost as quickly as they appear, authenticity has become one of the most valuable qualities an artist can possess. Social media has transformed the entertainment landscape, creating a generation of creators who are no longer waiting to be discovered but are actively building their own audiences and narratives. Yet among countless digital personalities, only a few manage to transcend the limitations of online fame and evolve into storytellers with lasting cultural relevance. RISHITA KOTHARI, widely known as just_rishuuuuu, belongs to that rare category.

Her journey reflects the changing face of modern entertainment, where the boundaries between content creation, acting, storytelling, and personal branding continue to blur. What makes Rishita's rise particularly compelling is that it has never been driven solely by numbers or visibility. Instead, it has been built on connection, emotional honesty, and a deep understanding of how stories can resonate with people on a personal level. Today, as she expands her artistic identity through acting and long format storytelling, she represents a new generation of performers who are redefining what it means to build a meaningful career in the spotlight. >>

WHEN AUTHENTICITY FOUND ITS AUDIENCE

Long before television audiences became familiar with her name, Rishita had already cultivated a strong digital presence. Her online journey began not with a carefully calculated strategy but with an instinctive desire to express herself. Through relatable moments, personal reflections, and creative experimentation, she gradually built a community that connected with her sincerity. The turning point in her journey arrived when she began to realize that people were responding to much more than the content itself. Her followers were not simply consuming entertainment. They were connecting emotionally. Messages from viewers revealed that her stories made them feel seen, understood, and inspired. Those interactions transformed her understanding of influence. She realized that meaningful storytelling is not defined by reach alone but by the depth of emotional impact it creates.

As creative collaborators and brands increasingly approached her not merely as an influencer but as a personality with a distinct voice and narrative potential, Rishita began to view her platform differently. She recognized that she was building more than visibility. She was building identity. From that moment onward, her focus shifted away from chasing temporary virality and toward cultivating a lasting artistic voice. Acting became a natural continuation of that journey rather than a dramatic departure from it.

DISCOVERING THE POWER OF SILENCE

For many creators transitioning into traditional performance, one of the greatest challenges is learning to communicate beyond the fast paced language of social media. Rishita encountered this transformation during her acting debut in the music video Iss Barsaat, a project that fundamentally changed her relationship with storytelling. Unlike short form content where expressions are often amplified to capture attention quickly, narrative performance demanded a different approach. In Iss Barsaat, dialogue was minimal, requiring emotions to be conveyed through subtle gestures, expressions, and moments of stillness. Every glance, pause, and breath carried meaning. It was a masterclass in restraint.

The experience taught her that some of the most powerful emotions are not expressed through dramatic displays but through what remains unsaid. Vulnerability, she discovered, does not require exaggeration. It requires honesty. Through this process, the camera transformed from a device recording her performance into a silent listener responding to her truth. The project expanded her understanding of acting and revealed the profound impact that subtle emotional storytelling can have on audiences.



ENTERING THE WORLD OF LONG FORM STORYTELLING

While social media offers immediate engagement and rapid creative experimentation, television requires a completely different level of commitment. With her lead role in Seher Hone Ko Hai, Rishita stepped into a storytelling format that demands patience, consistency, and emotional endurance. Unlike short content, where a narrative arc is completed within seconds, television unfolds over weeks and months. Characters evolve gradually, allowing audiences to witness every layer of their emotional journey. For Rishita, this meant fully immersing herself in the life of Seher, a character whose dreams, conflicts, relationships, and personal growth develop over time.

The experience has deepened her appreciation for the craft of acting. Living with a character day after day requires an actor to maintain emotional continuity while remaining open to transformation. It is a process that encourages empathy, discipline, and a deeper understanding of human behavior. Through Seher Hone Ko Hai, Rishita has discovered that meaningful storytelling often lies in gradual evolution rather than immediate gratification.

A CHARACTER CLOSE TO HOME

One of the reasons Rishita connects so deeply with Seher is that the character embodies struggles that feel profoundly familiar. Seher is ambitious, determined, and willing to challenge traditional expectations while remaining emotionally sensitive and grounded. She represents countless young women navigating the delicate balance between personal aspirations and societal expectations. For Rishita, this dynamic resonates strongly with her own life. Pursuing a career in entertainment requires courage, especially when choosing a path that often falls outside conventional definitions of stability and success. Like Seher, she understands the internal dialogue between security and dreams, between responsibility and ambition.

What makes the relationship between actor and character particularly interesting is that it has become mutually influential. While Rishita brings her emotional transparency and personal experiences to the role, Seher's resilience has also shaped her perspective. The character reminds her that ambition does not need to be loud or aggressive to be powerful. It can be graceful, compassionate, and deeply rooted in self belief. >>



LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

Every set offers opportunities for growth beyond performance itself. Working alongside seasoned actors such as Parth Samthaan and Mahhi Vij has provided Rishita with valuable insights into the realities of sustaining a long and successful career in the entertainment industry. One of the most important lessons she observed was the value of preparation. Both actors approach their work with clarity and purpose, arriving on set with a thorough understanding of their characters and emotional journeys. Their confidence stems not from spontaneity alone but from consistent preparation and discipline.

Equally inspiring was the way they manage their energy. Acting requires emotional investment, and maintaining creative excellence over time demands a healthy balance between engagement and self preservation. Watching experienced performers navigate these challenges reinforced the understanding that longevity in entertainment is built not only on talent but also on professionalism, discipline, and emotional intelligence.

THE FUTURE BEYOND ACTING

Like many artists of her generation, Rishita refuses to define herself through a single creative identity. She belongs to a generation that embraces versatility and sees creativity as an interconnected ecosystem rather than a collection of separate disciplines. While acting remains her primary focus today, she is equally intrigued by opportunities behind the camera. Writing and directing represent exciting future possibilities, allowing her to shape narratives from their earliest stages and explore themes that resonate deeply with her.

The stories she hopes to tell reveal a thoughtful artistic vision. She is drawn to narratives about identity, loneliness, ambition, emotional contradictions, and the invisible pressures faced by young people. She wants to explore the experiences of daughters balancing dreams and responsibilities, individuals navigating personal expectations, and relationships that reflect the complexity of real life. Her interest lies not in perfect characters but in deeply human ones whose imperfections make them relatable and memorable.

THE STORIES HER GENERATION WANTS

As entertainment continues to evolve, audiences are becoming increasingly selective about the stories they embrace. According to Rishita, her generation is craving authenticity more than spectacle. Viewers want narratives that reflect real experiences rather than exaggerated fantasies. Issues such as mental health, career uncertainty, emotional vulnerability, family expectations, and female ambition are becoming central to contemporary conversations. Audiences are looking for characters who are flawed, evolving, and emotionally layered. They are less interested in idealized heroes and simplistic villains and more interested in stories that acknowledge the complexities of modern life.

This desire for realism is reshaping entertainment across platforms. Whether on television, streaming services, or digital media, there is growing appreciation for narratives that prioritize emotional truth over dramatic extremes. It is a shift that aligns closely with Rishita's own artistic sensibilities and the kinds of stories she hopes to create in the future.

A JOURNEY JUST BEGINNING

When discussing the artists who have influenced her, Rishita often points to the work of Imtiaz Ali, whose characters are celebrated for their emotional complexity and beautifully imperfect humanity. That admiration reveals much about the performer she hopes to become. She is drawn to stories that embrace uncertainty, allow silence to speak, and trust audiences to find meaning in emotional nuance. As her career continues to expand, one thing remains clear. Rishita Kothari is not interested in becoming simply another recognizable face in entertainment. She is building something far more enduring. She is building a body of work rooted in empathy, authenticity, and emotional truth. Her vision for the future is both ambitious and deeply personal. She hopes to create stories where ambition and vulnerability coexist, where characters feel real rather than idealized, and where audiences can discover reflections of their own experiences.

In an industry constantly chasing the next big moment, Rishita's greatest strength may be her understanding that meaningful storytelling is not about commanding attention. It is about creating connection. And in a world that often feels increasingly disconnected, that ability has never been more valuable.

