

Expressions



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Age revision enough to curb maternal deaths?

Yashita Arora

From the ramparts of Red Fort Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed on Independence Day that government is considering to increase the legal age of marriage for girls that is currently 18 years. The PM said, "We have formed a committee to ensure that daughters no longer suffer from malnutrition and they are married off at the right age. As soon as the report is submitted,

EARLY MARRIAGE & CHILDBIRTH

appropriate decision will be taken about the age of marriage".

The prime minister apparently addressed finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman's call to augment the legal age of marriage from 18-21 years as a means to 'lower the maternal mortality rate and improving nutrition level'.

The task force that was set up on June 4 consisting 10 members un-

■ Even after raising the bar to 18 years, the child marriage rate has not decreased

■ India successfully brought down maternal mortality rate by 9 point in one year with a steep decline being reported in 11 states including Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh



“A large number of maternal deaths are due to issues related to pregnancy and childbirth. Girls who are married at early age are not physically and emotionally ready for motherhood

Muttreja | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, POPULATION FOUNDATION OF INDIA

der Ministry of Women and Child Development is currently headed by Jaya Jaitly. The finance minister earlier in her Union Budget speech indicated the lowering MMR (Maternal Mortality Rate) and improving nutritious level as a sign of improvement for our country.

But global research and Indian evidence argues that it is not feasible. Government rather than giving rhetoric should understand that such a move will not affect the ma-

ternal mortality rate or eradicate malnutrition and poverty. Even after raising the bar to 18 years, the child marriage rate has not decreased. To eradicate malnutrition and health related difficulties it needs to be understood that apart from social factor there are other pull & push factors like economic, environmental, lifestyle, dietary, government policies, political commitment that need to be addressed.

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Editor's Desk

Amid no major signs of Corona virus graph flattening and festival season of Dussehra, Chhath and Diwali on the cards, students, in particular are saddened that universities might not re-open in November 2020.



Are we going to meet in New Year! Perhaps yes, as there are conflicting reports of virus resurgence during winters and both university authorities and parents are extra cautious about students moving out of their homes.

Students will have to be content with online classes and examinations to ensure that they do not suffer academic loss. Although many youngsters have been insisting that they are too stressed being confined within the four walls of their homes for more than eight months and now more than ever they are feeling the need to get out and meet their classmates, faculty, friends etc.

There is no denying the fact that both the students and faculty have been experiencing difficulty in Work from Home (WFH) because of the increased screen time on their computers and laptops but somewhere we have to realize staying home prevents them from catching the dreaded infection.

Overall the country has seen a slight dip in the number of Covid-19 infections, however, the government warns slight laxity in health protocols might usher in a second wave of Covid attack specially with the onset of winter and pollution level again escalating across the country.

To recall, the University Grants Commission (UGC) had revised the academic calendar asking the universities to start the new session from November 1, 2020 giving a ray of hope to students to return to campuses.

However, I think it is not advisable to take a risk in the current situation when there are reports of resurgence of the virus and the way people in general are moving with a carefree approach without face masks and disregarding social distancing norm.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his nationwide address recently, had asked people to maintain an extra cautious approach during the festival months asserting though 'different candidates for Corona vaccines are in different stage of trials, we will have to continue with health protocols till it becomes available.'

Considering the size of population, India as compared to other developed countries is doing better and we all have to ensure that Covid-related protocols are strictly maintained until a cure is found.

Stay safe at home and enjoy the festivals!

Prof (Dr) Sanjay M Johri

From shy to confident

Coming from a far-flung area of the country, the environment at Amity University was no less than a fairy tale for me.



To put in bluntly, it was a cultural shock because for the first time in my life I got a chance to interact with such a diverse group of students when I joined the university in 2011. At ASCO, I evolved from a shy individual to a confident person. The faculty helped me improve and build my confidence by giving me responsibilities for events and programmes that are a part of my Amity journey.

Currently working as Assistant Manager-(Public-Affairs) leading in Internal Communications role with Pfizer Vizag, (world's leading pharmaceutical company listed in Fortune 100), as a public relations professional, I can always say one trait is a must have- 'Jack of all trade, master of one.'

