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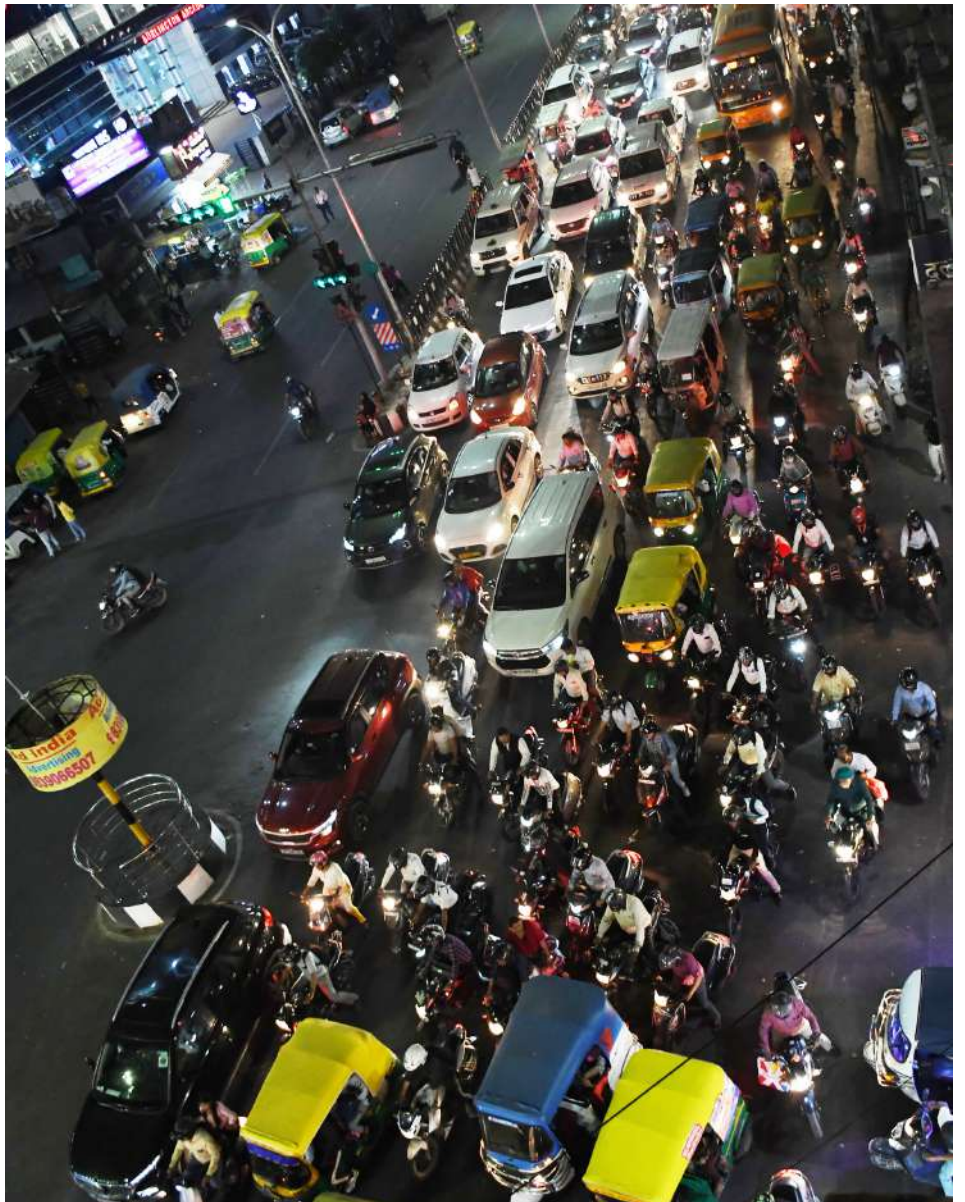
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Rush Hour RUMBLE

The chaos on Lucknow's roads



Fast fashion fever: Gen Z, thrift trends, and the hidden style cost

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Indian markets are always buzzing. In Lucknow's Aminabad, Delhi's Sarojini Nagar, or FC Road in Pune, stylish clothes literally spill out from roadside carts. These outfits are trendy, cheap, and often carry brand labels—drawing in thousands of young shoppers every day. Many of these clothes are second-hand. But few stop to ask where they come from—or where they end up. Behind these bargains lies a much bigger story.