MEMORIES IN MOTION

KANIKA MAHESHWARI AND THE NEW LANGUAGE OF AUTOMOTIVE STORYTELLING

Auto journalism has traditionally revolved around speed, specifications, performance figures, and engineering breakthroughs. Yet beneath every ignition lies a human story, and beneath every journey exists an emotional landscape rarely explored. At a time when the automobile industry is rapidly transforming through electrification, artificial intelligence, and connected mobility, KANIKA MAHESHWARI is reminding audiences that the most powerful technology inside any vehicle is still the human heart.

As the founder and host of Auto Affairs, Kanika has built a platform that looks beyond engines and exteriors to uncover the deeply personal stories attached to automobiles. For her, cars are not simply machines designed to move people from one destination to another. They are silent witnesses to personal evolution, repositories of memories, and trusted companions that travel alongside individuals through moments of triumph, heartbreak, reinvention, and growth. Through her unique storytelling vision, she is reshaping how audiences perceive the relationship between people and their vehicles, creating a new emotional dimension within automotive media.



BEYOND HORSEPOWER INTO HUMANITY

While the automotive world often celebrates innovation through acceleration figures, advanced technology, and engineering milestones, Kanika's focus remains firmly rooted in human experience. Her own understanding of the emotional power of automobiles emerged during a deeply personal moment. Sitting alone in her first car after experiencing a major setback, she suddenly saw the vehicle differently. The steering wheel, the seat, and every familiar detail remained unchanged, yet the space felt alive with memories. It seemed to contain every version of herself that had occupied it over the years. That realization became the philosophical foundation of Auto Affairs. Cars, she believes, do not merely carry passengers. They carry entire chapters of life. Every road trip, every celebration, every setback, every quiet moment spent parked alone becomes part of a larger emotional narrative. In her world, automobiles are not products. They are archives of human experience. >>



CREATING A NEW LANGUAGE FOR AUTOMOTIVE STORYTELLING

The inspiration behind Auto Affairs emerged from a simple observation. Celebrity interviews had become increasingly predictable, often revolving around achievements, awards, and carefully curated success stories. What fascinated Kanika were the untold moments that existed between those milestones. The fears, uncertainties, failures, and memories that rarely make headlines but shape individuals profoundly. The automobile became the ideal setting for these conversations. Unlike a stage or television studio, a car offers privacy and comfort. It is a familiar environment where people often feel safe enough to reveal their authentic selves. Within that confined space, conversations become more honest, more reflective, and more human.

This approach represents a refreshing evolution within automotive storytelling. For decades, brands have attempted to create emotional connections with consumers through marketing. Auto Affairs takes that concept further by exploring genuine emotional experiences linked to mobility. The result is not merely content about automobiles. It is storytelling about humanity through the lens of automobiles.

THE ART OF THE UNSCRIPTED JOURNEY

One of the most compelling aspects of Auto Affairs is its authenticity. Kanika approaches every interaction not as an interviewer seeking answers but as a fellow traveler sharing a journey. There are no aggressive questionnaires or performative moments. Instead, there is patience, curiosity, and a willingness to listen. The car itself plays an essential role in this process. People associate vehicles with daily routines, family conversations, personal reflection, and moments of solitude. Sitting inside a car naturally lowers barriers. It creates a sense of familiarity that encourages honesty.

As guests begin to relax, carefully constructed public personas gradually fade away. What emerges are stories that feel genuine and relatable. In many ways, Kanika's method mirrors the direction of modern automotive design itself. Just as manufacturers increasingly prioritize comfort, well being, and emotional experience inside vehicle cabins, Auto Affairs transforms the automotive space into an environment designed for connection and self expression.

"I don't approach conversations like interviews. I approach them like journeys."

WHAT CARS REVEAL THAT WORDS CANNOT

Among the many themes explored through Auto Affairs, one of the most fascinating is the idea that automobiles reveal aspects of personality that words often cannot. According to Kanika, vehicles expose emotional fingerprints. The way someone drives, maintains their car, organizes its interior, or even speaks about it can reveal qualities hidden beneath public appearances. Patience, discipline, ambition, loneliness, resilience, and spontaneity often become visible through a person's relationship with their vehicle.

This perspective offers valuable insight into consumer behavior within the automotive industry. Ownership is rarely a purely practical decision. Cars frequently become symbols of independence, achievement, freedom, adventure, and personal identity. Auto Affairs highlights these emotional layers, reminding audiences that the strongest automotive connections are often built not through performance figures but through personal meaning.

WHEN INTERVIEWS BECOME CINEMATIC EXPERIENCES

What distinguishes Auto Affairs from conventional interview formats is its cinematic quality. Each episode feels less like a question and answer session and more like a carefully unfolding emotional journey. Rather than structuring conversations around rigid talking points, Kanika focuses on emotional progression. Nostalgia often leads to struggle. Struggle evolves into breakthrough. Breakthrough eventually gives way to reflection. This emotional architecture creates an immersive viewing experience that resonates deeply with audiences.

The format also reflects some of the most successful principles in automotive storytelling. The industry's most memorable campaigns rarely focus solely on engineering. Instead, they explore aspiration, transformation, and human growth. Auto Affairs achieves something similar by allowing real people to tell real stories, resulting in content that transcends categories and creates meaningful emotional engagement.

THERAPY ON WHEELS

Throughout her conversations with actors, artists, and public personalities, there have been moments that transformed the very nature of the show. Guests have occasionally become so immersed in the discussion that they forgot cameras were present. Conversations shifted toward deeply personal experiences involving loneliness, rejection, grief, and vulnerability. In those moments, Auto Affairs stopped feeling like content and started feeling like therapy. This transformation reflects a broader truth about mobility itself. Cars have long served as personal sanctuaries where individuals process emotions, celebrate victories, and navigate life's challenges. Auto Affairs captures this reality beautifully, demonstrating that the relationship between humans and vehicles extends far beyond practicality. It is deeply psychological, emotional, and profoundly human. >>







THE EMOTIONAL TIME MACHINE

Few possessions hold emotional significance quite like a first car. Regardless of fame, success, or status, those early automotive memories remain remarkably powerful. Kanika describes cars as emotional time machines capable of instantly transporting people back to earlier chapters of their lives. For celebrities, this connection can be particularly meaningful. While fame may transform lifestyles, first cars remain tied to memories of ambition, uncertainty, rejection, perseverance, and hope. They represent the version of oneself that existed before recognition arrived.

This phenomenon transcends geography and culture. Whether in Mumbai, London, Los Angeles, Dubai, or Tokyo, people remember their first cars with extraordinary clarity. These vehicles symbolize freedom, possibility, and self discovery. In an era increasingly defined by autonomous technology and evolving mobility models, this emotional attachment remains one of the automotive industry's most enduring constants.

REDEFINING WOMEN'S VOICES IN AUTOMOTIVE MEDIA

The automotive industry has historically been perceived as a male dominated space, and women entering the field often encounter assumptions regarding their expertise and interests. Kanika has challenged these perceptions through the success of Auto Affairs. One of the most persistent misconceptions is that women engage with automobiles primarily through aesthetics rather than understanding engineering, culture, or emotional significance. Through her work, Kanika has demonstrated that storytelling can be as powerful as horsepower. Emotional intelligence, cultural awareness, and human insight are equally valuable perspectives within automotive discourse.

Rather than seeking acceptance within traditional frameworks, she is actively redefining them. Her growing influence reflects a broader transformation across the automotive sector, where diverse voices are increasingly shaping innovation, culture, and audience engagement.

BUILDING THE FUTURE OF EMOTIONAL MOBILITY

While Auto Affairs has already established itself as a unique voice within automotive media, Kanika sees it as only the beginning. Her vision extends far beyond celebrity interviews. She imagines cinematic road journeys across continents, conversations with global personalities, documentary projects exploring the relationship between mobility and emotion, and storytelling experiences that connect cultures through shared human experiences. As the automotive industry becomes increasingly global, technologically advanced, and interconnected, this vision feels particularly timely. Future conversations about mobility will undoubtedly focus on innovation, sustainability, and intelligent technology. Yet Kanika's work serves as an important reminder that mobility ultimately exists to serve people.

In the end, the future she imagines is not simply about cars. It is about memory, identity, transformation, and connection. It is about recognizing that every journey leaves an emotional imprint and every vehicle carries stories far greater than its mechanical components. Through Auto Affairs, Kanika Maheshwari is proving that the most meaningful automotive conversations are not always about engines, performance, or technology. They are about the lives unfolding within those vehicles. In doing so, she is creating a new language for automotive storytelling, one where humanity remains firmly in the driver's seat.