I would love to highlight how ASCO truly nurtures you to make industry ready professional. I remember getting an earful while learning camera handling and even praises on a decent research report submission. My journey towards professional life also started within Amity at the 'Innovation Incubation Center' on Noida campus.

ASCO made me work so hard that my projects and extra-curricular activities were recognized, and I was identified for a PR role in Amity's own Infosec startup company. Every single ladder I climb, ASCO is and will always be the foundation of my success

The environment of ASCO is such that it has all the capabilities to train, inculcate confidence and bring out the best in a student to make him/her industry ready. The course is designed and delivered in a way that all six semesters will make you fall in love with each field of communications and journalism.

So, enjoy your journey because this is what you will remember the most when you climb the ladder of success.

*Anant Deep
BJMC (2011-2014)*

ALUMNI CORNER

Gandhian principles losing sheen in new India



Aakarsh Bajpai

The principles of non-violence and satyagraha, which became synonymous with Father of the nation—Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, a legendary personality known and remembered respectfully all over the world, seem to have become a thing of the past.

In an interview author Pramood Kapoor said, “In a way Gandhi ji is a holy cow or a deity in a temple whom you worship but there is nothing you adopt from him in your real life”. Although Internationally Gandhi is still the face of India the pioneer of ‘Ahimsa’ and ‘satyagraha’ but certainly his ideals now struggle to find a space in new India.

Ramchandra Guha, in a lecture speaking on why Gandhi is relevant even today, said that in his thinking four aspects of Gandhi’s legacy remain relevant, not just to India but to the world.

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roads outside India are named after him

First, non-violent resistance to unjust laws and/or authoritarian governments. Second, the promotion of inter-faith understanding and religious tolerance. Third, an economic model of self-sustainability that does not exploit nature. Fourth, courtesy in one’s dealing with public and in public debates. The point to remind ourselves here is that these were the solutions to the problems of his time around 100 years ago.

In today’s time when the world seems broken. Countries and people taking side on the basis of their biases. The biggest reason why Gandhi is still relevant today is the fact that problems of his time still exist. It’s a good time to at least make an attempt to implement Gandhi’s principals in reality. Put religious pluralism above religious hate, to question governments but through ‘satyagraha’ and ‘Ahimsa’ and try to be a tolerant and happy society. India can decide whether to have a place for Gandhi in new India or not but certainly no one can deny following and implementing his ideals will surely help in making a better India.

LESSER KNOWN FACTS

Mahatma Gandhi was nominated 5 times for Nobel Peace Prize but never won it

Gandhi was responsible for civil rights movement in 12 countries

Age revision enough to curb maternal deaths?

Continued from P1

ADDRESSING MALNUTRITION AND POVERTY

India is home to 46.6 million stunted children as per the Global Nutrition Report. Nearly half of all under- 5 (years) child mortality in India is attributed to under nutrition. Any country cannot aim to attain economic and social development goals without addressing the issue of malnutrition. A study by Harvard Chan School of Public Health has pinpointed top five risk factors- short maternal stature, extreme poverty, poor dietary diversity and mother’s lack of education are among the topmost factor for malnutrition in children.

Even though by bringing the age at par with men (21 years) we might be able to educate the people but in a country where 22% of the population live below poverty it will be an uphill task.

MATERNAL MORTALITY RATE

Maternal death is when a mother woman dies during her pregnancy or with 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of duration and sight of the pregnancy, from any cause other than accidental or incidental. As per data released by Registrar General of India, India successfully brought down MMR by 9 point in one year with a steep decline being reported in 11 states including Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. This shows that the country is on track of achieving Sustainable Development Goal of less than 70 women MMR per 100,000 live births by 2020. Poonam Muttreja Executive Director, Population Foundation of India (PFI) stated in an interview that “A large number of maternal deaths are due to issues related to pregnancy and childbirth. Girls who are married at early age are not physically and emotionally ready for motherhood.”

Many will say that those who marry at age of 21 years and above are better off than those who marry younger. This is undoubtedly true but various studies prove that those who marry after 21 years are most likely to have higher secondary and college education these outcomes reflect the fundamental inequities in our society. However, the other socio-economic conditions must also be addressed to ensure that the objective of increasing marriage age for girls is achieved rather than it just becoming another damp squib project.