India now imports more used clothes than any other country in the world. Between October 2023 and September 2024, over 10,000 shipments of second-hand garments arrived from countries like the US, China, and Canada. The market is booming, expected to cross USD 3.5 billion this year, and it's only

growing. Used clothing is often praised as environmentally friendly, but most Gen Z shoppers aren't buying it for that reason. Thrifting is now cool, affordable, and Instagram-worthy. Influencers show off 'thrift hauls,' and fashion videos on apps push people to try new looks more frequently. Repeating isn't about saving the planet—it's just a cheaper way to stay trendy.

"I follow influencers who post new looks daily," says Sania Khan, 19. "I used to shop at malls, but now I thrift because the styles are unique and I get more for less."

What often goes unnoticed is the damage caused by fast fashion—and even by used clothes. Panipat was once known for recycling textiles, but today, massive heaps of discarded clothes are burned or left to rot. Most garments are made of synthetic fabrics that take years to decompose. When washed, they re-

lease microplastics into water bodies. When burned, they emit harmful chemicals into the air.

The production process is equally damaging. Textile industries use enormous amounts of water and release chemical dyes into rivers, harming aquatic life and local communities. What seems like a harmless fashion choice is part of a much dirtier and longer chain.

"Everyone in my class shops second-hand now," says Raghav Mishra, 21, a fashion design student. "But very few of us think about why these clothes are so cheap—or where they end up."

Fast fashion hasn't disappeared; it's just changed form. It's not only about how fast we buy, but how quickly we discard—without thinking of the impact. Fashion may have a new face, but the cycle of excess and waste continues. And in the end, it's the planet that pays the price. ■





Picture: BHAVNA SONI

LOCKED DOORS & EMPTY PROMISES

The dark picture of Pink Toilets in major city markets

BHAVNA SONI

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

When the government launches schemes such as the Smart Cities Mission, Sulabh Suvidha Kendras, Sulabh Shauchalaya, Pink Booths, and Pink Toilets, on paper, these look like immensely beneficial. Sure, some of these work well. However, others exist merely in name, offering no real assistance. An on-the-ground survey by Expressions reveals the actual reality of one such facility.

Lucknow's Pink Toilet initiative was launched under the Smart City Mission to improve sanitation and safety for women. Around 72–74 pink toilets were

The Pink Toilets are rarely open. When they are, attendants charge ₹10, so I prefer the Sulabh facility, which charges shopkeepers just ₹2.

Mausmi

constructed across key areas, including Alambagh, Aminabad, Hazratganj, Chowk, and Gomti Nagar, on a budget of approximately ₹7.59 crore.

Expressions conducted an on-ground survey looking into the availability of this

facility in a few of the city's main market areas, such as Alambagh, Aminabad, Hazratganj and Bhoothnath.

When seven months pregnant, Rashmika found herself desperate for a restroom during a busy market day in Alambagh. She rushed towards the newly built Pink Toilet, hoping for relief—but was met with disappointment. Outside the closed stall, a man was collecting ₹10, yet no female attendant was on duty. Inside, the place was filthy, lacked even water and basic sanitation, and felt unsafe for any woman—let alone someone carrying a child. Deeply frustrated and embarrassed, Rashmika decided then and there never to return to the facility.

"There is this Chander Nagar Hospital, beside my bangle shop, and I usually access their washroom facility," said Farana (32), a bangle seller in Alambagh market. While there exists a Pink Toilet at the Alambagh market, it has been locked for the past 7-8 months now, it was discovered. Mausmi (32), a cloth seller in Alambagh for 23 years, said, "The Pink Toilets are rarely open. When they are, the attendant charges ₹10, so I prefer the Sulabh facility, which charges Rs 2 for shopkeepers."

The same is the situation in Aminabad market, confirms Akash (30), a salesperson at the Bata store opposite the Pink Toilet. He said, "It's been two years since it was built, but I've never seen it open."

While the Pink Toilets in Aminabad and Alambagh are often found locked, the situation in Hazratganj and Bhoothnath is even more concerning—they are non-existent.

