



RELAX. THE WEEKEND'S HERE

# brunch

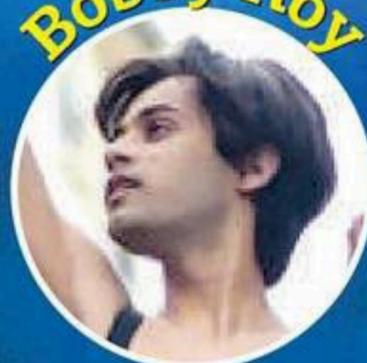
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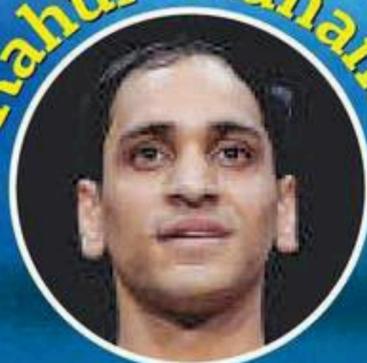
## Making a **pointe**

They're men in ballet. They're also dancers striving to make their mark in a niche but punishing field. See how four of them are battling stigma, mounting expenses, and competition to pirouette to the global stage

**Bobby Roy**



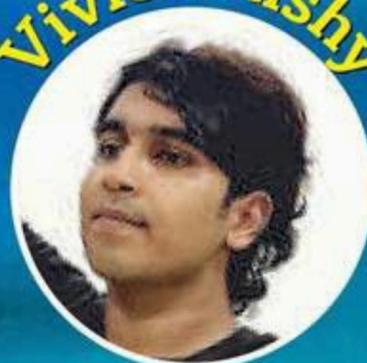
**Rahul Chanana**



**Tejas Saraswathi**



**Vivien Rishy**



**Kitty party**  
How Peter Cat Recording Co. ended up with a 77-city tour

**Rude Food**  
Notes from London's hippest restaurants

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# This week we're...



**Team Brunch**

letters@hindustantimes.com

**Getting freak**

**shakes.** Tinashe's song, Nasty, is an Insta-Reel hit because of one specific line: "Is somebody going to match my freak?"

That's now a rallying call those seeking a friend or partner with the same quirks. Kinks we love: Keeping headphones on, but music off; having a fav mug but being promiscuous with plates; being obsessed with Conan Gray. Are we OK?

**Pausing on Ali Fazal.** It took three seasons of Mirzapur for the actor's skills to pop. The show has gone off the rails, killing off characters, Game of Thrones style. But Ali, he's no longer the grump. He's holding his own against Pankaj Tripathi and Rasika Duggal. We're actually empathising with his character, Guddu. Who'd have thought?



**Pressing replay.** That viral video of Vicky Kaushal dancing to Tauba Tauba isn't Bad Newz at all. The reason it's popular is because it fits just about any song. Go ahead, try it. Some 100 creators already have, and we've enjoyed scrolling through them. We think Tauba Tauba is the aloo of videos – versatile, delicious. Keto-friendly also.

**Fawad thinking.**

Fawad Khan might be returning to Bollywood. But has he missed his chance? Oh, he's still crush-worthy. But it seems like the obsession may have peaked already. Public opinion is fickle – we're into hot rodent men now. And it'll never be as exciting as the first time we discovered him. Man needs to bring more to the table. 🍷



# The clock's not watching

**Slow down, you crazy child. Hard work and hustling will take you far. But there's no race to win and no deadline on goals**

**Sneha Krishnan**

letters@hindustantimes.com



In *Up In The Air* (2009), Anna Kendrick's character's life doesn't go according to her well-thought-out plan. Unfortunately, that's usually how life goes.

To best understand what's bothering young people today, rewind to the 2009 comedy-drama *Up In The Air*. Forget about George Clooney for a bit. There's Anna Kendrick, playing Natalie Keener, freshly minted Cornell superstar, who could have taken a job in San Francisco but followed her boyfriend to Omaha, the middle of nowhere, only to be dumped by him a few months into her new job.

She's not just heartbroken, she's unravelling: "I thought I'd be engaged by now... I thought by 23, I'd be married, maybe have a kid, corner office by day, entertaining at night. I was supposed to be driving a

Grand Cherokee by now." Keener didn't just have her life mapped out, she'd packed it so tight, it could only explode.

It's roughly why so many 20-somethings are so disenchanted with their own lives – they're all expecting to make their dreams come true by the coming weekend. Even the movie knows that this is a fantasy. "It doesn't work that way," an older high-flying woman tells Natalie. "At a certain point, you stop with the deadlines. It can be a little counter-productive."

Clearly, no one's listening. Because three years later, the HBO show, *Girls*, echoed exactly the same anxieties. Hannah Horvath, two years out of a posh liberal-arts college, is living in New York City and hoping to become a writer. Her rude shock arrives when her parents cut her off financially. "I don't want to freak you out, but I think I may be the voice of my generation. Or at



For Emily (top) in *Emily in Paris* (2020 - ) her dream of landing in France and making it big was crushed early on in S1 as she understood that things wouldn't just fall into her lap. Even if she's an American. The girls on *Two Broke Girls* (2011-2017) realised early on that there's no rushing dreams.

least, a voice, of a generation," Hannah tells them. It takes a few episodes before she stops whining and starts to appreciate survival as its own kind of success. By the middle of Season 2, Hannah has a different voice: "I realise I'm not different. I want what everyone wants. I want all the things. I just want to be happy."

The waitresses on *Two Broke Girls* (2011-2017) understand early on that there's no rushing dreams, that life is too unpredictable to control. "You need to stop freaking out because you're not where you thought you would be, in life or in our business," Max tells Caroline in Season 1. "It's real life, lower your expectations." The mantra helps them keep at it season after season, making money, risking it on a cupcake business, losing it and making more.

And perhaps no one struggles with professional fantasies and reality than Emily on *Emily in Paris* (2020-). She's 29, American, vaguely ambitious and dispatched to work in a venerable French marketing firm. Of course she's going to kill it, right? Wrong. American ideas don't play well in Europe, what's sexy can soon turn sexist. All the way into Season 3, Emily is still trying to make everything happen, and happen quickly. It prompts the French CEO Sylvie to dryly observe, "Were you just trying to have it all? That is SO American."

Forrest Gump was a mama's boy, and not terribly bright. But even he figured it out in the 1994 film: "Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're going to get." Nothing turned out quite like he'd imagined, let alone planned.