24x7 news din drown visual arts journalism in India

Shifa Dutt

From times when drawing was the only language we could communicate; art has been an essential part of the communication process. In the early days of journalism, illustrations, paintings were used to widely to inform readers rather than just words. Pages in newspapers were specifically dedicated to visual arts.

Arts journalism in India started with big newspapers like The Economic Times introducing separate art pages that focused on different cultural aspects of the society as depicted by artists. Things changed over the years and that one page started getting lost among other news in the race of 24x7 media transformation. Hence art pages in newspapers gradually turned into comic strips on entertainment pages and finally vanished. Today, art and cultural journalism are getting close to becoming just paparazzi and Page 3 reporting.

In an interview, Sadanand Me-

I personally believe that a society, which is not able to look at the creative forms around it and respond to them outside of the market space is a seriously deficient society that is getting to be highly monolithic

Sadanand Menon

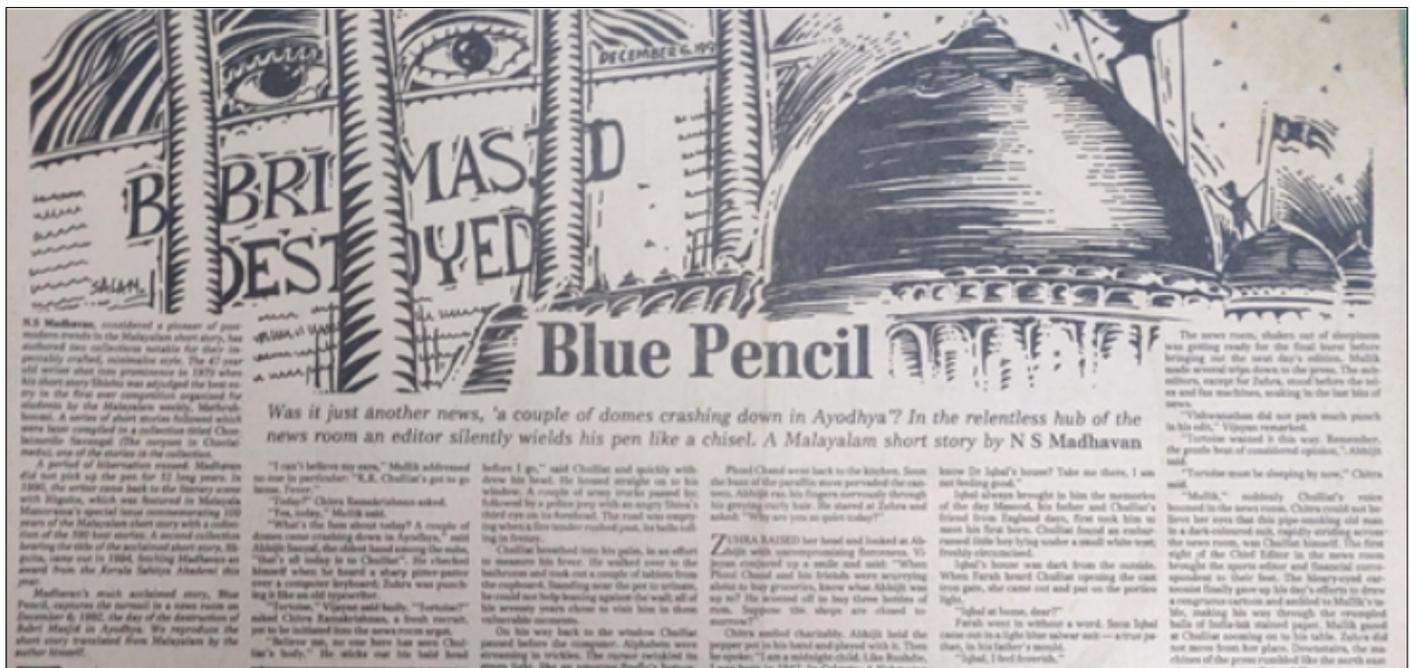
FORMER ARTS EDITOR, ECONOMIC TIMES

non, who was an Arts Editor with Economic Times in 1991, called Arts Journalism as a 'mythological' course as there is no real space for it in the media today. He said, "What happened in the period roughly from 1994-1996 was that first of all, the arts pages were abandoned by the entire Indian print media. Secondly, we saw the last of this char-

