

# CHEATING, FORGERY, LIES? SUNNY DEOL IN THE EYE OF A STORM

The actor-MP has been accused of dishonouring multiple film commitments after taking advance payments, more so after his film *Gadar 2* had a successful run at the box office

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Film producer Sorav Gupta (of Sundawn Entertainment Pvt Ltd) has levelled shocking allegations of cheating, extortion and forgery against actor-MP Sunny Deol. In a press conference earlier this week, Gupta, a real estate developer turned producer alleged that Sunny Deol took money from him in advance to do a film in 2016, continued to take more money while promising that he would start the film, but eventually never ended up doing the film after his recent film *Gadar 2* became a huge hit. Gupta tells HT City that in 2016 he signed a deal with Sunny Deol as the lead for his film on a fee of ₹4cr. "We gave him ₹1cr in advance but instead of starting my film, he opted to shoot for *Poster Boys* (2017) instead. He kept asking me for more money and by now my

₹2.55cr is in Sunny ji's account. He also made me give money to another director, book Filmistaan studio and get an executive producer," Gupta tells us.

The producer also alleges that Deol forged an agreement with his company in 2023. "When we read the agreement, humne dekha ki unhonein toh panna hi change kar diya beech wala, jahan par fees ka amount ₹4cr ko badha kar ₹8cr kar diya aur profit to ₹2cr kar diya," he shares.

Filmmaker Suneel Darshan, known for films such as *Janwar* (1999) and *Andaaz* (2003) also came in support of Gupta in the same press conference and alleged that he, too, had faced the same issue with Sunny Deol. "Sunny Deol acquired rights from my movie *Ajay* (1996) for overseas distribution and only made a partial payment. The balance payment never came through," says Darshan, adding, "Later, Sunny requested me to work on a project with him, saying, 'Have faith in me, help me

out', and got me to pay him again."

An industry source, on condition of anonymity, tells us that Deol is notorious for dishonouring commitments with several producers after signing agreements. "He is a known troublemaker for years. Sunny had given a bound script of a film called *Ram Janmbhumi* to a producer who created a huge set in Mumbai. Sunny signed the film for ₹5cr. But later, he refused to come to the sets and demanded a fees of ₹25cr because he had delivered a blockbuster (*Gadar 2*, 2023)."

Gupta shares that he has filed a police complaint against Deol "The police issued [Deol] a notice on April 30. His office sent a letter saying he was out of town on the day he was to present himself," says Gupta.

We reached out to Sunny Deol for his side but were met with no response till the time of going to press.



PHOTO: INSTAGRAM/ IAMSUNNYDEOL



Pitbull; (below) Guru Randhawa



Radhika Merchant and Anant Ambani



PHOTOS: INSTAGRAM AND YOGEN SHAH

## Guru x Pitbull for Anant-Radhika's pre-wedding 2.0

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The second pre-wedding celebration of Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant is underway on a cruise from Italy to France. While their first pre-wedding bash in Jamnagar, Gujarat, in March saw musicians Rihanna, Diljit Dosanjh and Akon make all the guests dance to their tunes, we exclusively learnt that the do number two will see singer Guru Randhawa and American rapper Pitbull reunite on stage. They had previously collaborated on the hit song *Slowly Slowly* in 2019. The insider says, "Guru will be performing with Pitbull at the celebration today. It's expected to be a fun gathering, high on music, with the perfect blend of Guru's music and Pitbull's beats."

This second round of festivities began on May 29 and will continue until June 1.

Several celebs, including Kareena Kapoor Khan, Karan Johar and Salman Khan, were spotted leaving for Europe.

Anant, the youngest son of business tycoons Mukesh and Nita Ambani, will marry Radhika, the daughter of businessman Viren and Shaila Merchant, in July.

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(R-L) Suneel Darshan, Sorav Gupta and Ashok Sarogi

We gave him ₹1 crore in advance but he opted to shoot for *Poster Boys* (2017) instead. My ₹2.55 crore is in Sunny ji's account. He has since then made me give money to another director, book Filmistaan studio and get an executive producer. Sorav Gupta, producer

Sunny gave a bound script of a film called *Ram Janmbhumi* to this producer, who created a huge set in Mumbai. He signed the film for ₹5 crore but refused to come to the sets and demanded a fees of ₹25 crore from the producer because he had delivered a blockbuster (*Gadar 2*). An insider

## Alaya on polarising response to her role in *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan*

Rishabh Suri

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Alaya F is ecstatic about the positive reaction to her latest film, *Srikanth*, starring Rajkumar Rao, which has inched its way to being labelled a hit. "The response is really special. I don't think I've experienced this sort of reaction to anything before, and it feels incredible to be part of a story that so many people were excited to watch," she gushes.

However, just before this success came a film that was a first for her in many ways: *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan*, her first big-budget masala potboiler, as well as the first to receive polarising reviews. At the box office, the multi-starrer movie underperformed, and viewers had mixed feelings about her role in the film, finding her to be either charming or annoying. Reflecting on the experience, Alaya chooses to look on the bright side: "I got a lot out of the movie. It was a unique experience to see that sort of response."