And even recreating that film, bit by bit for Indian audiences as *Laal Singh Chaddha* (2022) didn't work out as planned. So, maybe it's time to start valuing the journey rather than scrambling towards the destination. 🍷

# Back to the daily grind

**If you didn't choose the mug life. But why is café coffee always better? From bean to brew, here's how to find the best roast for you**

**Urvee Modwel**

urvee.modwel@hindustantimes.com

Trial and error works. Try out different combinations and settle for what feels right, not what everyone else seems to love. ADOBE STOCK



Ah, coffee. The stuff that fuels first dates, morning rituals, work meetings, breaks from work meetings, hipster conversations. It's the smell of potential, the taste of happiness and \*record scratch\* and why doesn't the coffee we make at home taste the same as in cafés? Why are beans so complicated? Why can you go wrong even with an expensive order? We asked some experts for help.

● **First, pick a side.**

Team Robusta or Team Arabica? Robusta has more caffeine than Arabica, it's also more bitter, says Siddhant Devan of Devan's, a 62-year-old coffee roasting company in New Delhi. Purists consider Arabica the superior bean. The higher elevations it grows in (between 3,000 - 6,000 feet), have warm days and cool nights. This gives the cherries – and the beans inside them – more time to develop and build a more refined flavour.

● **Test for taste.**  
Most good coffee

companies sell single-bean and blend versions of their coffees. Single-origin coffee comes from a single producer, crop, and region. That means no two single blends will taste the same. Kenyan coffees are known for being fruity; Ethiopian coffee is famous for its floral flavours. "In India, coffee plantations in India are usually peppered with spice and fruit crops like pepper, cardamom, vanilla, orange and banana," explains Nishant Sinha, founder of the seven-year-old Roastery Coffee House ➔

## Why cafés do it better

“They use specialised grinding and brewing techniques and equipment, measure with utmost precision, use specific water filtration systems, seal unused beans in special vacuum conditions, and have a long list of other checks. Ordinary people don’t always have the right tools and knowledge to make the perfect cup.” — **Apoorv Agarwal, founder, The Simple Brew**



Coffee beans are roasted to extract different levels of acidity and flavour profiles. Test medium, dark and light roasts to see what works best for your palate. ADOBE STOCK

chain. So, citrus, floral or spicy flavours can be inherent, depending on where the coffee was grown. “Coffee blends, on the other hand, combine coffee from different origins to create new flavours; and are best used in coffees with milk.”

● **The single life.** A bean that’s traceable up to a region is single-origin. If we know the exact estate it came from, it’s a step up: Single-estate. To infuse flavour, single-origin beans are often fermented along with fruits such as sherry or pineapple. “This is part of the next-level of producing single-origin coffee,” says Sinha. “These are called microlots – limited batches of high-quality coffee that are carefully fermented and processed.” They’re the best a farmer can offer, and sometimes come from just one patch of land.

### ● **Get roasted.**

When beans meet high temperatures, they release different levels of acidity and flavour. A light roast has no oil on the surface of the beans and is bold, fruity and floral – the most familiar coffee taste. A dark roast means the beans were heated longer, and are more caramelised, smoky and bitter. “Medium roasts retain the flavour of the bean, but also offer a decent kick of acidity and no bitterness,” Sinha says. Try out different combinations and settle for what feels right, not what everyone else seems to love.

● **Level up.** There are probably 100 different ways you could enjoy your cup of coffee. Vietnamese coffee uses medium and dark beans, and the pour-over method – hot water over coffee grounds over



To make coffee art like baristas do will take time. Start simple, maybe with a Moka pot, a French Press or a percolator (above). ADOBE STOCK; SHUTTERSTOCK



condensed milk. Turkish coffee uses very finely ground Arabica beans and the grounds are left in the coffee when served. Can't linger over a cup? Get espresso. Want to show off? Get Mazagran, a cold coffee with lemon juice, ice and sugar, that originated in Algeria. Some version even use rum.

● **Stay grounded.**

"Coffee that is freshly ground is the most flavourful," says Devan. If you don't have a grinder at home, and you're buying ground coffee from the store, consume it within two weeks of opening.

This isn't the same as instant coffee. "Instant coffee is basically stuff that's been brewed, dehydrated and needs to be dissolved in water or milk." Most brands make it with cheap coffee and chicory, the root of a bitter plant, to keep costs low. That's

why it never tastes like the coffee at a specialty café.

● **Assemble allies.**

Before splurging on a complicated coffee machine, start simple. Devan recommends Moka pots for those who like espresso or milky coffee; and pour-overs or a French Press for people who prefer strong black coffee. A French Press lets coffee grounds steep in hot water for a while, which produces a more robust cup. "The South Indian coffee maker/tumbler is also a great way to enjoy coffee with milk and is the cheapest way to get started," he says. There's no single best way to make coffee, but there are best moves, says Devan. "Use freshly ground beans, store coffee in an airtight container, do not boil the water – turn off the heat just before boiling. And never reheat coffee." 🌱

# The Cat's out of the bag

**Five months. Three continents. A 77-city tour. Peter Cat Recording Co. is living every rocker's dream. How did they pull it off?**

**Karishma Kuenzang**

letters@hindustantimes.com



The band members, who performed at London's Electric Ballroom (above) last November, aren't always together in the same city. They make band camps happen, putting their lives on hold for weeks at a time. SALIH AH SAADIQ

Who would have thought, even a decade ago, that a five-piece Delhi band, which plays jazz-based compositions and sings in English, would launch their third album with a 77-city tour across North America, UK, Europe and India? A decade ago, Peter Cat Recording Co. was barely five years old. Now, New York City, Chicago, Boston, Nashville, LA, Montreal, Vancouver, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Berlin, Amsterdam, Paris, Milan, Zurich, London and Barcelona are on the tour. Most gigs are already sold out. My, how they've grown!

The new album, *Beta*, has 13 tracks and is squarely within the band's soundscape: Gypsy jazz and ballroom dominate, there's a horn section, many songs show off the musicians' Indian Classical roots. Dhruv Bhola works the bass and samples, Suryakant Sawhney is on guitar, lyrics and vocals, Karan Singh is on the drums. The band has added new instruments to the line-up since 2009. Kartik Pillai, who plays the guitars, horns and woodwind, learned saxophone. Rohit Gupta, on keys, horns and woodwind, now plays clarinet and sax, and contributed to synth bass and electronic drum sounds. "It's exciting to pick up an instrument and figure out if it fits with a song," he says.

The changes have worked. But Peter Cat ➔



IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE AN INDIAN BAND WRITING IN ENGLISH, YOU HAVE TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO MAKE YOURSELF MORE UNIVERSAL AND NOT JUST WRITE MUSIC



The band puts much of their personal lives into their music. Karan Singh's toddler selected the album's name. The song Suddenly is an ode to Suryakant Sawhney's late father. A video from the previous album featured scenes from Sawhney's actual wedding. CELESTE BARBOSA

Recording Co.'s success comes largely because audiences have changed too. And they make music that is at once universal and intimate.