MELODY THAT STAYS

Inside axe.shay's global musical identity!

In the landscape of contemporary independent music, few artists navigate the complexities of cultural inheritance with as much intentionality and grace as AKSHAY CHOWDHRY. Known professionally as **axe.shay**, he represents a rare breed of musician—one who refuses the false choice between honoring a celebrated musical lineage and building something authentically contemporary. As the great-grandson of legendary Thumri exponent Naina Devi, Chowdhry carries a legacy that spans continents and generations. Yet his music speaks less of preservation than of evolution, less of adherence than of liberation.

When we speak of global artists, we often invoke those who have successfully transcended geographical boundaries or cultural specificity. axe.shay's achievement is more nuanced. He has not transcended his roots so much as he has allowed them to breathe within a modern context. His work sits at a deliberate, almost architectural intersection of Indian classical sensibility, rock and blues traditions, cinematic storytelling, and the kind of emotional honesty that audiences increasingly crave. This is not fusion for fusion's sake, but rather the natural emanation of a musician shaped by decades of listening across linguistic and geographical frontiers. >>

THE GENESIS OF A GLOBAL SOUND

Chowdhry's musical formation was never formal in the classical sense. Indian classical music existed in the ambient landscape of his childhood, but it was not until much later, through his study of the slide guitar with Pandit Debashish Bhattacharya, that he found himself returning to those roots with intention and reverence. The slide guitar—an instrument not traditionally associated with Indian classical traditions—became the bridge between worlds. It could sing like a human voice, carry the emotional weight of blues tradition, and simultaneously evoke the cinematic textures he had absorbed from decades of watching film scores shape dramatic narratives.

What emerged from this process was something that defies easy categorization because it emerges from emotional truth rather than genre calculation. Chowdhry speaks about melody as the carrier of emotional weight, the element that transcends cultural boundaries and linguistic difference. In this philosophy, he echoes something that the greatest composers have always understood: that a perfectly crafted melodic phrase can communicate across any divide. It is not the cultural origin of the music that matters, but the authenticity of its emotional core.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF LEGACY

Being descended from a figure as significant as Naina Devi carries an invisible weight. For many artists, such a connection might feel suffocating, a constant reminder of standards that seem impossibly high. Chowdhry's approach has been refreshingly different. Rather than viewing his family history as a mandate to preserve or defend a particular musical tradition, he has engaged with it as an ongoing conversation. His great-grandmother's legacy lives not in imitation but in his willingness to ask what it might mean to honor her work in an entirely different era, with entirely different tools, and entirely different audiences.

This evolution of legacy is informed by the artists who came before him and bridged similar territories. John McLaughlin and Shakti, George Harrison's experiments with Indian instrumentation and songwriting—these precedents made clear that artistic boundaries were not fixed, that curiosity and openness could coexist with depth and rigor. What distinguished those projects was not a superficial eclecticism, but a genuine musical understanding that allowed artists to move fluidly between traditions without losing their identity in the process.

THE CONTEMPORARY INDEPENDENT MUSICIAN

When Chowdhry reflects on the landscape of Indian independent music in 2026, his observations reveal both opportunity and caution. The pressure that once existed for Indian artists to diminish their cultural specificity in pursuit of global audiences has substantially diminished. Streaming platforms have democratized access in unprecedented ways. Yet this same accessibility has created a landscape of tremendous saturation, one where the challenge is no longer reaching an audience but sustaining meaningful attention in an environment that constantly rewards speed, visibility, and novelty.

There is something particularly thoughtful about Chowdhry's resistance to the aesthetic of perpetual performance that dominates contemporary music culture. In an era where artists are encouraged to maintain constant social media presence and feed algorithmic hunger for content, he has remained committed to the slower work of craft. His approach suggests that while engagement and visibility matter, they should never come at the expense of the actual creation of music. The tension between artistic integrity and commercial reality is not new, but the mechanisms through which that tension operates have shifted dramatically in the digital era.

THE COLLABORATION THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

One of the most significant moments in Chowdhry's recent artistic journey came through his collaboration with Pandit Debashish Bhattacharya on "Love in Kyoto." This piece represents something rarer than successful fusion music—it demonstrates what becomes possible when an artist of classical mastery meets another musician of equal openness and fearlessness. Debashish Bhattacharya's ability to improvise over a Japanese pentatonic scale that Chowdhry had been exploring revealed something fundamental about artistic possibility. True experimentation, the collaboration demonstrated, emerges not from superficial blending but from deep roots that are simultaneously flexible enough to venture into unmapped territory.

What struck Chowdhry most profoundly was the rarity of artists at Debashish Bhattacharya's level of classical training who maintain such genuine openness and curiosity. The history of classical music traditions in any culture is littered with artists who achieved great technical mastery while remaining conceptually confined within familiar frameworks. By contrast, an artist who can move effortlessly between Indian classical music, Hawaiian traditions, Baroque influences, and entirely foreign musical languages while maintaining emotional depth and personal identity represents something almost anomalous. This observation became foundational to Chowdhry's understanding of what the future of Indian classical music might look like—not the wholesale abandonment of tradition, but rather the development of artists rooted deeply enough that they need not fear expansion. >>

CRAFTSMANSHIP IN AN AGE OF VIRALITY

The music that has influenced Chowdhry most profoundly—whether it is found in classical composition, rock records, or film scores—tends to be music that lingers. A melody that stays in the mind. A vocal line that keeps calling you back emotionally. A guitar phrase that becomes embedded in memory long after the song has finished. This is the standard he holds for his own work, and it represents a philosophical stance that runs counter to the metrics of virality and immediate engagement that dominate contemporary music culture.

Over nearly a decade of posting music online, Chowdhry has maintained a commitment to sharing work that genuinely interested him rather than chasing patterns of engagement. This distinction matters. It speaks to an artist who understands that the role of social media in his career is real and important, but not totalizing. The greatest temptation facing contemporary musicians is the seductive logic of algorithmic success—the belief that replicating what has worked before will lead to continued growth. Yet this logic often leads away from the very thing that made the initial work compelling in the first place: originality, risk, and emotional honesty. His forthcoming debut project represents the culmination of this philosophy. It features slide guitar, English-language songwriting, cinematic arrangements, and Indian melodic sensibilities in equal measure. But the organizing principle is not eclecticism; it is emotional coherence. Every element serves the feeling that Chowdhry wishes to communicate. The technical capability to execute across these different domains has been built over years of deliberate practice, but the artistic vision that guides that capability is fundamentally personal.

VISION AND EXECUTION

When Chowdhry composes for commercial contexts—advertising, television, film—his creative posture shifts necessarily. These projects operate within external briefs and visual references. There is a discipline to this work, a training in adaptability and constraint that has its own value. Yet he is honest that such work, however professionally rigorous, cannot offer the same emotional fulfillment as music that originates from personal expression. The distinction he draws here is important for understanding how he has maintained artistic integrity across multiple modes of working.

"I want listeners to walk away with a feeling rather than simply being impressed technically… which comes with time, but what's much harder is creating something emotionally honest that stays with people long after the song ends.

His journey from Barefaced Liar—where success meant survival, consistency, and the willingness to play any venue regardless of size or prestige—to his current position has taught him something about the nature of achievement itself. The endorsements from respected international brands and recognition across songwriting platforms offer legitimacy and practical stability. Yet his definition of success has evolved toward something less quantifiable: the ability to wake each day with the hunger to improve, to challenge himself, and to continue creating with curiosity intact.

A PLACE CALLED GOA

The artist's relationship with Goa has become increasingly central to his creative philosophy. The region's reputation as a cultural crossroads—a place where global influences meet local traditions in a spirit of openness rather than conflict—has provided both practical and philosophical nourishment. The local music community, unburdened by the competitiveness that characterizes larger urban centers, has allowed Chowdhry to experiment more freely. Goa's particular fusion of Portuguese influence, local traditions, and the musical history embodied in traditions like Fado has subtly informed his artistic consciousness, even when not explicitly referenced in his work.

Living in Goa has contributed to what he describes as a sense of peace and emotional balance that directly feeds his creative output. This observation might seem tangential, yet it speaks to something musicians have always known: the quality of work produced is deeply connected to the environment in which it is created and the emotional state in which the artist is working.