acter in the editorial team called the 'Arts Editor'. It is interesting that from 1996 till today, there hasn't been any media house that has recruited an arts editor. The only paper today that retains a considerable amount of space for features is The Hindu, but even they don't have an arts editor."

He further added, "I personally believe that a society, which is not able to look at the creative forms around it and respond to them outside of the market space is a seriously deficient society that is getting to be highly monolithic. For me, all this represents not merely a deficit in art writing but democratic deficit".

Art is a process of communication, which can evoke hard hitting feelings. It's all about how they perceive it. In a country like ours where every single person is so different from the other, art can be the strongest tool to bring about a positive change in the society. But unfortunately in our country today, Visual Art Journalism is losing out to 24x7 masala news and looks like there is no saving it.



Fighting environmental, social issues via art

Sanjana Saxena

The earliest form of human communication is found in rudimentary paintings inside caves when people did not know alphabets. Art at that time was more than just a creative pursuit and with time as communication techniques evolved; so did art. Today it has become a form of activism for many with artists using their creative flair to bring to our notice important socio-economic and environment issues like climate change.

Climate Change Art is inspired by climate change and global warming. Its objective is to represent the climate scenario through art, which helps form an emotional connection with the audience

Such art leaves an impact on the mind of the audience. A painting that makes us introspect and feel obligated to our responsibilities towards mother nature, is the most beautiful masterpiece. Art world has been sounding the alarm regarding climate emergencies for a long time now. The primary reason behind this is that we are on precipice of a historic moment. The actions we take at present regarding the climate disaster, can make or break our future.

Individuals like Greta Thunberg galvanized the



need to shift our interest towards climate-change. Through literary pursuits, dance, songs, paintings and other forms, creative individuals are helping us understand the severity of climate-change.

One such artist is Manav Gupta from Delhi whose famous work is 'Excavations in Hymns of Clay'. He has been delivering soul-stirring messages on the issue of climate change using multiple art forms like poems, videos and paintings for more than two decades now. His PSA video with a blend of poetry and painting was commissioned by the Ministry of Environment and Forest to create awareness about climate change.

Similarly, on January 21, 2020, an art show opened in the national capital to draw public attention towards climate change crisis. It was curated by Mumbai-based art historian Arshiya Lokhandwala and was titled "We are still alive: Strategies in Surviving the Anthropocene". The show featured sculptures of artists regarding the heavy toll of burning fossil fuels, melting glaciers and other severe weather events. From graffiti on the walls of Mandi House metro station, Delhi, to

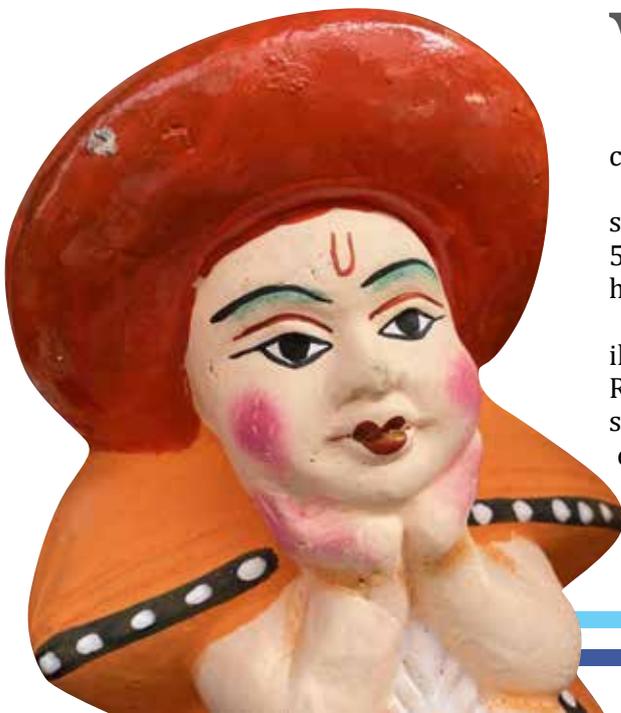
West Bengal's folk dancers' production "Ekonomi", all the art forms depict the mother Earth in agony and severity of climate change.