### Close to home

When they played in north America last year, Peter Cat Recording Co. were largely playing to folks who'd discovered their sound in the pandemic. "People were not looking for party music, but something more personal and intimate," says Sawhney. "We were Brown dudes, but the music

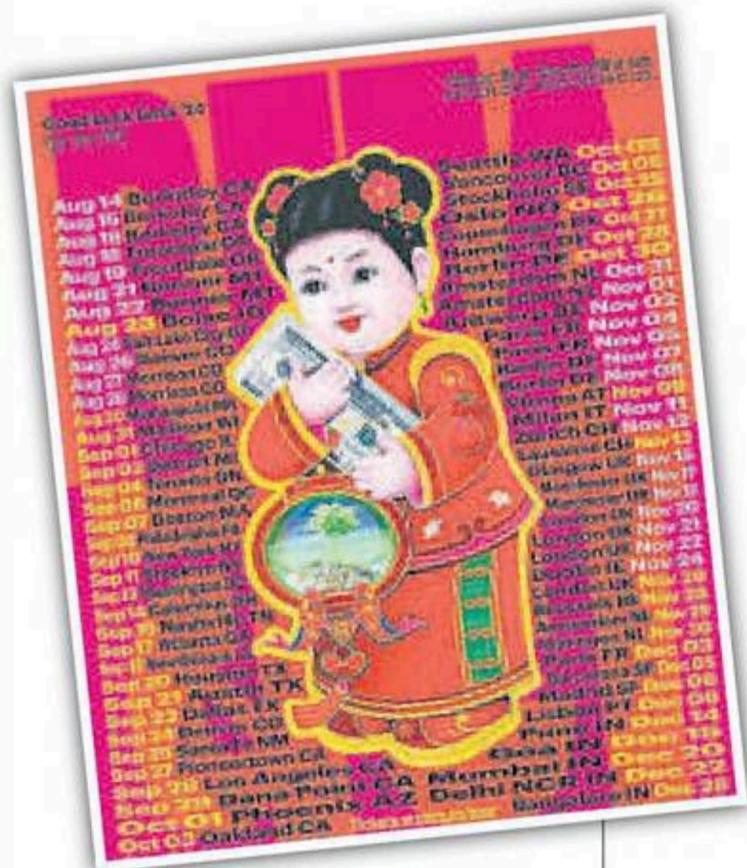
went past our identity. I've grown up listening to Western music and TV, like anyone else in the '90s. We all absorbed Western culture. In a way, we are just throwing it back out."

And they've been unafraid to make their work personal. Their previous album, Bismillah, featured clips from Sawhney's wedding video. To settle on an album name for Beta, Singh got his toddler Araan Tatak Singh to pick a slip of paper from a few options.

One song on the album, Suddenly, was released in June. It honours Sawhney's father Vikas Chander Sawhney, who loved Western music and passed away when Sawhney was a teen, leaving just him and his Indian-

music-loving mum. On YouTube, one user, @tarushdas1088, says it "made me feel everything I feel for my mom. She's a single mother as well."

It's validation for Sawhney. "I won't write songs about driving flashy cars at night. Because that's not the life experience I am having," he says. "For me it's hard to fake doing something. It only makes sense to make your art honest." →



The band is touring with their third album, *Beta*, next month (above). They're hoping to draw crowds who identify with their music, like the ones at Elysée Montmartre in Paris last November (below).

On the band's YouTube channel, listeners have left messages from as far away as Chile and South Africa, asking them to come play there. "Therapy isn't enough," comments SamarthAmin-yl7ni. "I want Suryakant Sawhney to moan in my ears." User joshua01096 says he's "lowkey proud that PCRC is more famous outside India than India".

### Living the dream

The tour kicks off in August and wraps in December. It won't be quite like *Almost Famous* (2000). The idea of debauched, freewheeling rock concerts died with the '70s, says Bhola. "And touring in a van or bus is not as comfortable as people imagine it to be!" Instead, it's professionally managed, precisely scheduled, hard work.

"Indian musicians need to see their work as a serious business and not flip-flop around like stoner dudes," says Sawhney. "It's taxing on your personal life if you're married or in a long-term relationship. You need two weeks to settle down when you

return, because there's a sort of disconnect when you're on tour."

Singh is trying to figure out where to house his dog, and how his wife will raise Araan. "We signed up for it," he admits. It doesn't mean it's easy.

What helps are hacks that would make '70s rockers keel over and cringe. Sawhney cuts down on smoking and drinking on tour because a musician can't afford to be sick, tired or hung over. "There's nothing more disappointing for an artist than playing an underwhelming show. We

aren't 27 anymore. We're actually trying to make a career out of it, and live longer," says Sawhney. 🌱



# Gender

## no barre

**Male ballet dancers are tiptoeing around taboos, training hard, and taking the stage, head held high. Meet four young men taking this leap of faith. See what it means to stand out among women, land a role and own it**