In Hazratganj, a Pink Booth constable, Ranjana (29), confirmed there is no Pink Toilet in the main market, though women are allowed to use the booth's toilet in emergencies. A similar situation exists in Bhoothnath, where a flower seller, Geeta (37), stressed the need for a dedicated women's facility in the main markets of Lucknow.

Launching public benefit facilities—such as toilets, booths, or community centres—is easy. What matters is what happens after that: regular on the ground monitoring to ensure they're working in real life. Without that follow through, even the best intentions remain mere paper promises. ■

Raising cities, razed destinies



Picture: AAROHI SEEM

The harsh reality of our labour force

AAROHI SEEM

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

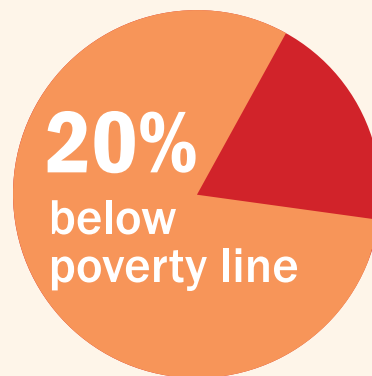
Almost daily, we wade through a concrete jungle, city, as we call it. We halt, ponder in amazement at the skyscrapers, astonished at all the advancement. Admire as much as we want, we tend to neglect the calloused hands that construct the city and the dreams that are sacrificed to raise our skylines.

A mother who carries bricks in one hand and a child in the other, a father who skips meals to pay for medicines, can hardly even stop in front of a gleaming building. Each of them has a story that nobody knows.

On a construction site along railroad tracks, a middle-aged Mayank wipes his forehead, drenched in the ravaging heat. He toils 12 hours a day, with no fixed tenure and medical care. His face creases not with age, but with struggles, as he toils from morning till evening.

But workers are not always men. A 29-year-old pregnant woman, Sunita Kumari, at the same location, spoke to Expressions: "My doctor has strictly ordered rest, but if I don't work, who will

Percentage of Labour Living Below Poverty Line



Regular salaried workers
₹19,010/ month

Self Employed
₹11,973/ month

Casual Labour
₹8,267/ month

Statista

look after my children?" Her belly bulges softly beneath a frayed saree as she carries those heavy bricks. She cannot afford to rest. Maternity leave, nutrition, or even basic healthcare are words foreign to her.

They sleep under tarpaulin tents, with

no electricity, sanitation, or security. The irony stands stark: those who construct homes don't have one for themselves!

Education is yet another aspiration sacrificed for existence. These workers' children are born and grow up on building sites, breathing dust in place of dreams. Ten-year-old Sonu plays barefoot among cement mixers, while his mother blends concrete mere meters away. "I wanted to go to school, but we had to move again to this new location," he whispers, with a bashful smile.

Seasonal migration is another bane. Workers move from place to place in search of employment, displacing their lives again and again.

Their suffering is not merely physical. It is also emotional and psychological. And it is inter-generational. Their strength is to be admired, but never romanticised. No one should have to live under this degree of hardship to make a living.

As citizens, we owe them more than just passing recognition. They deserve dignity, fair pay, access to healthcare, education for their children, but above all, to be seen and valued. Because every rising skyline stands on the silent sacrifices of forgotten lives. ■

Ageless or anxious? India's growing obsession with youth and aesthetic procedures