THE VISION AHEAD

What axe.shay represents, ultimately, is an answer to a question that contemporary music audiences are asking with increasing urgency: what does it mean to be an authentically global artist? Not an artist who sounds like nowhere in particular, but rather an artist shaped by multiple traditions and willing to listen widely. His work suggests that cultural specificity and international relevance are not opposing forces but complementary ones. The more deeply an artist understands his own roots, the more intelligently he can engage with influence from elsewhere.

The legacy he hopes to leave consists of songs and melodies that people remember, that communicate emotionally across time and distance. Beyond the music itself, he aspires for his body of work to reflect his values as a person: the honesty, curiosity, and intention that he brings to the creative act. In a music world often fragmented by commercial pressure and algorithmic distraction, this commitment to emotional truth and careful craft represents something increasingly rare—and increasingly necessary.



The Quiet One

SMITI MALIK HAS SPENT YEARS LISTENING, LEARNING, AND HOLDING BACK. WITH HER DEBUT SOLO EP, SHE FINALLY LETS YOU IN.

There is a stillness about SMITI MALIK that you notice before she says a word. It is not shyness, exactly — more a quality of careful attention, the kind that belongs to people who have spent years observing the world rather than performing for it. When she does speak, the sentences arrive considered and complete, each one chosen the way a songwriter chooses a lyric: nothing wasted, nothing accidental. Her debut solo EP, ‘Sad Songs For A Sunday’, sounds exactly like her. Unhurried. Emotionally precise. Quietly, almost stubbornly, itself.

In an industry that rewards volume — of output, of personality, of noise — Malik has built something that operates on an entirely different frequency. The Delhi-based singer-songwriter, who first came to wider attention as a founding member of indie outfit Kitchensink, has taken years to arrive at this particular moment. And if that sounds like a critique, it isn't. Some things are worth the wait.

THE LONG WAY ROUND

Malik grew up in a home where music was not decoration but substance — played, felt, taken seriously. "My memories of childhood often feel like they have a special OST running behind them," she says, and you believe her immediately. Hers is the kind of musical sensibility that is not taught in a classroom but absorbed over years of genuine listening. She never formally studied music, a fact she mentions not with apology but with a kind of quiet confidence — as though she long ago made peace with arriving at things her own way. Her early career was built in collaboration. As a founding member of Kitchensink and later in more intimate duo projects, she learned the craft alongside people she trusted — one of whom, she mentions without fanfare, is now her husband. "Working with people was invaluable in helping me broaden my imagination," she says. "These colleagues helped me build trust, restraint, and a confidence in my songwriting." There is something telling in the order of those words. Trust first. Then restraint. Confidence last.

The shift to solo work, when it came, demanded something different from her entirely. "I've had to sit more honestly with my instincts," she says, "which was daunting but freeing in equal measure." The rulebook, she adds, feels lighter now. It is the kind of thing people say and don't always mean, but with Malik you sense it is genuinely true — that she has done the internal work required to actually put it down.

BRAVE ENOUGH TO BE BORING

The most arresting thing Malik says, early in our conversation, is this: she spent a long time wondering whether these songs were even worth making. "They didn't feel cool, fun, or catchy," she admits, with the directness of someone who has finished being embarrassed about it. "In fact, they felt maybe too personal." That tension — the desire to be heard against the instinct to stay protected — is the invisible architecture of the entire EP. What made her stay? Partly process, partly the presence of producer Ritwik De, with whom she found a creative shorthand built on mutual curiosity rather than mutual approval. "We were both curious about each other's visions," she says. "That openness helped the music grow into something more expansive." But mostly, you suspect, she stayed because the alternative — abandoning something true in favour of something easier — was no longer available to her. At a certain point, the honest thing becomes the only thing. This is what gives ‘Sad Songs For A Sunday’ its particular texture. These are not songs engineered for playlists or positioned for algorithms. They are, in the most unfashionable sense of the word, felt.

THE INTELLIGENCE OF RESTRAINT

Malik is, by her own reckoning, someone who feels intensely and censors herself in equal measure. It is not an unusual combination, but she articulates it with unusual precision. "I have gotten really good at processing all of this privately," she says, "but the songwriter in me is more expressive and brave." Her music, she explains, represents a vulnerability she rarely allows herself in daily life — the songs offering shape to something that otherwise resists language entirely. "The words and sounds feel like they offer shape to something amoebic and elusive.“ >>



It is one of the more beautiful things a songwriter can say about why they write. Not to communicate, exactly. To contain. This quality — emotional intelligence worn lightly, feeling expressed through restraint rather than declaration — places Malik in a lineage of artists for whom the unsaid carries as much weight as the said. Think Feist at her most interior. Aldous Harding at her most oblique. Or, closer to home, the quieter corners of the Indian indie scene that rarely receive the international attention they deserve.

ON WOMEN, THE INDUSTRY, AND THE WEIGHT OF BEING WATCHED

Malik's relationship with India's independent music ecosystem is long, clear-eyed, and not entirely romantic. She came up when everything felt new and possible — and watched, over time, as the industry began to reward templates over talent, optimization over originality. "You see the repetition in the cycles," she says, "the ways in which you are expected to morph into optimised versions of what people wish to see, and the romance of it all fades."

For women, she adds, this is "all the more nuanced and mercurial." She says it without drama, which somehow makes it land harder. Lately, many of her music students are young women trying to break into the scene — their challenges, she notes, are uniquely gendered, and they remind her viscerally of her own early years. "I realise how much I've had to cement myself to keep this going," she says. "And in more ways than one am reminded of how much needs to change for women to feel like they don't need to work harder to be in the same room as male colleagues." There is no performance of outrage here. Just clarity. It is, perhaps, the most political Malik allows herself to be, and it is more effective for its understatement.

TEACHING AS COUNTERPOINT

Away from her own music, Malik has built a parallel life as a music educator — a role that began as supplementary income and became, gradually, something much more central to how she understands herself as an artist. "With teaching, I don't feel the need to prove a point," she says. "It isn't about me."

In a world that trains performing artists to be perpetually self-referential — always building the brand, always feeding the algorithm, always contending with relevance — this is no small thing. Teaching has given Malik something the stage cannot: the specific grace of de-centring herself. Her students, she is careful to note, are not extensions of her. They are individuals who have chosen to trust her with their voices. She takes that distinction seriously. "Working with voices of all ages has helped me build empathy and patience," she says, "which I think are crucial for songwriting." It is the kind of observation that sounds simple until you sit with it.

MOH-MAAYA AND THE PANDEMIC INTERIOR

The songs on ‘Sad Songs For A Sunday’ were shaped, in significant part, by the pandemic — a period Malik describes as the deepest inward journey of her life. It coincided with intense personal challenge, and together the two experiences forced a reckoning with something she identifies as central to her personality: the illusion of control.

She speaks of long conversations with her grandmother about Moh-Maaya — the philosophical concept, rooted in Indian thought, that desire creates mirages, that our attachments distort what we see. "I leaned into these subjectivities heavily during the pandemic and found a lot of honesty in them," she says. What the stripping-back revealed was not emptiness, but clarity: music, family, a simple life. The things that had always mattered, newly visible. It is a sensibility that feels both deeply personal and quietly universal — and it is precisely what makes this EP resonate beyond its immediate emotional context.

WHAT SHE WANTS YOU TO HEAR

When we ask Malik what she hopes listeners take from ‘Sad Songs For A Sunday’ — not just about the music, but about her, as a person navigating the ordinary extraordinary complexity of being alive — she pauses in the way she does before saying something true. "In some ways it's really simple," she says, "and I hope people hear that in the music too. That she, like everyone, is trying to figure it all out."

There is no grand thesis here. No carefully packaged artist statement. Just a woman who writes songs because it is the most honest thing she knows how to do — and who has finally, after a long and winding and very particular journey, decided that is enough. On the evidence of this EP, it is considerably more than enough.

THE WOMEN ARE THE STORY

How BANANA labs is Rewriting the Rules of Fashion, One Block Print at a Time!

By the time most fashion graduates are still hunting for internships, Mariyam Khatri had already worked in sustainability at Adidas London, completed a master's degree at one of the world's most prestigious arts institutions, and moved back to India to revive a craft that colonial modernity had spent decades trying to erase. She was twenty-something, and she was only getting started.