Alaya, who has starred in films such as *Freddy* (2022) and *Jawaani Jaaneman* (2020),

I got a lot out of the movie. It was a unique experience to see that sort of response.

ALAYA F, Actor

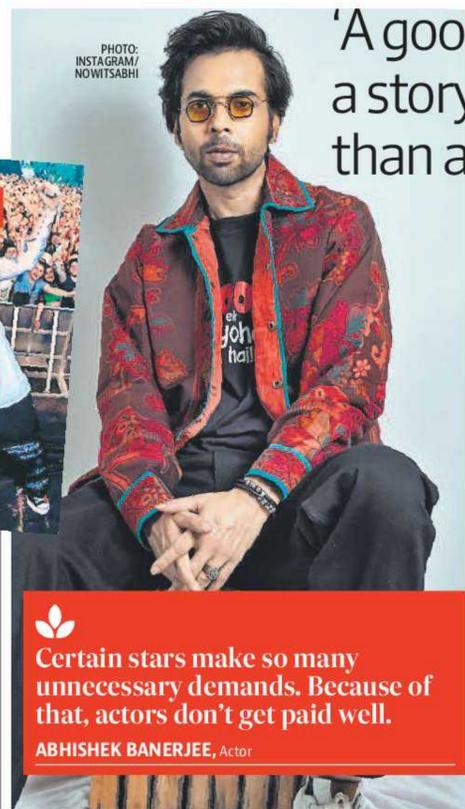
continues, "My character was pretty polarising. That was quite different for me, as my characters (so far in other movies) are normally not. [But] people really enjoyed seeing me in a commercial space, which is great for an actor

because I want to continue to do all types of cinema."

And what about the film's collections? Did that affect her? Alaya replies, "The film still made money, just not as much as it should have. But a lot of people saw it, compared to many of the other films I've done."



Canadian DJ Deadmau5 is set to return to India after a decade, with a performance in Mumbai on July 12. "Thrilled" about his visit, Deadmau5 expresses, "The energy and love of the Indian crowd are unmatched."



Certain stars make so many unnecessary demands. Because of that, actors don't get paid well.

ABHISHEK BANERJEE, Actor

## 'A good actor adds value to a story too, can't be paid less than a star's bodyguard'

Rishabh Suri

Abhishek Banerjee has seen showbiz from multiple perspectives, starting as a renowned casting director and now making waves as an actor. With his career gaining momentum with upcoming projects such as *Stree 2* and *Rana Naidu 2*, Banerjee reflects: "Acting is not always glam. It's a spiritual journey. You've to walk alone, experience things yourself. You keep practising. Not everybody is seeking gold; some are happy with what they have."

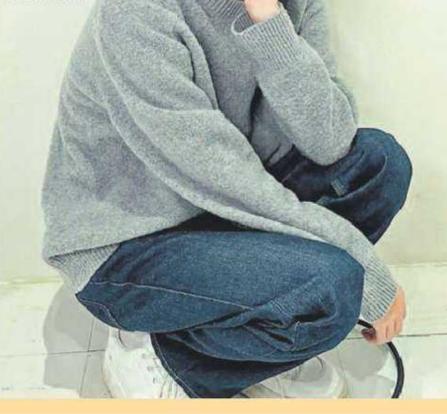
The conversation naturally shifts to the pressing issue of film budgets spiralling out of control due to skyrocketing actor fees and associated costs. Banerjee, who is most popular for his role as Hathoda Tyagi in the series *Paatal Lok*, corrects us: "You are talking about stars, not actors. That's completely a star thing; one can't blame actors for that. The producers have to decide."

Pointing out the additional demands some actors make

today, which inflate a film's budget, the 39-year-old draws from his experience as a casting director: "I have been casting for movies and shows for many years now. Certain stars make many unnecessary demands. Because of that, actors don't get paid well. I would be told by makers, 'kam paisa mein cast karo'. I don't know if the stars know this reality or not. Sometimes, good actors get peanuts for a show or a film. Of course, star value draws people to the theatres, but an actor also adds value to a story. One cannot neglect that. One can't pay a star's bodyguard more than an actor's daily wage."

He continues, "Mujhe yaad hai hamare paas casting mein ek difficult situation aati thi. We would be told, 'Hamare paas budget itna hi hai lekin achha actor chahiye' I would be like, 'Achha actor kam paisa mein kyun kaam kare aur kaise kare? Kam paisa mein how do I convince a good actor to be a part of a particular project?' It's sad; it shouldn't be that."

Kim Seok-jin; (inset) Wootteo, the character, that has resurfaced online PHOTO: INSTAGRAM/JIN



## BTS' Jin to collaborate with Coldplay?

Buzz is that Kim Seok-jin of BTS might collaborate with Coldplay soon. The musician is nearing his military discharge in a few weeks and fans are already in celebration mode. According to speculation, the 31-year-old might join hands with the British band.