MARIA SIDDIQUI

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

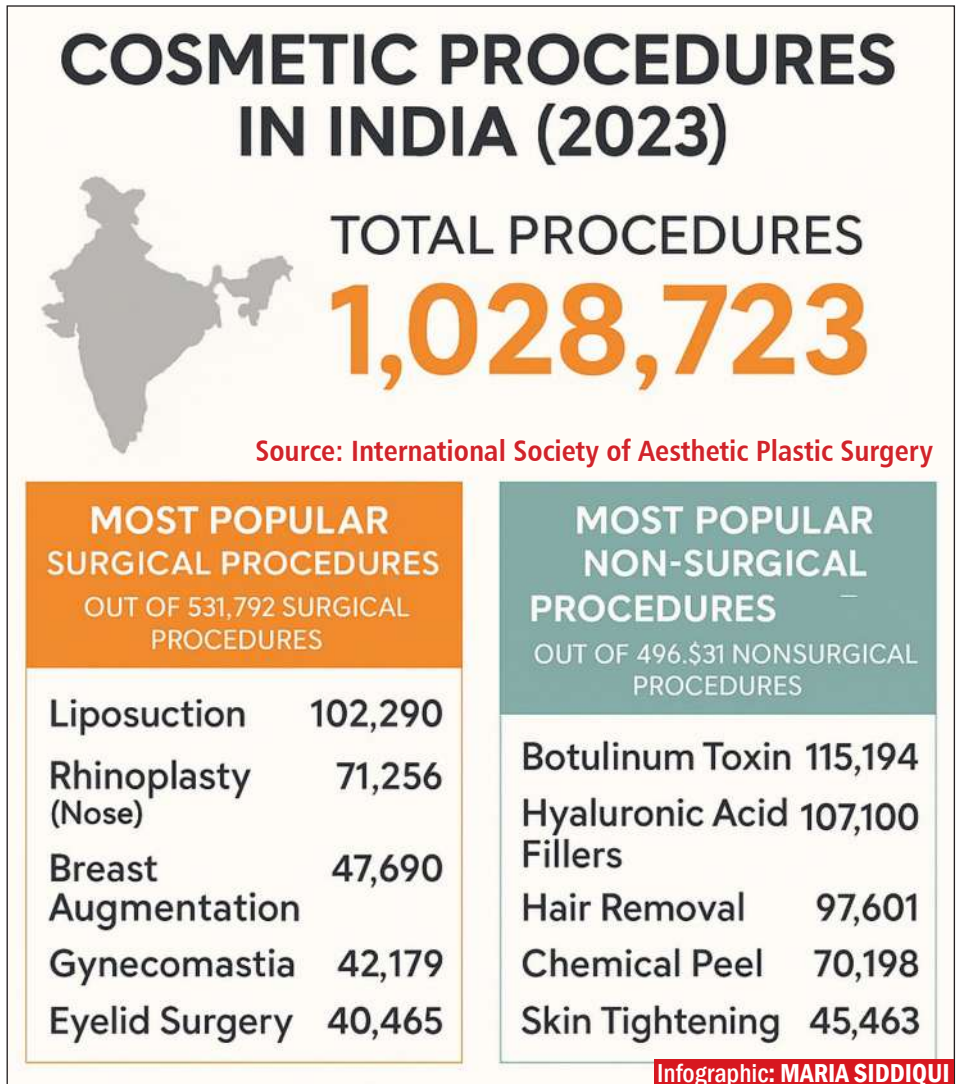
At the age of 32, Priyali, a Lucknow-based fashion PR executive, has already undergone two rounds of Botox. "It's about preserving and maintaining what I already have," she says. Growing up, she watched her mother and grandmother use herbal products in their daily routines and admired their commitment to aging naturally. Yet today, she finds herself embracing modern aesthetics. "Everyone's doing it, and now that I've seen its wonders on my skin, I plan to get it every year."

In a digital world dominated by filters, the pressure to look young has quietly become normal. What was once a privilege of celebrities has now become a routine for the working class. Botox, fillers, collagen boosters are no longer taboo but proudly shared in 'Glow-Up Diaries' across Instagram and YouTube. According to the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, India now ranks second in the world for non-surgical facial procedures performed by plastic surgeons. The country reports over 1 million aesthetic treatments annually, a number that continues to rise as younger generations enter the market.

"It's not about fixing your flaws," says Dr. Gupta, a Lucknow-based dermatologist. "It's about investing in your face the same way you invest in your skincare."

But this obsession isn't without consequences. Experts warn that these procedures, though marketed as safe, carry real risks. Incorrectly done injections can cause asymmetry, lumps, and even blindness. There are also rising reports of unlicensed surgeons and fake products being used across the country.

In a chilling case in 2024, Indian actress Chhavi Hussein suffered facial paralysis for over a year due to a Botox mishap. The influence of celebrity culture can't be ignored. From Bollywood stars to K-drama idols who seem to defy age,



many are backed by expert teams and post-production magic. The real burden falls on everyday people chasing that flawless, filtered look — often at great financial, physical, and emotional cost.