There is a courage required to move in the opposite direction to an industry. When fashion's dominant narrative for the better part of three decades has been one of acceleration — faster cycles, cheaper labour, disposable trends and the relentless democratisation of abundance — it takes genuine conviction to slow down, to look back, to insist that the hands doing the making are not merely a supply chain consideration but the very soul of the enterprise. That conviction is what BANANA labs, the India-based womenswear and textiles label, was built on. And it is, from its founding to its factory floor, entirely women-led.

Co-founded by mother and daughter Nuzhat Khatri and Mariyam Khatri, BANANA labs emerged at the precise cultural moment when the global fashion conversation was finally — if belatedly — beginning to reckon with its own wreckage. The year was 2020. The world had been brought to a standstill. Supply chains, long treated as invisible infrastructure, had suddenly become visible in their fragility. Garment workers, overwhelmingly women and overwhelmingly poor, were abandoned by the brands they had served. And in London, a young woman with a first-class grounding in textiles and a freshly minted UAL master's degree in Fashion and Sustainability was boarding a flight back to Rajasthan, armed with an education and a lineage.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF A DIFFERENT KIND OF COMPANY

To understand what makes BANANA labs structurally unusual — not just rhetorically progressive, but architecturally different — you have to understand who holds power within it. Mariyam serves as CEO and Creative Director, steering the brand's vision at the highest level. Her mother Nuzhat, an operations and management specialist who brings deep experience from the family's lineage in handblock printing, manages systems and teams with the precision of someone who has spent years building things that last. Every management position within the company is held by a woman. The seamstresses and craftswomen who do the physical work of making are not footnotes; they are the operational centre of gravity. This is worth pausing on, because the language of women's empowerment is deployed so liberally in contemporary fashion marketing that it has, in many cases, been almost entirely hollowed out. Brands place women of colour on their campaign moodboards whilst the boardrooms above them remain unchanged. They speak of artisanal communities whilst those communities receive fractional wages. BANANA labs does not occupy this territory. The women are not the story's decoration. They are its structure.

"Brand's mission is to preserve Indian craft heritage through innovation by creating ethically made, modern and affordable handcrafted products in collaboration with designers and local artisans."

Wonderland Magazine UK has already identified Mariyam as a future-shaping voice in fashion — a designation that carries weight precisely because Wonderland has a keen eye for the designers who are doing something genuinely new rather than performing novelty. The brand itself has been shortlisted for the Elle Graduate Awards and the Creative Conscience Awards, and has taken home the Sustainable Innovator Award 2023 and, most recently, the AMALA Earth Day Award for Most Responsible Brand in 2024. These are not participation trophies. In an era when sustainability awards are themselves under scrutiny for rewarding greenwashing, AMALA Earth's recognition carries particular credibility — the platform exists specifically to surface brands that have made responsibility operational rather than aspirational.

THE GRAMMAR OF SUSTAINABILITY

The most important thing to understand about BANANA labs' relationship to sustainability is that it precedes the brand itself. Mariyam did not discover sustainability as a marketable differentiator and work backwards from it. She studied it rigorously at the University of the Arts London — an institution whose Fashion and Sustainability programme is among the most intellectually serious in the world — and then applied that learning to a practice she had inherited by birth. The family's lineage in handblock printing, one of Rajasthan's most ancient and technically demanding crafts, gave her a material vocabulary. Her education gave her the analytical tools to understand why that vocabulary matters. Handblock printing is, by its nature, slow fashion. Each print requires a carved wooden block, a steady hand, a practiced eye, and an unhurriable process. It cannot be outsourced to an algorithm or replicated at industrial scale without losing the thing that makes it worth having. In an economy that has spent forty years treating craft as a charming anachronism, BANANA labs treats it as a technological solution — one that has been refined over centuries and is, by any rigorous metric, kinder to the environment than the synthetic alternatives that replaced it.

The materials chosen by the label are natural, vegan, and biodegradable. This is not a list of accreditations assembled for the benefit of a sustainability slide deck; it is a coherent material philosophy. Natural fibres — cotton, linen, plant-dyed silks — are chosen because they perform differently on the body and on the earth. They breathe. They age well. They return to the soil rather than accumulating in landfill for five hundred years. In a moment when microplastic contamination from synthetic textiles has become one of the more alarming emerging stories in environmental science — with researchers finding polyester fibres in human blood, in breast milk, in the deepest marine trenches — the choice to work entirely in natural materials is not nostalgic. It is urgent. >>

MAKING AS A POLITICAL ACT

BANANA labs' commitment to marginalised communities is where its sustainability philosophy becomes most explicitly social. The artisans, seamstresses, and suppliers who work within the BANANA labs ecosystem receive full and fair employment. This is stated plainly in the brand's values, without the hedging language and unverifiable third-party certification that many larger brands hide behind. Every person who is part of the process is accounted for. This matters for reasons that go well beyond ethical branding. The handcraft industries of South Asia are among the most economically precarious in the world, and they are disproportionately staffed by women — women who have often absorbed decades of wage suppression, informality, and the invisibility that comes from working in industries that the global fashion system has strip-mined for aesthetic content whilst returning almost nothing of the value created. The Rana Plaza disaster of 2013, which killed 1,134 garment workers in Bangladesh — most of them women — was not an aberration. It was the logical outcome of a supply chain architecture designed to externalise cost onto the bodies of the most vulnerable.

BANANA labs is a small brand. It is not, at this stage of its existence, going to single-handedly restructure the economics of South Asian craft labour. But what it models — and the modelling function of small, principled brands is something the fashion industry chronically underestimates — is a different architecture entirely. One in which the people doing the making are not costs to be minimised but skills to be valued, and in which the CEO and the seamstress are both, in their different ways, women whose labour the business is built to honour.

THE INTERSECTION WHERE FASHION BECOMES THOUGHT

Mariyam Khatri describes her creative practice as existing at the intersection of fashion, art, and craft — a formulation that sounds, in other mouths, like the kind of vague interdisciplinarity that design schools produce in abundance. In her case, it is precise. Her academic training in textiles gave her a technical understanding of fabric that most designers lack. Her sustainability master's gave her a systemic understanding of supply chains, material science, and environmental impact. Her family heritage gave her a living archive of craft knowledge that no curriculum can replicate. And her time at Adidas London, working as a sustainability expert within one of the world's largest sportswear companies, gave her an inside view of what institutional sustainability looks like when it is taken seriously and when it is not. The result is a designer who thinks in systems. The collections BANANA labs produces are not simply beautiful objects — though they are that, rigorously and unmistakably. They are arguments. Arguments about what fashion can look like when it refuses to separate aesthetics from ethics, when it insists that the beauty of a garment is inseparable from the conditions in which it was made, when it treats craft knowledge as intellectual property rather than free cultural resource.



The University of the Arts London has featured the brand's work. So has the Indian Institute of Crafts and Design — an institution whose entire mandate is the preservation and evolution of India's artisanal heritage. The New Indian Express has covered it. The Heroine's Journey, the cultural platform dedicated to amplifying women building new narratives, has told its story. These are not the usual media placements of a fashion brand working a PR strategy. They are the footprint of a project that is doing several things at once: reviving craft, creating sustainable employment, rethinking luxury, and placing women at the centre of all of it.

WHY THIS MOMENT

The global fashion industry is, by any honest accounting, in crisis. Not a financial crisis — it remains one of the most profitable industries on earth — but a legitimacy crisis. Consumer trust is eroding. Greenwashing litigation is accelerating. The EU's Digital Product Passport legislation, coming into force incrementally over the next several years, will require brands operating in European markets to provide full material traceability, ending the era in which a sustainably-worded marketing campaign could substitute for an actually sustainable supply chain. The reckoning is structural, not cyclical. Into this moment, BANANA labs arrives with something that is both deeply traditional and genuinely radical: a brand built entirely on values rather than retrofitted to them. Its sustainability is not a pivot. Its women's leadership is not a diversity initiative. Its craft knowledge is not a trend. These are the foundations.

In the lexicon of contemporary fashion, "slow" has become a compliment. But BANANA labs is not simply slow. It is deliberate — in its materials, its methods, its hierarchies, its ethics. It is a brand that knows exactly what it is doing and why, and that communicates that knowledge through the objects it makes. The hands that do the making — the craftswomen in Rajasthan who carry centuries of technique in their fingers — are, in the BANANA labs universe, not the bottom of the supply chain. They are its origin. And in fashion, as in everything, origin is everything.