**Reem Khokhar**

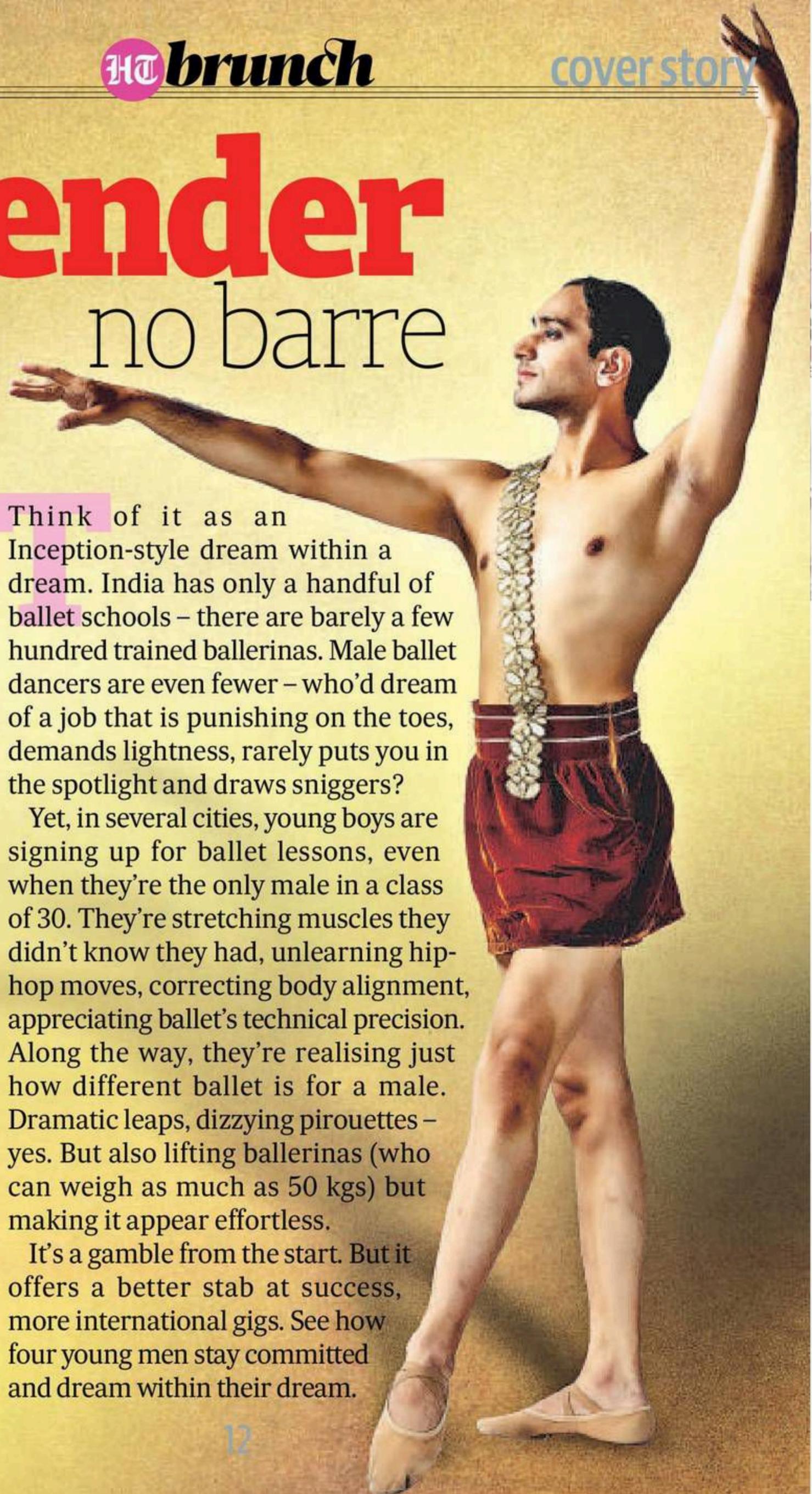
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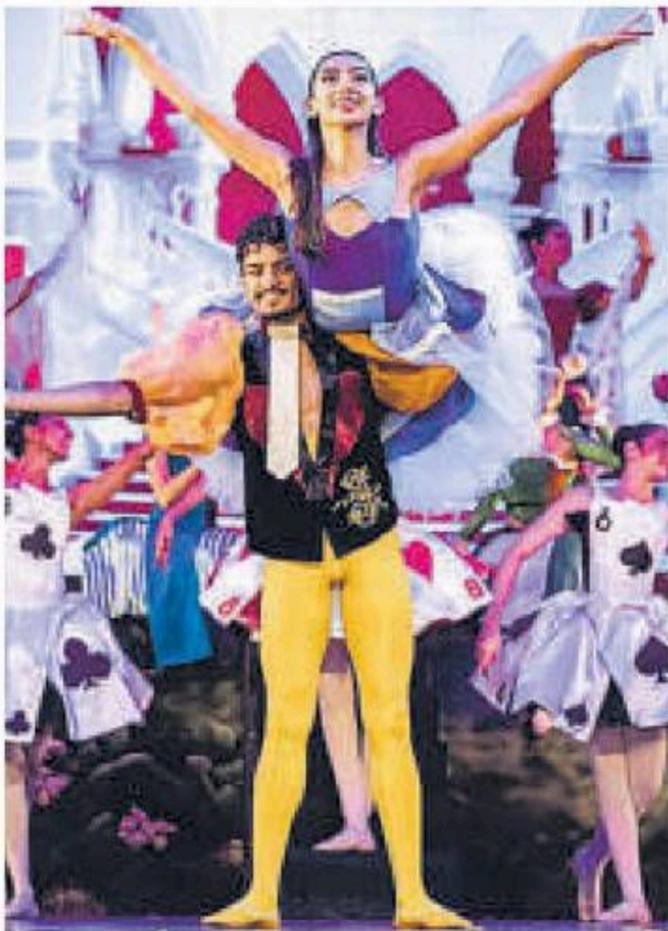


Think of it as an Inception-style dream within a dream. India has only a handful of ballet schools – there are barely a few hundred trained ballerinas. Male ballet dancers are even fewer – who'd dream of a job that is punishing on the toes, demands lightness, rarely puts you in the spotlight and draws sniggers?

Yet, in several cities, young boys are signing up for ballet lessons, even when they're the only male in a class of 30. They're stretching muscles they didn't know they had, unlearning hip-hop moves, correcting body alignment, appreciating ballet's technical precision. Along the way, they're realising just how different ballet is for a male. Dramatic leaps, dizzying pirouettes – yes. But also lifting ballerinas (who can weigh as much as 50 kgs) but making it appear effortless.

It's a gamble from the start. But it offers a better stab at success, more international gigs. See how four young men stay committed and dream within their dream.





Last year, ballet dancer Tejas Saraswathi performed his first duet in *Alice*, the ballet version of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.



### Tejas Saraswathi, 19, Bengaluru

Saraswathi started taking ballet lessons when he was seven. The bullying started shortly after. Boys in school would make fun of him for “dancing like a girl”. Saraswathi almost gave up. He only kept at it because his grandmother urged him to, and his ballet instructor, Yana Lewis, encouraged him to. Ten years on, “the kids who teased me come to my shows and cheer me.”

Still, it's been a tough journey. He studied ballet via the Lewis Foundation of Classical Ballet's outreach programme at his school. He put in the time and the sweat, winning 99/100 in an international ballet exam, and winning this year's edition of the Great Indian Ballet Competition in Mumbai.

His moves called for not only grand jetés (those broad, high leaps that look like aerial splits) and complicated jumps, but also for supporting his female partner through lifts and spins. “I had to gain more muscle for all the partner work, working out with weights in between rehearsals.”

He's also learning jazz and hip hop at TLFCB, but Saraswathi is one of only six males studying ballet across the institute's six centres. It's given him a unique edge. “With ballet, there are more opportunities to be on stage,” he says. Saraswathi was accepted into the summer programme at New York City's National Academy of Ballet this year. He can't afford it. It's also why it's hard for him to plan a career in ballet and why he's studying to become a physiotherapist. He still dances five hours a week.

“Ballet will remain my passion and I will always dance,” he says.

The kids who teased me come to my shows and cheer me.

TEJAS SARASWATHI,  
Bengaluru



**Bobby Roy, 23, Mumbai**

“There are no ballet companies or productions in India. I want to change that,” says Bobby Roy, who launched India’s National Youth Ballet in April.

Roy only started learning ballet at 17, after watching a class by Yehuda Ma’or (who inspired the 2020 film *Yeh Ballet*). “I didn’t know this dance form existed,” Roy says. He convinced Ma’or to train him and won a full scholarship by The Danceworx’s founder and choreographer Ashley Lobo.

Roy made up for lost time by putting every spare minute into rehearsal, often lunch breaks too. “If the studio was open, I would practise.” He wore out his ballet shoes and kept sewing them up. Eighteen months in, he got accepted into a ballet school in Paris and got a restaurant job to get by.