There's also an economic side to this trend. What starts as a small touch-up can turn into a regular cycle of expensive treatments — a kind of beauty subscription that hides its long-term cost behind perfect Instagram posts.

Yet, amid the hype, a quieter rebellion is growing. More people, including some celebrities, are rejecting the idea that age needs to be "fixed." From Konkona Sen Sharma's minimalist beauty to Ratna Pathak Shah's open criticism of cosmetic trends, the idea of aging gracefully is making a comeback. "I eat one table-

spoon of ghee every morning to get the dewy, flawless skin that everyone else is chasing through treatments," laughs Megha Rawat, 55, a homemaker. "I don't want to look 25. I want to look healthy at 55." She represents a shift towards wellness over cosmetics — a movement that focuses on mindful eating, sleeping, and natural skincare instead of syringes.

There's also rising awareness about anti-ageism. Many brands are moving away from terms like "anti-aging" and choosing more positive words like "pro-aging" or "skin longevity."

The future may lie in balance — where aesthetic tools are used responsibly and mindfully. Beauty doesn't fade with age. But maybe, our obsession with staying young should. ■

Rush hour rumble: The chaos on Lucknow's roads

AREENA MIRZA

Assistant Professor, Amity School of Communication

Driving in Lucknow during peak hours isn't just a commute—it's a real-life video game, minus the extra lives and power-ups. Let's start with our most meditative breed: the Zen Drivers. These peaceful souls, usually driving at a revolutionary 10 kmph in the exact middle of the road, give off strong "I'm in no hurry to get there" vibes! You, on the other hand, are frantically racing against time to make it to your office's biometric scanner. But these slow cruisers! They're either deep in conversation on their phones, texting like it's a poetry contest, or simply enjoying the spiritual experience of wasting your time. Honk all you want—they won't budge. Not left. Not right. Not even mentally. Then there's

the complete opposite: the Trigger-Happy Honkers. These folks believe that constant honking is the universal solution to traffic jams, red lights, narrow roads, or even global warming. Speaking of daredevils, bike riders in Lucknow seem to think they're auditioning for a stunt show. One minute you hear a sudden engine roar from behind, the next—whoosh! They've passed you at a distance of hardly a couple of centimetres, weaving like a cobra chasing caffeine.

And oh, the e-rickshaw drivers—true magicians of the road. No license? No problem! They appear out of nowhere, take turns sharper than trigonometry problems, and vanish just as quickly. An e-rickshaw swoops in at a 270-degree angle like it's breaking into your personal driving space. Then come the Lightning Bolts—those drivers who see the traffic

light turn yellow and treat it as a race flag. They fly past in a blur, fully prepared to scrape, bump, or dent anything in their path, just to avoid the shame of stopping at a red light. Meanwhile, you—the law-abiding citizen—wait patiently for the green, only to be passed by half the city from both sides.

Let's not forget the 'L' plated warriors, proudly displaying their Learner signs while moving at the speed of continental drift. Next up: the Monster Vehicles—trucks, dumpers, garbage vans, even JCBs that pick the exact 9 AM spot to begin their majestic journeys. Some spill garbage, others rain down construction materials, and a few carry iron rods that double their width. So next time you step into your car, take a deep breath, say a little prayer, and remember, driving in Lucknow isn't for beginners! ■



Beneath the old tree

The silent legacy of Lucknow's roadside barbers

SUPRIYA SRIVASTAVA

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

In the heart of the city, just beyond the polished windows of branded salons, a silent trade continues to thrive on footpaths and street corners. Roadside barbers, armed with no more than a comb, scissors, and a cracked mirror, serve hundreds of customers daily—many of whom avail themselves of the services more due to affordability than grooming.

With the rise of unisex salons, mobile barbers, and YouTube tutorials, many young people do not really need these roadside stalls. Besides, the newer generation of barbers is hesitant to take up the profession due to the lack of stability.

Across areas like Aminabad, Charbagh, Alambagh, and Malhaur Station, these informal setups offer haircuts for as little as ₹30—attracting daily wage earners, students, and pensioners. Despite lacking basic facilities such as electricity, water, or shelter, roadside barbers remain a vital part of the city's informal economy and social life.