SUNLIT ANARCHY

Golden hour drifts across still waters as POPP DAPP Global Media & Magazine's May–July 2026 editorial reimagines tailoring through the language of rebellion and romance. Structured silhouettes soften against the fluidity of the river, where sharp suiting, silk scarves, pleated drapes, and decadent textures collide in cinematic harmony. The spread explores a new generation of fashion freedom, one untouched by rigid binaries and predictable glamour. Every frame feels suspended between nostalgia and futurism, between movement and stillness. Against the raw geometry of the ferry, the models embody fearless elegance, transforming transit into theatre and sunlight into couture. Fashion here is not worn. It commands.

MODELS SHARAN UDAY SHETTY & VEDIKA | PHOTOGRAPHER ABHISHEK GAIKWAD | HAIR DISHA KALRA | MAKEUP NISHITA GANDHI | STYLIST URVASHI HEMLANI

MODEL **SHARAN UDAY SHETTY** | PHOTOGRAPHER **ABHISHEK GAIKWAD** | HAIR **DISHA KALRA** | MAKEUP **NISHITA GANDHI** | STYLIST **URVASHI HEMLANI**

MODEL **VEDIKA** | PHOTOGRAPHER **ABHISHEK GAIKWAD** | HAIR **DISHA KALRA** | MAKEUP **NISHITA GANDHI** | STYLIST **URVASHI HEMLANI**

MODELS **SHARAN UDAY SHETTY & VEDIKA** | PHOTOGRAPHER **ABHISHEK GAIKWAD** | HAIR **DISHA KALRA** | MAKEUP **NISHITA GANDHI** | STYLIST **URVASHI HEMLANI**

In the dim glow of forgotten treasures and gilded relics, POPP DAPP Global Media & Magazine's May–July 2026 editorial unveils a world where vintage decadence collides with untamed glamour. Draped in leopard sequins, shadowed faux fur, and razor-sharp boots, the muse moves like a rare artefact within a cabinet of curiosities. Every object surrounding her feels charged with memory, excess, and mystery, transforming the frame into a theatrical study of power dressing and sensual nostalgia. The editorial captures fashion at its most seductive: bold, unapologetic, and richly cinematic. Here, luxury is not polished perfection. It is texture, instinct, darkness, and desire preserved beautifully through time.

Dust, Drama & Desire!

MODEL **VERONICA** | PHOTOGRAPHER **ABHISHEK GAIKWAD** | MAKEUP **NISHITA GANDHI** | STYLIST **URVASHI HEMLANI**

MODEL **VERONICA** | PHOTOGRAPHER **ABHISHEK GAIKWAD** | MAKEUP **NISHITA GANDHI** | STYLIST **URVASHI HEMLANI**

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MODEL **VANESSA NORONHA** | PHOTOGRAPHER **ABHISHEK GAIKWAD** | HMU **NISHITA GANDHI** | STYLIST **URVASHI HEMLANI**

Draped like a Prayer

Bathed in pastoral light and framed against ancient earth, POPP DAPP Global Media & Magazine's May–July 2026 editorial explores the quiet collision between innocence and power. Billowing white volumes, sculptural pleats, and crimson layers evoke a modern heroine suspended between mythology and contemporary couture. The silhouette feels almost devotional, yet undeniably commanding, transforming softness into strength through precision and restraint. Set within the stillness of open fields, the image breathes with cinematic calm while carrying an undercurrent of rebellion. Every detail speaks of romantic futurism, where femininity is no longer fragile but monumental. Fashion here becomes ritualistic, poetic, and deeply rooted in emotional grandeur.

MODEL **VANESSA NORONHA** | PHOTOGRAPHER **ABHISHEK GAIKWAD** | HMU **NISHITA GANDHI** | STYLIST **URVASHI HEMLANI**



MODEL **VANESSA NORONHA** | PHOTOGRAPHER **ABHISHEK GAIKWAD** | HMU **NISHITA GANDHI** | STYLIST **URVASHI HEMLANI**

MODEL **VANESSA NORONHA** | PHOTOGRAPHER **ABHISHEK GAIKWAD** | HMU **NISHITA GANDHI** | STYLIST **URVASHI HEMLANI**



THE GARMENT THAT SAYS: 'I WAS HERE'

MAYANK, the quietly disruptive founder of I'M HERE, is building India's most emotionally charged fashion label — one story, one fabric, one town in Bihar at a time!

Most fashion brands begin with a mood board. This one began with a typo. Mayank was mid-message, mid-crisis, mid-something he is still learning to fully name, when his fingers landed wrong on the keyboard. "Im.here" — two words, a stray period, and suddenly a hyperlink. The kind of accidental poetry that only means something if you're paying attention. He was. And in that small blue underline, something that had been circling him for years finally landed: a name, a philosophy, a declaration. Not a brand concept. A survival statement.

I'M HERE, the label Mayank has since built from that moment of fracture, is now one of the more quietly radical propositions in Indian premium fashion. It does not do streetwear. It does not do heritage revival. It does not chase a Western template or dress itself in the borrowed language of Seoul or Milan. What it does — with a precision that feels almost confrontational in an industry addicted to noise — is tell stories through cloth. Real ones. His own. This is the conversation we had about what happens when a founder refuses to separate the personal from the professional, the artistic from the commercial, and the deeply local from the genuinely global. >>



Let's begin with the work itself. How do you take something as intangible as a feeling and make it wearable without it losing what it actually is?

Mayank leans forward slightly, as if the question requires physical engagement. "The process itself is an art," he says. "It's about knowing when to stop." He pauses, and you sense this is not a rehearsed answer. "A lot of designers keep adding, keep pushing — and that's exactly where the essence gets lost. For me, it starts with a feeling or a story I want to tell. The entire process is about finding how to make that visible through fabric, placement, proportion — without saying too much."

He is careful to distinguish between influence and imitation. Some pieces draw from classical masters, he explains, but most originate from something far more interior: personal observation, felt experience, a story he has been carrying without quite knowing where to put it. "The painting or the reference is just the starting point. What I'm really asking is — how do I make someone 'feel' this when they wear it? How does the story show through the piece without needing an explanation?" He settles back. "When I can answer that, the design is done. When I can't, it isn't ready yet." There is something almost meditative about this threshold — the moment of 'enough' — in an industry that competes largely on excess. It is also, notably, a standard that cannot be faked. Either the piece carries it or it doesn't.

And when it comes to art history — how deliberately do you reach for it?

"Always conscious, never forced," he says without hesitation. "I don't sit with a history book and pick a reference. It comes from what's living in my head at that moment — what story I'm trying to get out." Sometimes that gravitational pull leads toward a classical painting. Other times, the visual language is entirely his own. What matters to him is the effect, not the lineage. "I'm not trying to educate anyone through the clothes. I'm trying to make them feel something."

He makes an observation here that is worth sitting with: that today's digitally native audience is far hungrier for depth than the fashion industry has traditionally assumed. "They're tired of surface level," he says. "When something has a real thought behind it, they sense it — even if they can't articulate it. That's the connection I'm chasing with every piece." In an era of algorithmic content and micro-trend cycles, this is either an act of faith or an act of defiance. Perhaps both.

Walk us through the process, start to finish.

He describes a sequence that is, at its core, a series of increasingly committed acts of translation. It begins not with a sketch but with a thought — something unresolved, something pressing. "That thought becomes the soul of the piece before anything else happens." Story comes next: who is wearing this, what are they feeling, what does the garment need to say on their behalf? Illustration follows, where the visual language begins to solidify. Then fabric — and here Mayank's tone shifts, becomes more emphatic. "This is where most people rush and where most designs die." The wrong fabric, he insists, collapses everything regardless of how beautiful the illustration is. "Fabric decides how the art moves, how it breathes, how it feels against skin." It is, in his framework, not a material decision but an emotional one.

The mockup stage is where intention meets reality — where placement is interrogated, proportion is challenged, and a great deal gets changed. And then the final step: knowing when to stop. "That moment of certainty is what I'm chasing through the entire process." It comes, or it doesn't. When it doesn't, the piece waits.