Prior to his enlistment, the singer released a solo track, titled *Astronaut*, penned by Coldplay, and believed to be a gift from his friend, the group's frontman Chris Martin. The beloved titular character, dubbed Wootteo, left for fans during his absence, has resurfaced on Instagram after a prolonged break. With Wootteo back in the spotlight, fans quickly discerned the connection.



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PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK (FOR REPRESENTATIONAL PURPOSE ONLY)

# HT HEALTH on Thursday



## FEELING HOT, HOT? WATCH FOR SIGNS OF HEAT STRESS

**As North India grapples with heatwave, panic might seem obvious. But taking a back seat with your health is also not an option. Experts caution against heat-induced ailments**

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The Capital records high temperatures every summer, so it may seem that nothing is new. Yet, with Delhi NCR recording highest-ever temperature crossing 50°C in May, summer spookies should not be taken lightly. What's more, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has also issued a heatwave red alert for Delhi and six other states.

Amid this, it is important to not lose one's cool (sometimes, literally). If you're unsure about how to deal with the heat, here's some expert-based advice on watching out for heat-induced ailments and appropriate measures against it.

### TAKING CARE OF YOUR BRAIN

"The brain works hard to coordinate and regulate body temperatures, and peak summers can leave you with dizziness, fainting spells and confusion," says Dr Sunil Singla, director and head of department (HOD), Neurology, at a Gurugram-based hospital. While symptoms can range in severity, from mild

exhaustion to life-threatening heatstroke. Even fatigue, nausea and headache are very common. In extreme cases, the function of the central nervous system can also be disrupted. Singla adds, "The body's thermostat dilates blood vessels through sweating, but blazing hot temperatures are particularly dangerous because they test our natural abilities of thermoregulation."

### HARD ON YOUR HEART

Sweating and rerouting blood flow is how the body gets rid of the excess heat, and for both of these, the heart is responsible for the extra work. Talking about the cardiological challenges during summers, a Gurugram-based interventional cardiology specialist, Dr DK Jhamb shares, "Rising temperatures are detrimental for heart patients, especially those with a history of heart attacks. This is owing to a decrease in blood flow and subsequently, in heart rate. Prescription medications for high blood pressure and heart diseases also impede with heat regulation."

He continues, "These drugs can block sweating, slow heartbeat and increased urine output, resulting in dehydration.

Increased water intake may help avoid the strain on organs."

### EFFECTS ON SKIN HEALTH

Summer holidays may be the trademarks of the season, but the heat and humidity can trigger skin woes for a lot of people. Dr Atula Gupta, dermatologist at a private clinic in Gurugram, shares, "Heat and sweat create a breeding ground for bacteria and fungus, which can lead to pimple breakouts, acne triggers, athletes foot and jock itch."

While swimming pools may seem like a much-needed respite, Gupta warns against the side effects of the chlorine in the swimming pools, that works with

### Chlorine works with heat to strip the skin's moisture



heat and air-conditioning to strip the moisture of the skin. "Dry skin caused by chlorine can appear dull flaky, and further exacerbate skin progression of lines and wrinkles," she shares.

### HERE'S HOW YOU CAN BEAT THE HEAT, ACCORDING TO EXPERTS

- Opt for electrolyte-rich drinks such as lemonades, instead of just water.
- Sponge the body with cold water and ice cubes to help bring down the elevated body temperatures.
- Limit processed foods and sugary drinks which may cause inflammation.
- Opt for a broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 50 or higher. Make sure to reapply it in every two hours. Don't neglect areas like lips, ears and top of your feet.
- Prevent overheating and sweat build-up by wearing breathable fabric options.
- Heart patients are advised against intense exercises during such weather extremities.
- Avoid excessive consumption of dehydrators and diuretics, like alcohol and caffeine.

## Want to save your mane from bane? Use sunscreen!



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It's extremely hot and dealing with the heat and acne is just one of the beauty issues that people face. Says Shaina Advani, corporate executive, "I've been struggling with dry and brittle hair since April and first I thought I'd change my conditioner, but that hasn't helped." If you feel similarly, it could be that your hair is suffering sun damage. Time to use sunscreen for the hair. Dr Nishita Ranka, dermatologist and founder of a clinic for skin, hair and aesthetics, says, "Yes, hair and scalp do benefit from SPF protection. The hair may be less susceptible to direct damage compared to the skin, but it can still suffer significant harm from prolonged UV exposure."

**HOW BAD CAN IT GET?** Prolonged exposure to UVA and UVB rays can cause a lot of damage to hair through

several mechanisms. Dr Ranka informs, "For one, there is protein degradation. Hair is composed mainly of keratin, a structural protein. UV radiation, particularly UVA, can break down the disulfide bonds in keratin, leading to weakened hair shafts, increased brittleness, and split ends." She adds, "You also face colour fading, especially coloured hair that is particularly vulnerable to UV damage. There is also scalp damage and lipid peroxidation, where UV radiation can initiate lipid peroxidation in the hair cuticle, leading to loss of natural oils. It causes dryness and frizz."