Naim Bhai, 53, has been running his barbershop near Banthra for more than 25 years. His setup includes a wooden mirror stand, a plastic chair, and a trunk filled with scissors, razors, and bottles. "My father was a barber, and so was his father,"



Picture: SUPRIYA SRIVASTAVA

With the growth of branded salons in Lucknow, roadside barbers report a 30% decline in regular customers over the last five years.

Naim says during an interview with Expressions. "I haven't studied much, but these hands have supported the family."

Despite their resilience, roadside barbers face daily challenges. Weather is a major concern—rain ruins their tools and business, while extreme heat makes work difficult.

"He knows exactly how I like my haircut. He even asks about my grandchildren. Salons don't offer that personal touch. People often suggest fancy salons, but I always come back here," says Mohit Srivastava, a retired clerk who has been going to the same barbershop for fifteen years.

Barbers often form lasting relationships with their clients. They remember their preferred styles, life updates, and sometimes even behave like family. Some NGOs in the city have started training camps for these informal workers, offer-

ing hygiene kits and basic business education. Still, much more needs to be done to protect and dignify their work.

Jai Prakash, 38, who works near the Alambagh Bus Stand, shared with Expressions, "People think we're unhygienic. But I clean my blades, use fresh towels, and even wear gloves at times. I wish the Nagar Nigam would help us with shade and water.

Once, I was hit by a bike that jumped the curb. I filed a complaint, but nothing happened."

There is no formal licensing, no social security, and absolutely no insurance! Many struggle to get medical help or support in emergencies. Still, most have never thought of leaving the trade.

As our cities grow and modernise, it's important to remember those who work quietly at the heart of everyday life. Roadside barbers are one such group. With simple tools and years of skills, they offer more than just haircuts—they bring care, tradition, and a deep sense of community. ■

Mobile photography workshop unveils the power of vision

'A week-long immersive experience at Amity School of Communication reveals that great photography begins with observation, not equipment'



Pictures: SURESH SAHU

**SAANCHI ARORA
APRAJETA MUKHERJEE
SHREYANSHI SINGH**

Student, La Martiniere Girls' College, Lucknow



The above quote came alive during the "Mobile Photography Workshop" held at Amity School of Communication (ASCO), Amity University Lucknow Campus, from 21st to 26th July—a truly enriching and unforgettable experience for all of us.

We stepped into ASCO as curious and excited learners, eager to explore the world of mobile photography. By the end of the workshop, we had not only learned valuable techniques but also discovered a newfound appreciation for the art of seeing.

The workshop was led by Ace Photographer, Mr. T. S. Kalra (Trainer, ASCO), whose dynamic training style and personal mentorship stood out throughout. Right from the start, he created an inspiring and interactive environment, encouraging us to observe, ask questions, and think beyond the obvious.

No question went unanswered, and no concept was left unclear. His patient, hands-on approach made even technical aspects such as composition, lighting, angles, and framing feel natural and intuitive. Each session was thoughtfully designed, helping us understand that

great photography is less about fancy equipment—and more about vision. The venue was well-equipped, peaceful, and conducive to focused learning. The facilities, combined with the supportive atmosphere, boosted our confidence and creative energy.

A heartfelt thanks to Prof. (Dr.) Sanjay M. Johri, Head, Centre for Media Studies (CMS), and our Mass Communication teacher, Mrs. Puja Mishraw, for organising this insightful and empowering workshop.

We also extend our appreciation to Mr. Suresh Sahu (Sr. Campus Photog-

rapher), Mr. Abhishek Singh (Campus Photographer), and Ms. Shweta Wahie (Event Coordinator) for their efforts in making this event a smooth and memorable experience. This workshop ignited our passion for photography in ways we hadn't imagined. We learned that a good photograph isn't about a DSLR or an expensive phone—it's about how you see the world, use the light, and tell a story through your lens.