The name itself — tell us where it actually comes from.

He smiles at this, and for a moment the brand strategist recedes entirely. "It wasn't planned," he says. "I typed 'Im.here' in a message and it turned into a hyperlink. A slip of the finger — but for me it was a sign. My breaking point. My beginning." The philosophical weight he has built around those two words is not retrofitted branding. It emerged organically from what the moment actually meant to him. "I'M HERE means I exist. I choose to show up. I refuse to disappear." He connects this directly to the history of art itself — every painter, every sculptor, every person who ever made something, he argues, was at root making the same declaration. 'I was here. I felt something. It mattered.'

"I want every customer who wears I'M HERE to feel that same thing. Not just dressed. Present. Chosen. Seen." He quotes a line from the brand's website with the quiet pride of someone who wrote it and meant every word: 'I don't design clothes for you to wear. I design stories for you to live.'

"That's the most honest thing about the brand," he says. >>



There's been significant celebrity visibility — Rishabh Pant on Netflix, among others. How do you protect the voice when the audience expands?

"The artistic voice stays intact because it was never built around visibility in the first place," he says. "It was built around a point of view. And a point of view doesn't change just because more people are watching."

The celebrity alignment — Rishabh Pant, Siddharth Nigam, Prince Narula, Mr Faisu, various standups — has been, he insists, entirely organic. None of it was engineered. "They all came to the brand because something in it spoke to them." The Rishabh Pant moment is the one that resonates most clearly: worn on Netflix, on one of India's most-watched entertainment formats, without a single conversation prior. "That's the only kind of visibility worth having. When the right people are drawn to you organically, it reinforces the voice rather than diluting it." The rule he holds himself to is clean: every creative decision starts with the story, not the audience.

And production — there's something genuinely unusual about where these pieces are made.

This is where Mayank's voice takes on a different quality — quieter, more personal. Every I'M HERE piece is produced in Gaya, a small town in Bihar. His hometown. "In doing that, we're generating real income and livelihoods for families in that community." He does not dramatize this. He doesn't need to. In a premium fashion landscape where ethical production is frequently performative, rooting the entire supply chain in the place you are actually from is simply unusual. It is also, he suggests, non-negotiable. "I'M HERE was never just about building a brand. It was about building something that means something beyond the garment." The Gaya origin is not a footnote. It is load-bearing. It is part of the answer to the question of authenticity that every premium label eventually has to face.

Finally — label or movement?

"Honestly, both," he says. "And I think that's what makes this real." He is clear-eyed about the commercial ambition — the timelines, the targets, the eventual stores. "I know exactly where this is going commercially and I'm building toward it every single day." But the reason the brand carries cultural weight, he argues, cannot be manufactured. "It either exists in what you've built or it doesn't. With I'M HERE it exists."

He wants to build the largest fashion brand India has ever produced. He wants it to carry art, romance, and human identity to the top — not as brand language, but as structural foundation. A typo became a hyperlink. A hyperlink became a name. A name became a declaration. And somewhere in Gaya, Bihar, that declaration is being stitched, one considered piece at a time, into something that refuses — quite literally — to disappear.

THE VOICE THAT PIVOTED

RJ ANMOL ON PASSION, PICKLEBALL, AND BUILDING INDIA'S MOST PREMIUM SPORTS EMPIRE!

"Will Replace Gold with Pickleball as the No 1 networking sport in India"

- 'RJ Anmol- Founder, Grav8 Sports

There's a confidence that comes from having spent years talking to strangers and making them feel understood. **RJ ANMOL** built a career on exactly that — a warmth through the speaker that felt personal, intimate, almost conspiratorial. For over a decade, he was one of Indian radio's most recognisable voices, the kind that soundtracked morning commutes and late-night drives. Then, quietly but decisively, he walked away from the microphone and into a boardroom. The destination? Grav8 Sports — a company with an audacious ambition: to make pickleball the number one networking sport in India, dethroning golf from a throne it has held for generations.

Sitting down with POPP DAPP, Anmol is precisely what you'd expect — articulate, unhurried, disarmingly self-aware. But what surprises you is the consistency of his inner logic. For a man whose career appears, from the outside, to be a series of dramatic reinventions, he sees it all as one unbroken thread. "From the outside, radio and sports look very different," he says, leaning forward. "Radio, then YouTube, now pickleball — people see completely different shades. But from the inside, it's just one thing: passion. That one word has followed me through my entire life." It's a simple philosophy, but it carries real weight when you trace the arc. Anmol did a Master's in advertising — a practical, career-oriented choice — but passion pulled him toward the mic instead. When social media arrived, passion pushed him toward YouTube. And when pickleball landed in India with a quiet thud that only a few people initially noticed, passion told him this was the next move.

THE STORYTELLER'S ADVANTAGE

What Anmol brings to Grav8 Sports that most sports entrepreneurs simply don't have is an intuitive understanding of narrative — not marketing copy, but genuine human storytelling. "Even as a small kid, I've always been a storyteller," he reflects. "And I truly believe that whichever field you're in — radio, entrepreneurship, sports — you have to be a storyteller, because ultimately, you have to sell." On radio, he was selling himself, his personality, his taste. At Grav8, he's selling an experience, a lifestyle, a vision of what sport in India can look and feel like. The product has changed. The craft hasn't.

This storytelling instinct directly shapes how Grav8 constructs its sporting properties. The company's flagship offering — the CXO Pickleball League — is, by design, a narrative as much as it is a competition. It is India's first pickleball league exclusively for C-suite executives, senior corporate leaders, and top-tier decision-makers. It is, in essence, the boardroom taken to the court. "We looked at the landscape and made a deliberate choice," Anmol explains. "There are open tournaments happening in every city. There are big national leagues. We rejected both those routes. Our niche is premium and corporate."

REDEFINING PREMIUM IN INDIAN SPORT

The word "premium" gets thrown around recklessly in modern business. Anmol is refreshingly specific about what it means at Grav8. "Premium is about the experience you take back home," he says. "From the moment you register, the kind of communication we send you before the event even begins — that's where premium starts. It doesn't start when you walk through the door." At the CXO Pickleball League, attendees play alongside Saina Nehwal, Grav8's brand ambassador and one of India's most celebrated athletes. There are private-label paddles, high-quality branded playing kits, live chefs preparing food courtside, curated venues, premium goodie bags of meaningful value, and an atmosphere designed to blur the line between sport and luxury lifestyle event. But beyond the aesthetics, Anmol keeps returning to something less tangible — the memory.

"When people go back home, are they taking a memory? Are they taking an experience that they'll talk about? That's the real measure of premium." The strategic vision behind this is sharper than it first appears. Golf has long been the default sport of India's corporate class — a place where deals are made, relationships forged, networks deepened. Anmol wants pickleball to claim that space. Not just because pickleball is faster, cheaper, more accessible, and far easier to learn, but because Grav8 is structuring its events around the very thing golf provides: meaningful, high-quality networking. "We are hell-bent on replacing golf as the networking sport of India," he says, with a calm certainty that makes the ambition sound less like bravado and more like a plan already in motion.

WHY PICKLEBALL, WHY NOW

The sport itself is doing a lot of the heavy lifting. Pickleball is one of the fastest-growing sports on the planet, and its rise in India has been rapid. Anmol articulates why with the precision of someone who has clearly thought about it deeply. "India is not really a sporting country — we love watching sport, but how much we love *playing* is a different question. Life takes over. You get a job, you get caught in a routine, and sport falls away." Pickleball, he argues, is the antidote. "Put someone on a pickleball court who has never held a racket in their life and within 20 to 30 minutes, they're hitting the ball and feeling good about themselves. A 20-year-old and a 60-year-old can share the same court. That inclusivity is remarkable." Grav8's second league, already in the works, combines pickleball and padel — a twin-sport format that broadens the appeal while maintaining the premium positioning. A third and fourth concept are already being mapped out. >>



FEAR, FAILURE, AND THE FOUNDER'S MINDSET

When asked about the fears that accompany any transition from a stable, celebrated career to the uncertainty of entrepreneurship, Anmol pauses — but not because the question is difficult. It seems genuinely not to apply. "Frankly, I don't have fears in life," he says. "The one fear most people carry is the fear of failure. I don't have that because I've never seen failure as failure. Every time something didn't go the way others expected, I never saw it that way. When you don't carry that fear, it changes everything."