**TACKLING THE ISSUE** Sunscreens are formulations that protect against ultraviolet (UV) radiation, specifically UVA and UVB rays. Adds Dr Ranka, "They contain active ingredients that function as either chemical filters, absorbing UV radiation and transforming it into

harmless heat or physical filters, reflecting and pushing UV radiation away from the skin and hair (such as titanium dioxide and zinc oxide). Sunscreens today in creams, sprays, gels and lotions and are increasingly incorporated into hair care products to provide comprehensive protection."

### DOS AND DON'TS FOR HAIR SUN PROTECTION

- Dos**
- Use SPF hair products.
  - Wear hats to shield the hair and scalp.
  - Stay hydrated to maintain moisture levels within the hair shaft.
  - Use a heat protection spray before using styling tools.
  - Rinse with fresh water after exposure to chlorinated or saltwater.

- Don'ts**
- Stay outdoors in peak hours. Try and limit time spent in direct sunlight, especially during peak UV radiation hours (10am to 4pm).



### { DAILY HOROSCOPE } Thursday, May 30, 2024

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### ARIES MAR 21-APR 20

Your self-discipline in spending will help fatten your bank balance. New clients are assured for professionals trying to expand their business. A new addition in the form of an asset is likely to be acquired. **LOVE FOCUS:** Romance seems on the upswing. **LUCKY NUMBER:** 6 **LUCKY COLOUR:** Cream

### LEO JUL 23-AUG 23

Financial strength will enable you to think big. A good offer on the business front may become hard to refuse. Fun seekers are likely to plan an exciting trip. Property owners can make a killing in the realty market. **LOVE FOCUS:** There is a good chance of getting close to someone you love. **LUCKY NUMBER:** 7 **LUCKY COLOUR:** Maroon

### SAGITTARIUS NOV 23-DEC 21

Past investments will keep your coffers brimming. Things begin to turn favourable at the work front. Those travelling abroad will find the journey comfortable. Your academic efforts will be recognised. **LOVE FOCUS:** Romance returns to make love life exciting. **LUCKY NUMBER:** 17 **LUCKY COLOUR:** Purple

### TAURUS APR 21-MAY 20

Fitness training holds much promise. A pending man-management issue will be competently tackled at work. A good showing in an exam or an interview will get you firmly on the path to success. **LOVE FOCUS:** You will take steps to strengthen the romantic bonds. **LUCKY NUMBER:** 18 **LUCKY COLOUR:** Brown

### VIRGO AUG 24-SEP 23

The financial situation will improve. Efforts of those trying to work up the corporate ladder are likely to get a boost. Today's the day for those thinking of buying or selling property. **LOVE FOCUS:** Finding love in a most unusual place cannot be ruled out. **LUCKY NUMBER:** 17 **LUCKY COLOUR:** Orange

### CAPRICORN DEC 22-JAN 21

Your efforts at work are likely to be acknowledged by higher-ups. You may derive much pleasure in organising a trip out of town. Those dealing in real estate can expect to seal a good deal. **LOVE FOCUS:** Attempts to brighten up your love life will succeed and how! **LUCKY NUMBER:** 8 **LUCKY COLOUR:** Brown

### GEMINI MAY 21-JUN 21

Your efforts will help keep you fit and energetic. Your investments are likely to pull substantial returns. A property issue that was bothering you may be easily laid to rest. **LOVE FOCUS:** Romantic thoughts may dominate your mind today. **LUCKY NUMBER:** 1 **LUCKY COLOUR:** Light Red

### LIBRA SEP 24-OCT 23

Slowing the pace of life will have a beneficial effect on health. Good management by effective delegation will keep the current project going smoothly. **LOVE FOCUS:** Impressing someone on the romantic front is on the cards. **LUCKY NUMBER:** 5 **LUCKY COLOUR:** Green

### AQUARIUS JAN 22-FEB 19

It's an excellent time to think of the ways to increase your income. Some payment can be expected in business. You'll be able to devote equal time to family and work. **LOVE FOCUS:** An evening out with lover cannot be ruled out for some. **LUCKY NUMBER:** 22 **LUCKY COLOUR:** White

### CANCER JUN 22-JUL 22

You will manage to handle your finances well and save too. You will get a free hand to exercise your authority on the professional front. You will enjoy a leisure trip with someone close. **LOVE FOCUS:** Falling in love is a foregone conclusion. **LUCKY NUMBER:** 2 **LUCKY COLOUR:** Sky Blue

### SCORPIO OCT 24-NOV 22

Body aches and pains troubling you might disappear. Financially you find yourself stable and secure. A prestigious assignment will be yours. Travelling to a picnic spot with friends is possible. **LOVE FOCUS:** The possibility of getting romantically linked with someone you secretly love is rife. **LUCKY NUMBER:** 4 **LUCKY COLOUR:** Grey