Climate crisis poses an existential threat to every being on the planet. The world needs more and more artists to remind the masses about the magnitude of threat that looms on humanity as we speak. With the global pandemic, our life has altered drastically. Not paying heed to climate change is akin to digging a grave for ourselves. Artists all around the world have taken the pledge to keep the planet intact by playing their part, it is time we do ours.



PANDEMIC STUMPS IDOL MAKERS

Lensman: Trilochan S Kalra



Will the pandemic impact Diwali Celebrations this year? Only time will tell but the potters of Lucknow, who usually did a good business every year around this period by making traditional Lakshmi Ganesh idols made of clay, are worried a lot this year.

Saadat Ganj, is traditional area in Lucknow where one will find artisans (sculptors) from Prajapati Community. There used to be around 500 houses in this densely populated area but barely half of them live here now as many have migrated to villages during the lockdowns.

Among those who have spent 30 to 45 years in this work are families of Rahul Abhishek Sharma, Shankar Rawat, Kailash Prajapati, Rajkumari Prajapati. With Durga puja being held on a very small scale, the artists are now focusing on Diwali to make up for the losses. "We used to make idols of Lakshmi Ganesh, Shankar, Hanuman, Durga, Kuber as per the orders received every year but this year the orders are scarce," said an artist while putting final touches to a Lakshmi idol.



One can see disappointment and sadness on the faces of these artists who apprehend the pandemic will hit their Diwali sale this year. However, they continue to work tirelessly hoping to get orders as the festival nears. "What else can we do?" asks an artist helplessly as he surveys the finished idols.

It may be mentioned the Prajapati's face stiff competition from the craftsmen of Kolkata who make all kinds of decorative items besides Lakshmi Ganesha idols well before Dussehra. However, this year it is not about competition with Kolkata artists but surviving the pandemic.

UNITED COLOURS OF STREET ART

Riddhi Bhargava

Street art originated from the shenanigans of scribbling names on public properties. However, it has come a long way now. In India, the oldest evidence of mural making comes from the cave painting in Ajanta, Maharashtra. Discovered in 1819, they inspired artists and sculptors for generations and continue to be an important part of Indian history of art.

From Europe's 'Hailed Art Festival' to 'Nuart Festival' in Stavanger and 'POW! WOW!' in Hawaii; street art has taken over the world

This was followed by the emergence of a plethora of modes of expression. From hand painted Bollywood posters to truck art, slogans, painted advertisements and even political graffitis which had its epicentre in West Bengal. It

was not just splashing colors on the streets but a magnificent growth of street art. This can be seen on the streets of Prayagraj, Lucknow, Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad, and Mumbai to name a few cities.

Thus, a thriving culture was painted into existence. The local street art culture was used as a medium to pour the thoughts in public spheres with a dollop of creativity. The other name given to street art is graffiti, which bloomed in Kolkata. Soon after that, local street art created its space in metro cities like Delhi and Mumbai. These cities saw the rise of renowned artists like Yantra in 2006, Zine in 2007 and Daku in 2008. Street art is no longer a hobby or passion. The local street art has ignited a flurry of festivals in many parts of the world. From Europe's 'Hailed Art Festival' to 'Nuart Festival' in Stavanger and 'POW! WOW!' in Hawaii; street art has taken over the world.

With time the medium changes but the roots remain the same. In the present generation, social media platforms have seen the rise of several

street artists and an overwhelming response of young admirers. From page updates, fest updates, awareness about Covid, to photography, the street art culture-based posts are flooding on multiple platforms like Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. With the view to reach every bit of culture and independent approach, local street art is creating an admirable and inviting environment by uniting all the different cultures in the incredible world of colours.