His Paris training got him opportunities to work with Europaballett in Austria, and dance companies in Germany, despite the pandemic. “I got to perform at the Vienna State Opera as a guest dancer.”

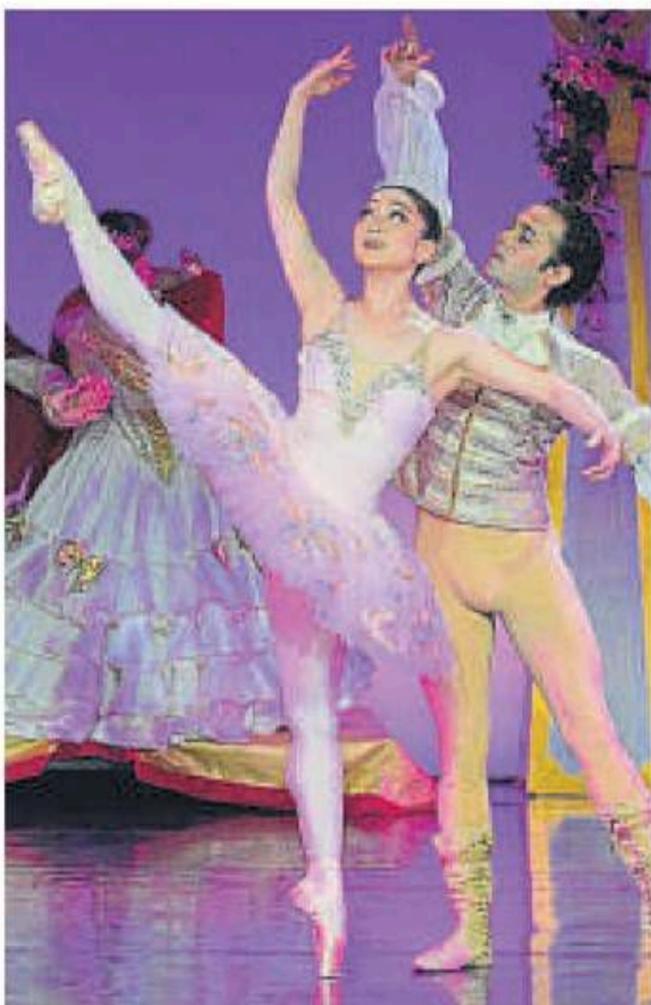
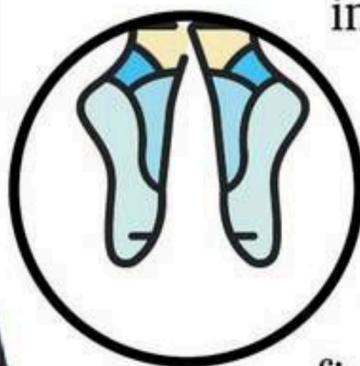
Throughout, the fact that he is a man, pirouetting in an overwhelmingly women-focused field, hasn’t bothered him. What’s kept him up at night is the competition. Internationally, it’s common for 600 to 700 male dancers to compete for two spots in a major production. “In Europe, the minimum height requirement for men is about 170 centimetres.” Few Indian ballet dancers make the cut.

So he’s changing the game. His Mumbai-based dance company currently has three men and five women. “Not everyone can go abroad. So getting performing experience locally is crucial.”

There are no ballet companies or productions in India. I want to change that.

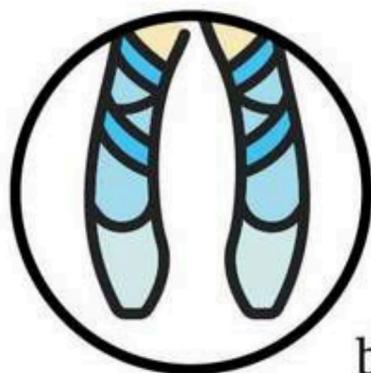
BOBBY ROY, Mumbai

Bobby Roy performed in Europaballett’s production of *Sleeping Beauty* in St Pölten, Austria. In Europe, the height requirement for men is about 170 centimetres, which makes it difficult for Indian dancers.





In 2013, at age 10, Vivien Rishy was the only boy in class at The School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance in Chennai. Even now, there are just three male ballerinas in a class of 20.



**Vivien Rishy, 21, Chennai**

In 2013, at age 10, Vivien Rishy was the only boy in class at The School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance in Chennai. “I thought ballet was for girls. My grandmother was a Bharatnatyam dancer and showed me ballet in videos, encouraging me to take classes,” he recalls. Later, he noticed a few other boys attending evening classes. It motivated Rishy to keep returning.

Now 21, with a degree in Visual Arts, he’s part of the school’s advanced batch, dancing twice a week and has performed in the school’s recitals of The Nutcracker. He’s also taking classes in piano, guitar, vocals, and the violin.