### PISCES FEB 20-MAR 20

Wise investment in property and shares will keep you financially strong. A family member is likely to take some burden off your shoulders. You get to achieve your aim on the academic front. **LOVE FOCUS:** Romance is likely to beckon! **LUCKY NUMBER:** 6 **LUCKY COLOUR:** Silver

## Get a straw, berry good drink is ready



The viral iced strawberry latte perfectly balances out the tartness from the fruit and the rich coffee

PHOTOS: INSTAGRAM

### Tips on making cold foam

For a good latte, Gupta shares, the foam is important and if you get it right at home, it's a simple way to elevate your coffee experience. Heat the milk, either on the stove or in the microwave, until it's warm but not boiling. Full-fat milk will give you the creamiest and tastiest foam. Grab a hand-held milk frother or an electric whisk, and whip the milk till it gets frothy. You can also just shake the warm milk in a tightly sealed jar or dunk it in a blender and give it a whirl at a high speed to achieve similar results. Add this light, airy foam to your latte or cappuccino at home to add a professional touch to your home-brewed coffee.



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Social media trends are relentless and as we battle the summer heat, a drink creating chatter online is the iced strawberry latte. It is a perfect blend of sweet and tart from the strawberries, while also giving you the much-needed caffeine boost from the espresso shot.

Pallavi Gupta, founder at The Kind Roastery and Brewroom, Bengaluru, says, "This latte has emerged as a delightful trend in the coffee world. It blends the robust flavour of the coffee with the sweet, refreshing taste of strawberries." Looking like something straight out of a boujee cafe menu, it is pretty

simple to prepare at home. You can use mashed fresh berries, a compote (fruit puree) or even store-bought syrup. Condensed milk, vanilla-flavoured syrup or simple syrup can be added for sweetness and flavour. Brew a shot of espresso and add it to your glass, pouring it gently to get the aesthetic layers in your glass. You can top the glass with cold foam or whipped cream. "Pairing coffee with the tartness of strawberry is a good idea. Strawberry iced lattes are refreshing and very on trend," says Ashish D'abreo, coffee roaster and co-founder of Maverick & Farmer Coffee Roaster, adding that it can be imagined in many ways. For instance, you can add matcha if you want to skip the coffee.

Entertainment & Promotional Features



## Enjoyed high tea at Buckingham Palace: Auto driver Arti Kashyap on meeting King Charles III

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The fact that an 18-year-old e-rickshaw driver from Uttar Pradesh's Bahraich met King Charles III at Buckingham Palace, London, earlier this week created quite a stir on the internet. And Arti Kashyap is on cloud nine when she talks to us. "Unka mahal toh bahut hi bada hai. Kabhi socha nahin tha itne bade raja se mil sakte hain, photo khichaana toh door ki baat hai," says Kashyap, who was in London to receive the Amal Clooney Women's Empowerment Award, which recognises women from across the world who succeed against odds to make an impact in society.

Sharing how the experience of being at Buckingham Palace was, the 21-year-old says, "We met King Charles III a day after the ceremony. We were in invited to Buckingham Palace over high tea. Aisa lag raha tha jaise koi sapna dekh rahe hain. At the Palace, we were served Indian tea with biscuits. Mazaa aa gaya jab apne India jaisi chai mili." Kashyap was accompanied by 24 other award winners. "But I got the grandest welcome," she says with a smile, adding, "There was a pink auto that took me to the palace.



**Aisa lag raha tha jaise koi sapna dekh rahe hain. At the Palace, we were served Indian tea with biscuits. Mazaa aa gaya jab apne India jaisi chai mili.**

ARTI KASHYAP, E-rickshaw driver

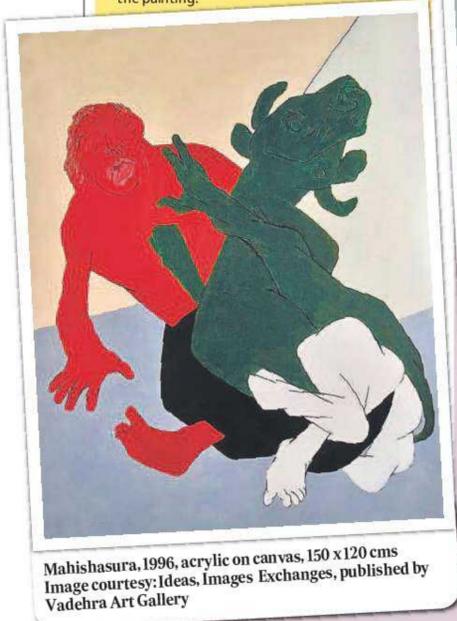
King Charles III ne jab humse baat ki, bahut achcha laga. While interacting with him it felt like I've known him for so long. He was curious to know how the autorickshaw, which took me to the

Buckingham Palace, worked — battery or electricity. He asked me about my family, my siblings and hometown. He also asked me to convey his warm regards to my parents."