A magnificent show of street art during Mahakumbh 2019, at Prayagraj



Social media, a boon for artists

Adeeba Lari

Maybe a few years ago, if someone identified themselves as an artist on social media they would be met with some snickers of mockery or even a comment by nosy aunties reminding them that is not a real job. But with Covid pandemic forcing everyone inside and online, this misunderstood job has found a new place on the societal mantle.

In theory, a social media artist is simply a person showcasing his artistic skills on online platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Pin-interest, Youtube etc, but in reality, it is another world in itself.

Many centuries ago, artists were bereft of recognition. Many artists like Van Gough or writers like Franz Kafka died before they even tasted any appreciation for their masterpieces but with the discovery of Internet and social media world-artists have a found a platform to connect with their audience.

Many tech ignorant critiques disapprove of this art as it has no censor board where anything can go viral in a few minutes ranging from an

Not only artists can showcase their talent, but they can also sell their creations online directly to customers

exclusive piece to the most bizarre thing. To quote the most recent of anecdotes, how can we forget Marizio Cattelan's Comedian—which is, "As everyone now knows, a banana duct-taped to a wall- that sold for more than \$120,000? Art has always been an abstract concept of an emotion or feeling,

As everyone now knows, a banana duct-taped to a wall- that sold for more than \$120,000? Art has always been an abstract concept of an emotion or feeling, something that is experienced by the artist alone, the tangible art created out of an intangible concept reveals a profound truth about social media: it has a strong-hold over everything, even free artistic expression

Marizio Cattelan | COMEDIAN

something that is experienced by the artist alone, the tangible art created out of an intangible concept reveals a profound truth about social media: it has a strong-hold over everything, even free artistic expression."

Perhaps one of the key advantages of social media is that it has provided many artists a platform of making their own virtual gallery. Now, our online feed is filled with painters, writers, photographers, chefs and even something as rare as 'art out of pressed flowers' trending the virtual world. Though, platforms like Instagram constantly change trends to make sure artists are often challenged in new ways, for example, the new update of reels have provided fresh new variety of content.

Not only artists can showcase their talent, but they can also sell their creations online directly to customers. From students stuck at homes and adults finding their way back to their hobbies- in this pandemic, art has been used as a form of ther-

apy and livelihood.

We have artists like @Kashmirthroughmylens who used the beauty of Kashmir as a backdrop for showing the struggles and strife faced by the valley's residents. Even pages like 'Terribly Tiny Words,' which hosts some of the best Indian writers and poets has become popular. We have food bloggers playing with food styles and hundreds of painters advertising their own vision of the world.

With social media, art is not limited to museums and galleries. It is accessible at the mere swipe of fingers on our phones. More so, many artists have literally starved to death and have earned fame after but now with social media, we simply need to double tap to show our support. The benefits of social media are still a source of debate, we still ponder on how much harm it does but its work with artists is perhaps its redemption online.

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The rise of Indie art film style

Nitin Kumar

'*Kabhi kabhi galat train bhi sahi jagah pohocha deti hai*' an iconic dialogue from the movie "The Lunchbox" speaks directly to our hearts. The movie starring the late versatile actor Irrfan Khan, distinguished itself as a unique attempt at exploring an uncharted territory. Likewise, we saw several other movies like Gangs of Wasseypur, Vicky Donor, Mukti Bhawan, Court and others, that had a deep impact due to their unique and influential plots.

However, one can draw a concrete parallel between the movies of Indian Cinema before and after 2009. The reason being a foundational change that came into existence and instigated a wave of revolution.

We are talking about the emergence of new 'Indie' as the 'Glocal' hybrid films. The term 'Glocal' is a fusion of global in aesthetic and local in content. It has brought the power and beauty of bold rawness to the Cinema. These new hatke (different) films are targeted at globalized middle-class audiences with local stories and social themes.

The wave soon engulfed Bollywood with exceptionally talented filmmakers like Anurag Kashyap, Dibakar Banerjee, Navdeep Singh who got the audience hooked to their Indie film making and unique way of storytelling. Films like LSD, NH10, The Lunchbox, Peepli Live, Ship of Thesus, Paan Singh Tomar, Masaan & Haider can be characterized as the creations that juxtapose social realism with entertainment.