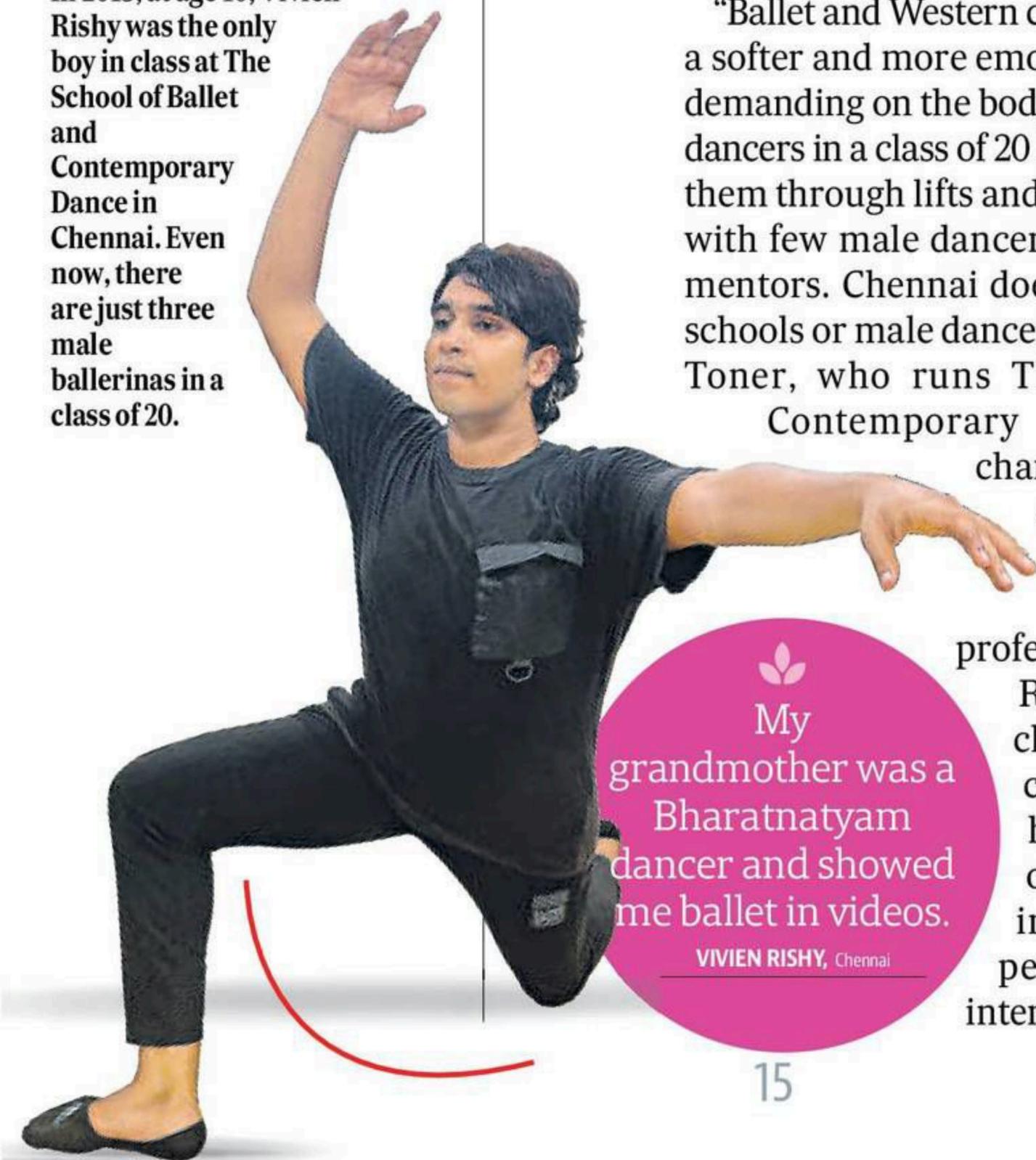
“Ballet and Western contemporary dance capture a softer and more emotional side.” But it’s doubly demanding on the body. Rishy is one of three male dancers in a class of 20 ballerinas. He has to support them through lifts and turns. Plus, it can be lonely with few male dancers as peers, role models, or mentors. Chennai does not have as many ballet schools or male dancers as Delhi or Mumbai. Ann Toner, who runs The School of Ballet and

Contemporary Dance says things are changing. “Earlier they would start really young, now we get young adults, people in college and working professionals,” she says.

Rishy hopes to become a choreographer for ballet and contemporary dance. He says he’s never faced any teasing or bullying about him being in ballet. “But I only tell people if they may seem interested.”

My grandmother was a Bharatnatyam dancer and showed me ballet in videos.

VIVIEN RISHY, Chennai





Rahul Chanana has performed in productions of *Diana* and *Actaeon* (above). Shy by nature, he says ballet has given him a confidence that mere dancing couldn't, and he's also much more comfortable in social situations now.

**Rahul Chanana, 31, Delhi**

Chanana, by his own admission, is shy. But on the dance floor, he's a whole other person. Chanana would let loose at parties and wedding celebrations, wowing onlookers. He took his first formal lessons, in jazz dance, only when he started working at age 21 – a grown-up in a class of kids. "I was so self-conscious and just nodded nervously anytime the instructor spoke to me."

He found his groove soon enough. And even found the confidence to try a few ballet sessions. "I

didn't know what the barre was, but the discipline of the form

appealed to me," he recalls.

He signed up at Central Contemporary Ballet in Gurgaon in 2017 and

worked his way up (with an

almost perfect attendance

record) from learning

to teaching and

dancing full-time with

his mentor and instructor

Sanjay Khatri, one of the male

pioneers of ballet dancing in India.

He's appeared in productions of *Diana*

and *Actaeon* and *Spartacus*. Ballet has given

him a confidence that mere dancing couldn't, he

says. "It gives me peace and a sense of comfort,"

he says.

Being a male instructor can be challenging,

Chanana says. Parents of young children

generally prefer female teachers.

But they've learnt to trust him.