## Tyeb Mehta's masterful works of art are celebrated for innovation

### Thematic depth of mythology

Tyeb Mehta's painting, titled Mahishasura, is a masterful reinterpretation of the Hindu mythological story, where the demon King Mahishasura battles Goddess Durga. This work is celebrated not only for its thematic depth, but also for its innovative artistic execution. The painting is a striking blend of traditional Indian mythology and modernist abstraction. The artist employs a distinctive style characterised by a vibrant colour palette, primarily using red, green and blue to create a visually arresting composition. This use of colour is not merely decorative, but also serves to heighten the emotions in the painting.



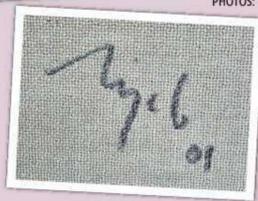
Mahishasura, 1996, acrylic on canvas, 150 x 120 cms  
Image courtesy: Ideas, Images Exchanges, published by Vadehra Art Gallery

### Transcending cultural boundaries

The most compelling aspect of this painting, titled Mahishasura, is the artist's ability to convey complex narratives and emotions through abstract forms. The figures of Mahishasura and Durga are depicted in fragmented, cubist-like shapes. Tyeb Mehta shows the chaos and violence



Tyeb Mehta's MAHISHASURA  
Acrylic on canvas  
5 ft x 4 ft  
2001



Tyeb Mehta's signature read as Tyeb 01

of their struggle and invites the viewer to piece the story together. The forms also suggest the breaking down of binaries like good and evil, human and divine. It also highlights the interconnectedness of these opposing forces.

Mehta's treatment of Mahishasura is noteworthy — the viewer is invited to empathise with his plight. The painting was acquired by late Dr Gieve Patel, a poet, playwright and painter. It's now the property of one of the leading legal and chartered accountancy firms in India.

The dynamic composition, combined with the use of diagonal lines and intersecting planes, creates a sense of movement and energy. It makes the viewer feel as if they are witnessing the battle in

real-time. Mehta's mastery of form and colour, along with his ability to infuse traditional themes with contemporary relevance, cements Mahishasura as a significant work in Indian modern art. Mehta's Mahishasura is not just a painting but an experience that captures the essence of mythological storytelling through a modernist lens. It offers a powerful commentary on the eternal struggle between opposing forces. The painting stands as a testament to Mehta's artistic vision and his ability to transcend cultural boundaries, while also making timeless themes accessible to contemporary audiences.

## PRE-MONSOON BEAUTY: READY TO WATCH FIREFLIES SHIMMER AT NIGHT?

Before the rains arrive, head out on trails in

Maharashtra to catch this beautiful spectacle

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Each year, before the monsoon makes its way into big cities, many enthusiasts grab their backpacks and head out into the outskirts and smaller villages to catch a shimmering spectacle that doesn't last forever. We're talking of pretty fireflies or lightning bugs that light up the night in green places around Maharashtra. It's said that the most beautiful things are short-lived and that is the case here as the time for viewing these little insects is only between May-end to early June.

### WHAT THE LURE IS ABOUT

The stunning bioluminescent phenomenon is about millions of fireflies that shine bright in large groups around trees and in thick patches and they twinkle during their mating season. For those who have been there or seen that, it's simply unforgettable. Nikhil Bagul, avid photographer, who's been capturing the sight since 2016, says, "Post sunset, the surroundings turn magical because of the fireflies. You'll see them around trees and the glow is beautiful. I've been taking pictures of them for the last eight years at Bhandardara and Tamhini Ghat and over time, more people are coming here to see them."

He adds, "What people must remember is not to use a flash or any other light while taking pictures. The artificial light hampers their mating process, which may also be causing the decline of this species. To capture fireflies, you can use DSLR as well as a mobile phone with a tripod for stability."

### BONFIRES, MUSIC NIGHTS AND A FEW RUSTIC EXPERIENCES ADD TO THE FUN

Watching fireflies has become so popular over the last few years, that tour planners are now adding other activities to this. And camps have

chalked up the fun with bonfires, storytelling and more.

Says Inir Pinheiro, director of a community-based rural tourism service that takes groups to Purushwadi, "Nine years ago, we had just 30-40 people signing up to watch fireflies and now that has grown to 90-100 people per night over the three-week period." He adds, "Now, people don't just view fireflies, but also get a very rustic, rural experience alongside partaking in a village activity like staying with a local family, taking up farming, playing traditional village games or even taking a dip in the river. In the evenings, after preparing and eating local food, it's time to do a small uphill trek to view the fireflies." Jigar Mandvia, Mumbai resident, will take a group to Bhandardara for a fireflies' lakeside camp. He adds, "We will go into the forest at 7.30pm and leave by 10pm as that is the rule. Once back, there will be a few ice-breaking games as fireflies trails are also a great way to bond, with a guitarist act and some jamming."