The historical lineage of the Indie traces back to the post-independence of Hindi & Bengali cine-

FILMY FACTS

■ Indie is "Glocal" hybrid films. The term 'Glocal' is a fusion of global in aesthetic and local in content, that has brought the power of bold rawness to the Cinema. These new hatke (different) films are targeted at globalized middle-class audiences with local stories & social themes

■ Filmmakers like Anurag Kashyap, Dibakar Banerjee, Navdeep Singh have become synonymous with this trend. The streaming platforms have given such film makers the gift of creative liberty



■ Films like LSD, NH10, The Lunchbox, Peepli Live, Ship of Thesus, Paan Singh Tomar, Masaan & Haider have successfully carved a niche in the Indie film world

Streaming platforms have given the filmmakers a gift of creative liberty and fresh talent

ma, middle cinema of the 60s-70s, along with Hinglish films from the early 90s. The flavor of regional languages and local mood compel big productions to invest their money and serve the national audience.

Unfortunately, the bitter truth remains that this "road less taken" still has filmmakers doubting their decisions. The success of films like Kabir Singh, War & Student of the Year shows the withstanding dominance of masala films in the box-office. From Bollywood filmmakers successfully sending the audience on a thought-provoking hunt of meaning in incomprehensible plots, the future of Indie film is still dubious.

Another thorn in the way of Indies films is the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC). It rules them out in the name of overtly transgressive content and the sen-

sitivity of their plots. Self-funded films like Amu & The World before Her & Final Solution documentary have faced such hindrance. The same CBFC turns a blind eye to the mainstream misogynistic narratives that go without struggle.

However, the silver lining is that India's visual culture is gradually moving out of the commercial masala-driven shadows of Bollywood films. The independent films ("Indie") have begun to experiment with form and narrative in different film genres. The powerful portrayal of female characters in films like Lipstick Under My Burkha, Queen, Piku and Kahaani, are some successful examples of the same. Also, streaming platforms have given the filmmakers a gift of creative liberty and fresh talent like Abhay Deol to become a trailblazer for the Indie films.

Only time will tell the future of Indie cinema. But there is no doubt that Indie films have carved a niche among the audience.

How about a meme for your thoughts!

Angela

If I ask, 'Have you read the newspaper today', the answer could be a yes or a no but if the question is did you come across a meme, and I know for sure, the answer would be an affirmative yes.

Memes are one of the greatest accidental inventions of all time. A meme is a social wonder, spreading like an infection, heading out starting with one individual then onto the next quickly, until it takes on its very own existence. 'Meme' is articulated as 'meem'. It is a term begat by Richard Dawkins.

Images today gigantically impact current language and culture. They shape how the young, and the entire web client populace, so far, that is concerned, carry on with their lives. Marketing, advertising and promotions professionals embrace memes because it's inexpensive and trendy. Even political campaigners use memes as a medium for communicating with the citizens. Paid bloggers, micro bloggers and commenters are hired to generate content. They thus create images and opinions in the mind of people.

Infact, some can even say we have a new form of communication among our peers with memes alone. There is no formal hello needed, nor do you need a smart anecdote to tell a joke now. All you need is to send a meme and have them send a laughing emoji back. And in this new world, this is as solid as a handwritten letter because it has value. It may come across as shocking to all old school romantics but many love communication messages also start and end with memes for Generation Z. Some memes enter our culture in the form of a slang or knowledge, such as the terms 'bae' or 'selfie'. Some enter our mind as, something



'culturally relevant' and unforgettable. Memes furnish a chance to interface with individuals of all sorts. To state that memes have not had any impact on mainstream society, resembles saying that an unnatural weather change has had no impact on the world.

These are some of the most common memes that we use in our daily conversation. We even frame these templates as per our need. They lighten up the conversation and make it more fun and interesting. There are tons of memes that we find relatable every day. People who use social media, are well aware about the meme culture. In today's world memes are one of the biggest things that work as a common ground for youth as well as the elderly, who come across it.