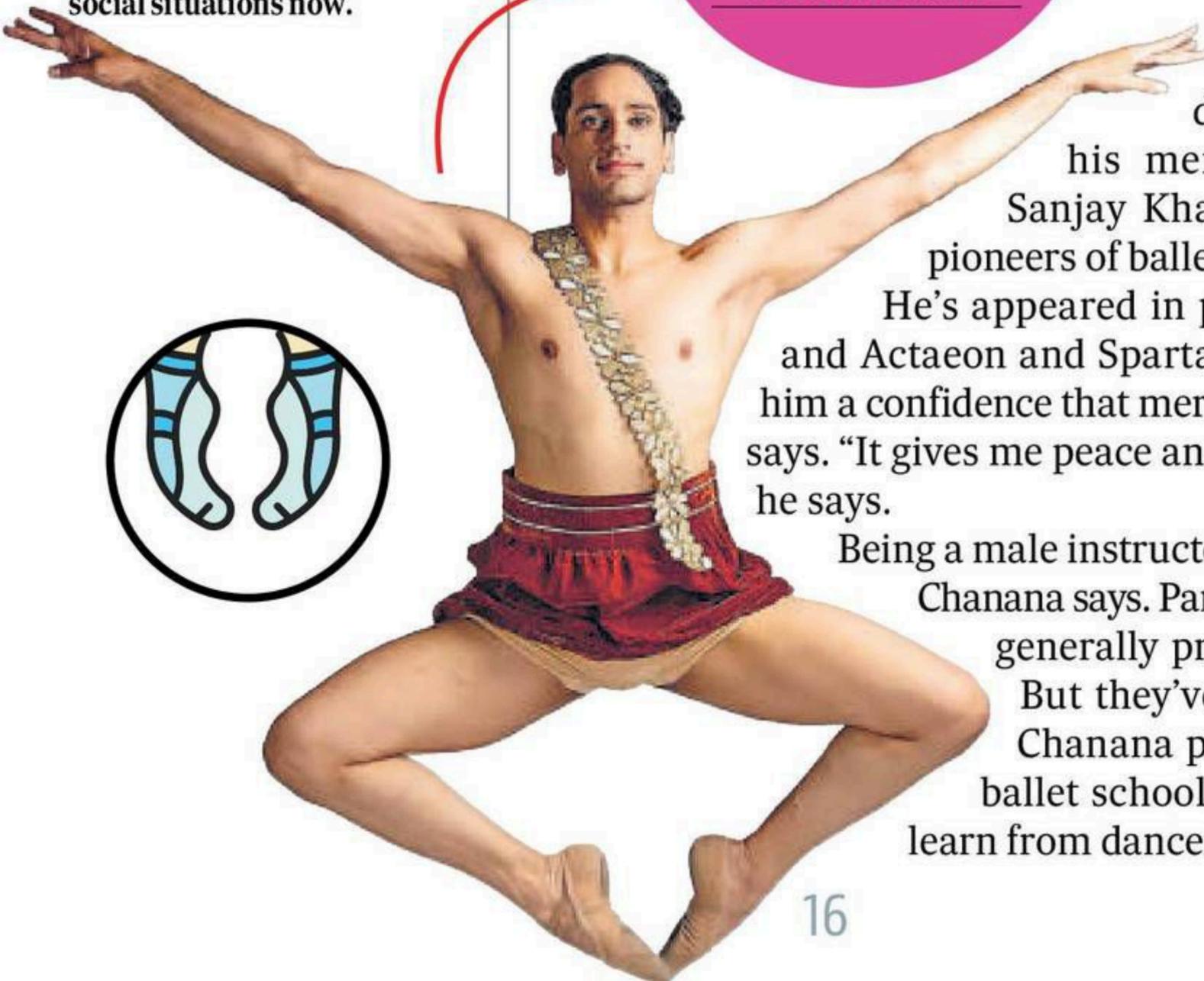
Chanana plans to open his own

ballet school. "Then, I would love

learn from dancers abroad." 🌸

The discipline it requires keeps calling to me. It gives me peace and a sense of comfort.

RAHUL CHANANA, Delhi



# Where to dine like a king



VIR  
SANGHVI

**London has an exciting mix of grand legacy restaurants and newer, sleeker dining places. What do they have in common? Chefs who aim for perfection**



London views itself as the international food capital of the world. Old restaurants such as The Arlington, the rebranded version of the famous Le Caprice, are still going strong. It serves the classic English dish, the Shepherd's pie (inset).



When I go to London, now hailed (by Londoners themselves if nobody else) as the international food capital of the world, I try not to eat Asian food because Indians now have so many opportunities to travel to East Asia and eat the real thing.

But I was curious about the new Koyn Thai in the heart of Mayfair. It is daring to open an upmarket Thai restaurant in an area dominated largely by Arabs, Russians, rich Indians and Eurotrash, none of whom like paying high prices for Thai food.

I know the owners (Dinesh and Samyukta Nair) and it was a surprise to find Koyn Thai packed out. The bigger surprise was how good the food was. I

ordered dishes I already knew well from

Thailand: Chiang Mai Sausages, Massaman Curry, Grilled Pork Neck, Beef with Black Pepper, Chicken Krapow and many more. They were outstanding. My wife had to concede that this was well up to top Bangkok standards.

The chef, Rose Chalalai Singh, whose glamorous Thai kitchen in Paris is much praised, was not there the night we went but the kitchen was on top form.

Long before central London became infested with the world's rich, there was Le Caprice. It was, in its heyday, the hottest restaurant in London frequented by powerful media people and



The Devonshire is hailed by critics and amateurs alike as the one place to go if you could have only one meal in the city. It serves delicious diver scallops (above) and ham and pea soup (inset). Young Indian-origin chef Siddharth works at the restaurant.



glamorous celebrities. On a good day, if you were lucky you might see Princess Diana or Mick Jagger, or, if you were less lucky, Jeffrey Archer. I once sat on the next table to David Bowie.

Le Caprice's glory period came when it was run by Chris Corbin and Jeremy King. Eventually, Richard Caring bought the restaurants and though he did not destroy Le Caprice, the restaurant lost its status.

Now, it is back with Corbin and King. Because Caring owns the Caprice name, they have had to call it Arlington after the street where it is located. But it looks the same, the menu is an updated version of the original and the old regulars are back.

It is doing extremely well (I loved it) and the big question when it opened— what about the new generation? — seems to have been answered. The original Caprice opened in 1947, Corbin and King took it over in 1981. Generations come and go but Le Caprice goes on.

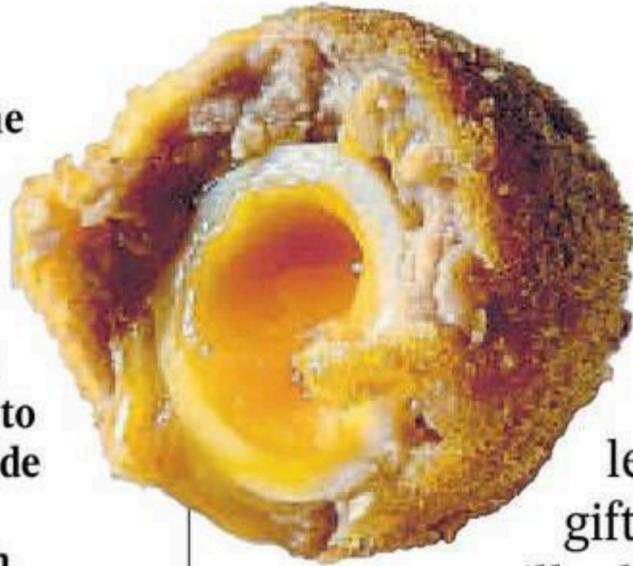
Though he has been around for a while,

Claude Bosi is the chef of the moment in London. Brooklands, Claude's restaurant at the Peninsula got two stars from Michelin, putting it on par with Bibendum, where Bosi has had two stars for years.

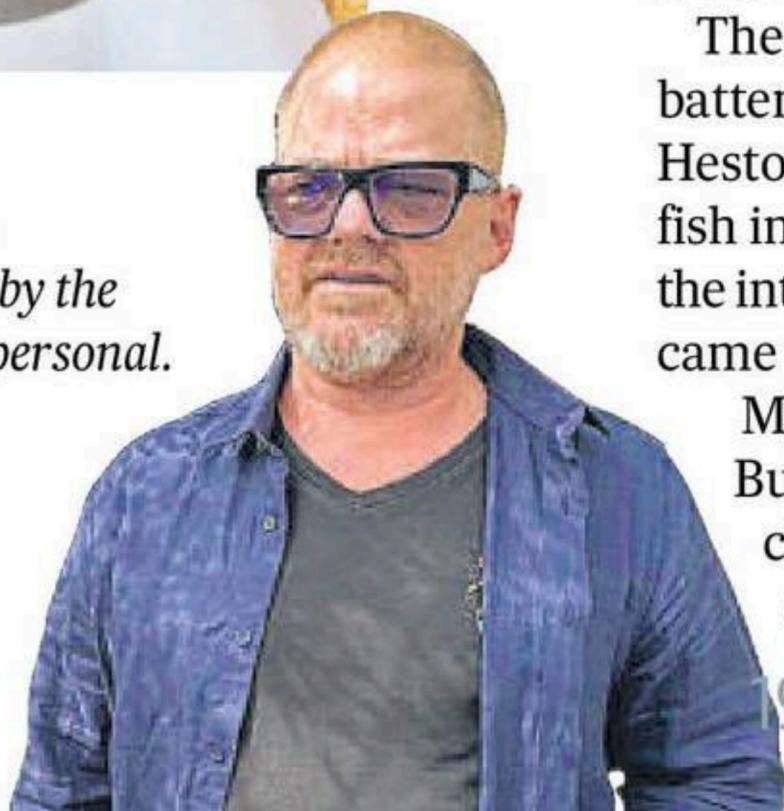
Josephine is Claude's stab at a neighbourhood (in Chelsea) restaurant in the tradition of Lyon. It has got better reviews than Claude's older Socca in Mayfair which is more Riviera-ish in style.