### ADVICE: BE ON TIME

Sarfaraz Baghdadi, founder of another treks and trails group, has some advice, "It's easier to embark on a fireflies' trail in a group rather than go solo as groups offer amenities like food and shelter. Over the last few years, Bhandardara Lake, Prabalimachi, Pawna and Rajmachi have become popular for Mumbaiers, while Pune folks prefer campsites around Panshet Dam and Malshej Ghat, where if you park near the highway, you can easily see fireflies. A short drive away, Khirshwar village is another hot spot for viewing fireflies."

He adds, "Just ensure punctuality as many places are in forest areas, so you need to enter here on time. Also, in case there are pre-monsoon showers, it can get slushy like in Rajmachi, unlike Bhandardara, (which is a tar road), so my advice is to make this trip before June 8."

### BEST SPOTS TO VIEW FIREFLIES

- Prabalimachi
- Rajmachi
- Kothaligad
- Bhandardara
- Igatpuri
- Kamshet
- Purushwadi
- Wada
- Bhimashankar



People must not use a flash or any other light while taking pictures of the fireflies.

NIKHIL BAGUL,  
Travel photographer

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# 'I WAS NEVER THE TYPICAL MALE LEAD OF A TV SERIAL'

**Dheeraj Dhoopar on completing 15 years in the industry and facing discrimination for being an actor on the small screen**

**Akash Bhatnagar**  
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For Dheeraj Dhoopar, time has gone by in the blink of an eye as he completes 15 years in the television industry this year. However, the actor believes he still has "a long way to go". He adds, "I entered the industry when I was 27. I gave two of the biggest shows on Indian TV — *Sasural Simar Ka* and *Kundali Bhagya* — which ran for a total of 13 years."

The 39-year-old's entry into the world of acting happened because his mum told him "that I resembled (actor-host) Hussain Kuwajerwala and I should try acting on TV". He began his career with *Maat Pitaah Ke Charnon Mein Swarg* and was seen in shows like *Naagin*, *Sherdil Shergill* and more.

Reminiscing about his characters, Dhoopar insists, "I was never the typical male lead of a TV serials. With Karan Luthra (his character in *Kundali Bhagya*), I got global fandom." He adds that with *Saubhagyavati Bhava: Niyam Aur Shartein Laagu*, he got to explore his darker side: "I've always played positive roles, but I loved playing a negative character."

While some actors leave television to venture into OTT and films, he isn't one of them. Dhoopar says, "I never want to leave TV as I am what I am because of this industry. Why should I leave this for something that may or may not happen?" The actor, who featured in the web series *Tatubaaaz* (2023), adds, "I would like to be a part of all mediums, simultaneously, and don't want to quit one for another."

He is proud of being an actor on the small screen but reveals he has faced discrimination because of the medium "many times". "I could see it in people's eyes. I would get invited for the biggest award shows and notice a stark difference in the attention given to the film stars and me. I used to feel bad. I'm not saying treat them lesser than, but treat us as equals. I'm here because of the work that I have done on TV," he wraps up.

**I never want to leave TV as I am what I am because of this industry. Why should I leave this for something that may or may not happen?**

**DHEERAJ DHOOPAR, Actor**

# It was incredible: Piyush Shankar on working on KK's last song

**Piyush Shankar and KK; (below) with lyricist Rashmi Virag at the studio**

**Now that KK sir is gone and this song is his last, it does make me sad. But whenever I listen to it, I'm reminded of the memories we made together.**

**PIYUSH SHANKAR, Composer**

KK sir was an incredible experience. The track is about promise and love."

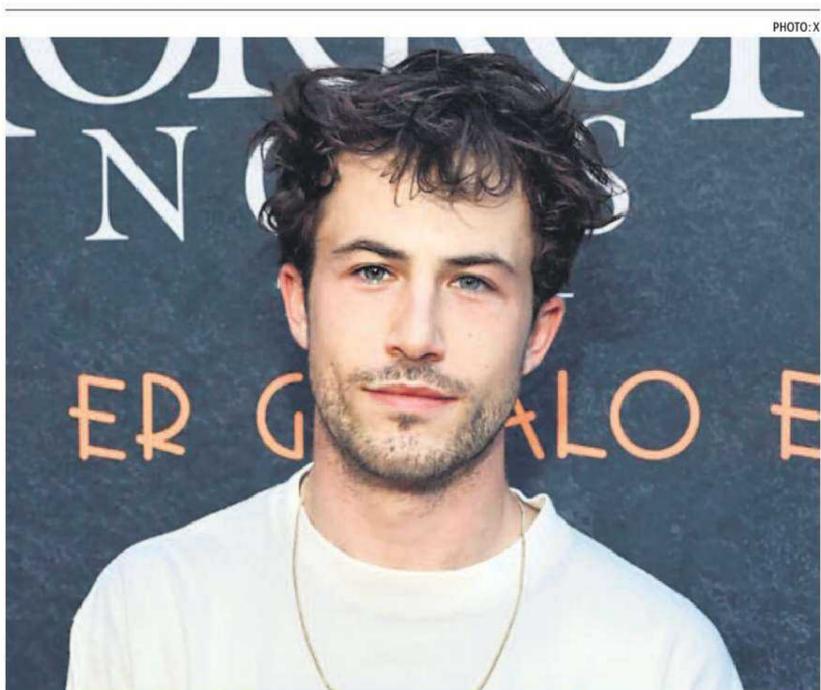
He adds, "I felt so much pride in being in the studio with him. Besides being an amazing artiste, he was a great human being too, so full of life. I remember I had dubbed the rough vocals for the song and the backing layers and he really loved my voice. He insisted I kept my voice along with his."