More so, memes are based on cur-

rent affairs. Be it feelings or news, they pick up the most relevant topic and create humour out of it. This art form of communication is old, but this development is new. Many of us get informed about current topics after coming across these memes.

Memes have become like emojis. Youth prefer to use memes to reply instead of emojis. Memes are even criticised at times though, as there are countless memes that can be considered as 'dark humour' and can often be very offensive to certain audiences.

The motivation behind why numerous individuals of various ages can comprehend memes is that anybody can make one. So, no matter how old you are or wherever you are in the world, memes will continue to impact and touch your life in either way you want it to be.

Learning 'Art of living' during pandemic

Anjali Singh

It started with a junta curfew followed by lockdown and then unlock—Covid 19 tested us and how. Long isolation, an uncertain future, loss of income and even in grave situations, permanent loss of loved ones due to the pandemic. Coping mechanisms differed from people to people right from spending more online time to doing something creative a la artistic ventures.

There were creativity galore that could be seen on online platforms right from Tik Tok videos, playing with colours, making paintings, writing, dancing, singing, photography, yoga, or learning a new type of skill and even cooking.

According to a study, spending just 45 minutes on our favourite art helps in relieving stress, strength-



en critical thinking skills, and improving memory. It has been seen that more than 65% of Indians have started working on one or two kinds of art forms just due to isola-

tion and fear of infection.

Mehak Kundu, a college student said, "I was planning to join dance classes but due to lack of time I was unable to. Due to the pandemic and the resultant lockdowns, I was under a lot of stress, so I decided to learn Bharatnatyam through online classes and it helped me relax. One must work focus on creative ventures as it rejuvenates the soul."

Like Mehak, several others also took to various creative ventures and well...the world became their oyster. Art has helped people cope up with the pandemic helped each other connect virtually. The importance of art has been magnified through the global pandemic considering the balance between lives and art which has made the inner world (our homes) less stressful and more productive.

Podcasts- Give your voice a new platform

Sonia Singh

The audio concept isn't something new for Indians. Be it listening to cricket commentary, religious musings, or radio; it is deeply rooted in our culture. With the proliferation of smartphones and affordable mobile internet, podcasts are experiencing unprecedented audience growth.

India is the world's third largest podcast listening market and as per a PwC report, the number of listeners is going to rise from four crore in 2018 to 17.61 crore in 2023. India's music, radio and podcasts market were worth Rs 5,753 crore in 2018 and could hit upwards of Rs 10,000 crore by 2023.

Moreover, podcasts are particularly popular among younger audiences, with more than half of monthly listeners under the age of 35 years. Listeners are turning to podcasts as they are subject-oriented, to the point, infotaining, short and like radio do not engage listener's all senses. Listeners are preferring it while driving, cooking or doing some other chores. According to a 2019 report by Deloitte, globally podcasts could be a USD 3.3 billion-plus business by 2025.

As it is evident that podcasters will take over a new set of listenership, it is important to be ready for this new opportunity to give your voice a platform.

THERE ARE VARIOUS FORMATS FOR PODCASTS:

- **Solo Podcast** | Host talks directly to the audience. You rely on yourself for engaging the audience. It can be intimidating for beginners.
- **Co-Hosted Podcast** | Two hosts talking to the audience from time to time. This format helps in sharing the burden but requires good management between the hosts.
- **Interview Podcast** | This format ensures fresh content, different perspectives and a quality audience if executed neatly. Host requires to find trending topics, preparing interview questionnaire and guests who can contribute their opinions.
- **Roundtable Podcast** | Taking interview podcast format one step further, roundtable podcasts invite 2 or more guests to contribute on the topic. This category is very impactful for producing niche quality content.
- **Documentary Podcast** | It brings in multiple voices, musical elements, and actuality to add an extra layer of production and storytelling. It is also referred to as "BBC- style" podcast format.
- **Fiction Podcast** | This format is perfect for hosts who are storytellers. Creative audio dramas where the listener gets emersed in the story with well-placed sound effects attract a lot of listeners.

Podcasting requires no big monetary investment today, but to succeed one needs to be creative, have dedication to adapt to the new, bring out the storyteller and journalist within you.