His advertising background feeds directly into his commercial instincts. "Even during my radio days, I would create a concept and then go and sell it myself, because I knew how I'd built it and what story lived inside it. Creative ideas without commercial reality are just happy daydreams. ROI matters. That's not a compromise — that's the discipline."

SUCCESS ON HIS OWN TERMS

On legacy and long-term vision, Anmol is characteristically grounded. He doesn't think in five-year horizons — "even five days is a stretch," he laughs — but he trusts his co-founder to hold the organisational roadmap while he inhabits the present, generating ideas and executing with immediacy. What he is clear about is this: success is entirely self-defined. "I've learned over the years that success has to be measured completely from my own point of view — not by anyone outside. If I set a parameter and I achieve it, that's success. Full stop."

For a man who has reinvented himself multiple times without ever losing the thread, that might be the most valuable thing RJ Anmol has to say — not about pickleball, not about premium sports, but about the architecture of a life built on knowing yourself well enough to always play your own game.

Alchemy Of Tradition & Modernity

HOUSE OF AADYAA BY SAYALEE MARATHE

In an age obsessed with speed, House of Aadyaa chooses slowness. Not the kind that falls behind the world, but the kind that understands craftsmanship cannot be rushed. Every curve of silver, every intricate motif, every handcrafted detail emerging from Aadyaa's universe carries the quiet confidence of something created with intention. The brand does not merely sell jewellery. It preserves sentiment, celebrates cultural identity, and transforms heritage into something deeply contemporary.

Founded by Sayalee Marathe, House of Aadyaa has emerged as one of India's most distinctive silver jewellery brands, blending traditional Maharashtrian artistry with modern design language. Yet the story of Aadyaa is not only about jewellery. It is about reinvention. About intuition overpowering predictability. About a woman trained in engineering and corporate systems deciding that creativity deserved a seat at the centre of her life. The result is a brand that feels deeply rooted while remaining globally relevant.

THE WOMAN BEHIND THE VISION

At 37, Sayalee Marathe's journey reads less like a conventional entrepreneurial roadmap and more like a carefully unfolding narrative of instinct and courage. A Computer Science graduate from Pune University, Sayalee entered the corporate world in 2005, building a successful career with global giants including IBM, Deloitte Consulting, and Capgemini. Her work as an SAP consultant offered stability, structure, and international exposure. Yet somewhere between presentations, consulting frameworks, and relocation assignments abroad, another world quietly called to her.

That world was handmade art.

During her travels to the United Kingdom, Sayalee discovered jewellery making through simple beading kits. What began as a hobby soon became a deeply personal creative outlet. She started designing pieces for herself, friends, and family, unaware that these small experiments would eventually become the foundation of a nationally recognised luxury silver label. When she relocated back to India in 2013, she decided to pursue this creative instinct further. Using locally available materials and posting her creations online, Sayalee began receiving an unexpectedly enthusiastic response. Social media audiences connected with the honesty and individuality of her designs. Aadyaa's digital journey had begun. At that stage, entrepreneurship was never part of the plan. But passion has a way of rewriting plans entirely.

"With hundreds of unique designs, Aadyaa is now known as a Premium Handmade Silver Jewellery brand globally."

THE BIRTH OF AADYAA

The name Aadyaa carries extraordinary meaning. Derived from the Sanskrit word "आद्य," it represents origin, creation, and the unparalleled essence of beginnings. It perfectly mirrors the philosophy behind the brand. House of Aadyaa was built on three deeply emotional pillars: Tradition. Soul. Happiness. This philosophy remains visible across every collection. Whether it is a delicate nath inspired by Maharashtrian bridal heritage, intricately crafted earrings echoing temple artistry, or collectible silver keepsakes designed for modern homes, Aadyaa creates pieces that feel emotionally alive. The jewellery is not designed to simply accessorise an outfit. It is designed to connect generations.

Sayalee's fascination with heritage forms became the heartbeat of the brand. In a market increasingly saturated with mass-produced aesthetics, Aadyaa chose authenticity. Traditional motifs inspired by flowers, sunlight, geometry, and cultural symbolism became signatures within the brand's visual language. The designs carry nostalgia without appearing dated. They feel rooted without becoming rigid. This balance has become Aadyaa's greatest strength.

FROM EXHIBITIONS TO RECOGNITION

The early years of Aadyaa were defined by persistence. Sayalee participated in nearly 150 exhibitions, personally showcasing her creations and building relationships with customers one interaction at a time. Those exhibitions became the brand's first real classrooms. They revealed what women truly wanted from handcrafted jewellery: individuality, emotional resonance, and authenticity. As Aadyaa's social media following grew rapidly, Sayalee made the life-changing decision to leave her corporate career behind and dedicate herself entirely to the brand. It was a leap powered not by certainty, but conviction. Soon after, Aadyaa launched its official website and began experimenting with newer techniques and materials. One of the most defining moments arrived in 2016 with the launch of "Itihaas," Aadyaa's first pure silver collection inspired by traditional Maharashtrian jewellery.The collection transformed the brand's trajectory.

Traditional Maharashtrian jewellery crafted entirely in silver had rarely been explored in such a detailed and modern format before. "Itihaas" felt fresh, culturally rich, and emotionally evocative. Customers responded instantly. Orders increased, operations expanded, and Aadyaa evolved from a promising passion project into a serious design house. Today, the brand offers a vast spectrum of handcrafted silver creations including earrings, kamarbandhs, rings, brooches, armbands, hair accessories, pooja ornaments, bookmarks, photo frames, and collectibles. Each collection continues to preserve the handcrafted essence that first defined the brand. >>



SAYALEE MARATHE
FOUNDER, HOUSE OF AADYAA

BUILDING A CULTURAL UNIVERSE

What makes House of Aadyaa particularly compelling is its ability to function beyond the language of retail. The brand has cultivated a cultural ecosystem around itself. Its Pune flagship space, spread across 4500 square feet, is more than a store. It is an immersive experience where design, heritage, storytelling, and community intersect. Events such as the Earrings Festival, Diwali showcases, and Rakhi specials have become highly anticipated gatherings for Aadyaa's loyal audience, affectionately called the "ATribe." The launch of Aayaam, Aadyaa's alternative cultural space, further deepened the brand's creative identity. It positioned the label not only as a jewellery destination, but as a curator of artistic conversations and experiences.

In 2022, Aadyaa expanded to Bandra, Mumbai, introducing its thoughtfully crafted universe to one of India's most style-conscious cities. The response was immediate and emotional, proving that heritage-led storytelling transcends geography.

A MODERN INDIAN SUCCESS STORY

House of Aadyaa's rise has also been recognised at prestigious national and international platforms. The brand was incubated at NSRCEL, IIM Bangalore in 2020 and became part of the inaugural Cornell Maha60 Program cohort. It received recognition from NITI Aayog and the United Nations in 2021 and later earned a Forbes Award in 2024. Yet despite the accolades, Aadyaa's identity remains remarkably intimate. At its core is still Sayalee Marathe, a creator deeply connected to people, stories, and craftsmanship. She leads her growing team with the same emotional investment that once inspired her to handcraft jewellery for loved ones. Her vision is clear: to make Aadyaa the first name people think of when they think of silver jewellery.

And perhaps what makes this ambition believable is the fact that Aadyaa never chased trends aggressively. Instead, it focused on building emotional permanence in an increasingly disposable world.

THE FUTURE WRITTEN IN SILVER

India's online silver jewellery segment still remains in its evolutionary phase, and Sayalee understands the scale of possibility that lies ahead. With expansion plans across cities including Delhi, Bengaluru, and Kolkata, alongside a stronger global e-commerce presence, House of Aadyaa is positioning itself for a future far larger than traditional retail definitions. But growth for Aadyaa does not seem driven by numbers alone. It is driven by meaning. Every Aadyaa creation carries a story waiting to become part of someone else's memory. A wedding heirloom. A festive ritual. A gift exchanged between generations. A quiet reminder of home worn across continents.

In a rapidly changing luxury landscape, House of Aadyaa offers something increasingly rare: emotional craftsmanship.

And perhaps that is why the brand feels less like a jewellery label and more like a living archive of modern Indian heritage, delicately sculpted in silver.

AMAN MATHUR

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