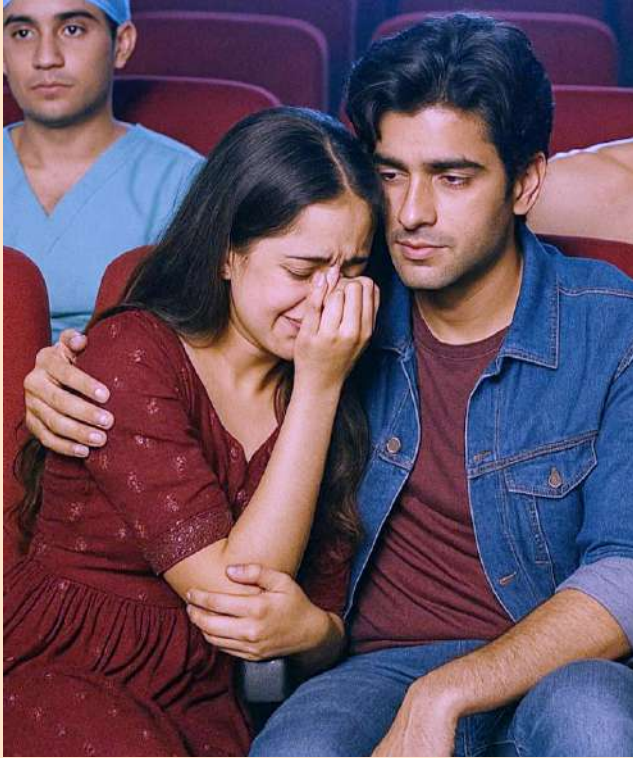
Thank you, CMS, ASCO, Amity University Lucknow Campus, for capturing our minds the way a perfect photo captures a moment. ■

Photos clicked by Students



SAIYAARA

A must-watch or just overhyped?



RAMZI HASAN

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

In a surprising twist, *Saiyaara*, a film whose first 10 seconds were mysteriously cut, sold nearly 10,000 tickets within the first hour of its premiere night. The film marks the massive debut of Ahaan Pandey (nephew of veteran actor Chunky Pandey) and Aneet Padda, instantly placing them among the biggest Bollywood debuts of 2025.

Released on 18th July, *Saiyaara* has broken records, crossing ₹200 crore on its second weekend, the fastest for any Hindi film this year. Its music, especially "Tum Hi Rehna" and "Saiyaara Reprise", struck an emotional chord, going viral and crossing 100 million views on YouTube!

Mohit Suri, often hailed as the "Romance King" of Indian Cinema, returned to the director's chair after a gap of three years. Deeksha, discussing the emotional impact of the film, remarked, "Mohit's

comeback has truly set the screens ablaze with emotion."

Yogesh Rokde, while reviewing the film, described it as a perfect blend of classics such as *Rockstar*, *Aashiqui 2*, *Kaho Naa Pyaar Hai*, and *Sanam Teri Kasam*. He noted that the story is tailored for the 18–25-year-old demographic.

According to a report by *The Times of India*, *Saiyaara* was initially conceptualised as *Aashiqui 3*. Mohit Suri revealed that Bhushan Kumar and Mukesh Bhatt had approached him to work on the script. However, due to creative disagreements and a rushed announcement, Suri decided to reimagine the concept independently, which eventually evolved into *Saiyaara*. The film's popularity has also ignited debate. While millions celebrate its emotional depth and relatability, a section of critics has labelled it "ordinary" and accused the audience of being immature. Responding to this, Deeksha countered, "Everyone has 100 problems in life. If someone wants to spend 100 minutes of peace in a cinema hall with

their own money, what's the issue?"

She further added, "When *Sanam Teri Kasam* released, people went back to re-watch it because it touched hearts. But when Bollywood offers something fresh, some real performances, soulful music, and the vision of a master director like Mohit Suri, some still criticise. Ironically, the same critics praise Hollywood, without a second thought."

Filming took place across picturesque locations such as St. Xavier's College (Mumbai), Manali, Istanbul, and Kashmir. While rumours circulate that *Saiyaara* is a remake of the Korean film, 'A Moment to Remember,' no official confirmation or data supports this claim.

As *Saiyaara* continues to make waves, one thing is clear. It's not just the film. The audience, too, has a role in shaping cinema culture. Films are the result of countless hours of hard work, and it becomes a shared responsibility to view them with maturity and appreciation. As Deeksha wisely put it, "A movie is for entertainment, not imitation." ■