The composer adds that KK sang the track, penned by Rashmi Virag, in his signature style, which will be a treat for his fans. "Every chord struck and every lyric sung felt like

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Tomorrow (May 31) marks singer KK's second death anniversary and his fans are enjoying his last-recorded film song, *Vada Humse Karo*, which was released earlier this week. Talking about the track from *Savi* and how recording with the late singer, who died of cardiac arrest after a concert in Kolkata in 2022, was like, composer Piyush Shankar says, "Recording the song with

He is proud of being an actor on the small screen but reveals he has faced discrimination because of the medium "many times". "I could see it in people's eyes. I would get invited for the biggest award shows and notice a stark difference in the attention given to the film stars and me. I used to feel bad. I'm not saying treat them lesser than, but treat us as equals. I'm here because of the work that I have done on TV," he wraps up.



# Dylan Minnette on why he quit acting: Felt like a job

Dylan Minnette, popular for his role on the web series, *13 Reasons Why*, said he deliberately scaled down his acting career because of a shift in perspective.

Minnette who began his career as a nine-year-old in 2006, recently stated, "I was on *13 Reasons Why* and it was really popular and definitely reached a peak."

Discussing his decision on the podcast, the Zach Sang Show, the actor-singer added, "I was in a very fortunate position — it was always fun for me, always really inspiring, but then it was just starting to feel like a job."

That's when he felt inclined towards music and started the rock band, Wallows. "I was like, music is this passion that we (as a band) have always had. I'm in a position where I can just do that for a while," he added.

However, he did admit that he wants "something to give creatively in other fields" apart from music. "I'm starting to feel inspiration for [acting] again," he continued. "At some point, when we're all ready to take a break as a band, that's when I'll have the perfect inspiration to do something."



PHOTO: INSTAGRAM/SHALINBHANOT

# Have nothing to hide: Shalin on speculations about his private life

**Yashika Mathur**  
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Having been in the public eye since 2004, actor Shalin Bhanot says he is "unbothered" by speculations around his personal life.

The 40-year-old's private life first made headlines in 2015, following an ugly separation from ex-wife, actor Dailijet Kaur. Although things eventually cooled down, Bhanot found his personal life being hotly discussed during his stint on *Bigg Boss 16*. Despite this, he tells us, "I don't get bothered by my personal life [becoming public], because whatever does come out is probably just 20-30% of it."

Even as Kaur was recently in the news for her alleged estrangement from husband, businessman Nikhil Patel, Bhanot has remained tight-lipped on the subject. He asserts that he tries to keep his life "pretty private". Having said that, the actor acknowledges that the attention is part

and parcel of being a public figure. "We step out of the airport in the middle of the night with family and even that gets covered (by the media)," he says, adding, "If one is bothered by it, they will not be able to survive. But it doesn't affect me; I have nothing to hide."

The actor is currently in Romania, where he is shooting for *Khatron Ke Khiladi 14*. Although this is his second stint on the show (he also participated in the tenth season in 2020), he brushes aside concerns about being pigeonholed. "If I had done reality shows back to back, then probably aisa lagta, but that was not the same. You can do the same thing 100 times and it will still be real for yourself and the audience," he says.

Ask if he has plans to do more films after *Pyare Mohan* (2006) and *Love Ke Fundey* (2016), the actor replies: "I'd love to be part of something intelligent and fun. I am open to any medium because I like to work."



Zaira posted a childhood photo (inset) along with her father, Zahid on social media

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM/ZAIRAWASIM

# Zaira Wasim on father's death: Please remember him in your prayers

Former actor Zaira Wasim recently revealed that her father, Zahid Wasim, had died on Tuesday.

Taking to social media, Zaira posted a childhood picture of herself and her dad and wrote, "My father, Zahid Wasim, has passed away. Please remember him in your prayers and ask Allah to forgive his shortcomings, make his grave peaceful, protect him from its torment, ease his journey from here ahead and grant him the highest level of Jannah and Maghrirah" she wrote.

The 23-year-old made her Bollywood debut in 2016 at the age of 16, playing a young Geeta Phogat in *Dangal*. She went on to star in *Secret Superstar* (2017) alongside actor Aamir Khan but quit acting in 2019.