I thought the food at Josephine — a cheese soufflé, steak tartare, confit duck — was fine without being particularly good and the service was friendly if only intermittently attentive. But some of the tables were so uncomfortably close together that you felt you were eating at a communal table. I went on a Sunday but the restaurant was not full. So maybe Claude needs to take out a few tables.

Heston Blumenthal's London restaurant, The Hind's Head, serves his special creation, the soft-centred Scotch Egg (inset). The test of a good fried fish (below) according to him, is the crispy outside texture and the inner temperature of the fish.



*The views expressed by the artist are personal.*



The best reviews I have read for any new restaurant in years are for the Devonshire in Soho. If you have just one meal in London, this is where you should go.

It has first-rate ingredients which are brilliantly cooked by a multi-ethnic team led by Jamie Grey. (Also in the kitchen is a gifted Indian chef, Syd, short for Siddharth, who will take India by storm if he comes home.)

We had an absolutely perfect meal: Ham and Pea Soup; Iberico Ribs, cooked so that the meat melted off the bone; a White Crab salad and a British steak that was fire-cooked in full view of the dining room.

The three standout dishes were a bread and butter pudding (quite different from the Anton Mosimann version), diver scallops with bacon and malt vinegar and chips triple-cooked in duck fat.

One of Heston Blumenthal's Michelin-starred places is The Hind's Head, a pub with a dining room upstairs in the foodie village of Bray. I won't review the food because we went with Heston and his wife Melanie. The food was terrific, of course!

Still, it was very special to eat Triple Cooked Chips with the man who invented them, to rediscover the soft-centred Scotch Egg, another of Heston's contributions to gastronomy and to observe Heston's seemingly endless search for perfection.

The test of a good fried fish is the crispness of the batter and the texture of the fish steamed inside. Heston used a thermometer to check how hot the fish inside was and I was surprised to discover that the interior temperature actually went up as the fish came to the table.

My lunch at the Hind's Head was wonderful. But to see one of the world's most influential chefs in action is also a privilege and an education. 🍷

# What could go wrong?



SEEMA  
GOSWAMI

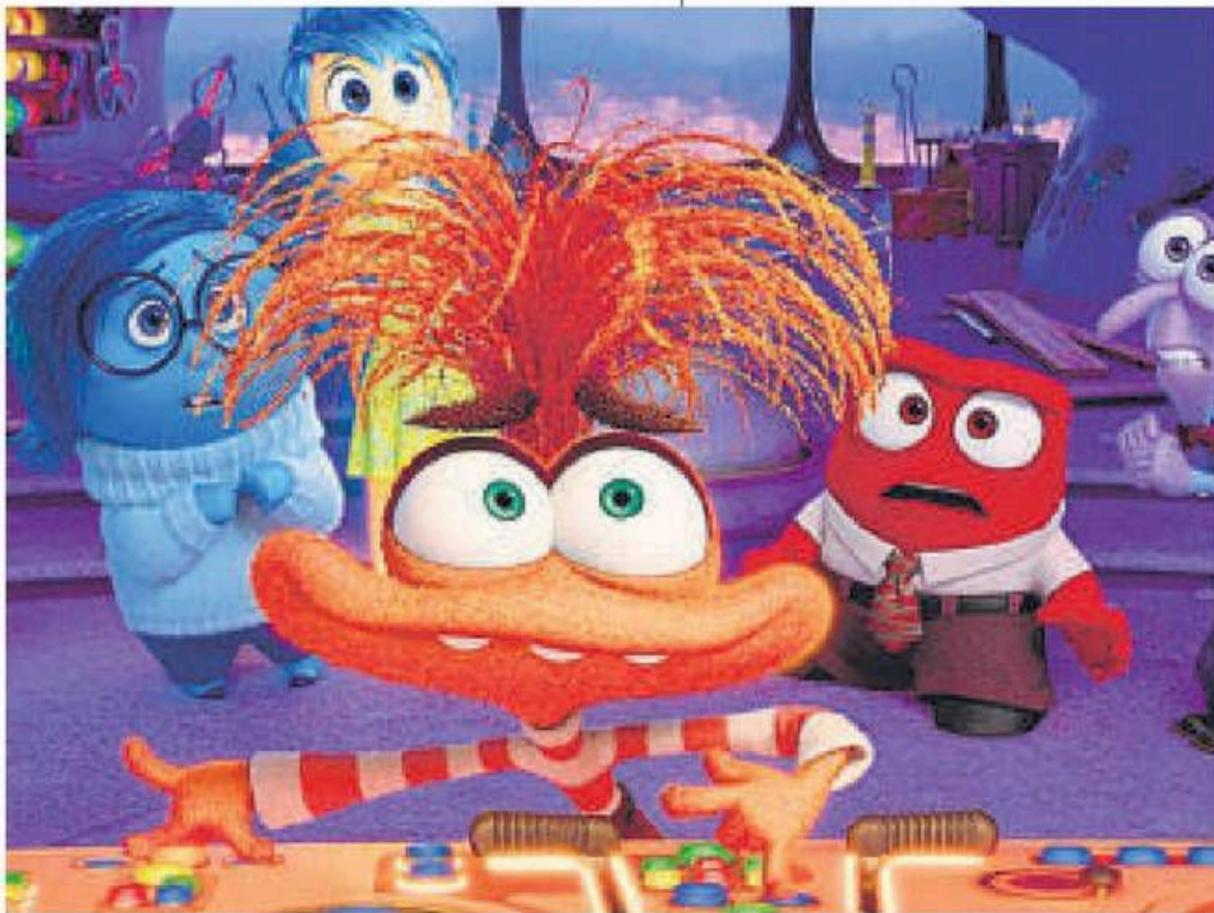
**A lot of things, as every chronic worrier knows. But life goes on, whether you worry or not. Here's how to accept it**

The world is divided into two sorts of people: The worriers and the non-worriers. The worriers have it bad by any standard. Rare is the situation that does not leave them worrying about how — and if at all — it will be resolved. If they are meant to do a task, they will worry about how well they will perform it. If they are expected to do something for someone else — no matter how trivial — they will lie awake at night wondering if they will mess it up. Every life situation they encounter will come with its own set of worries. They will worry about how their kids will turn out. They will agonise about dying alone. And sometimes they will worry for no good reason at all.

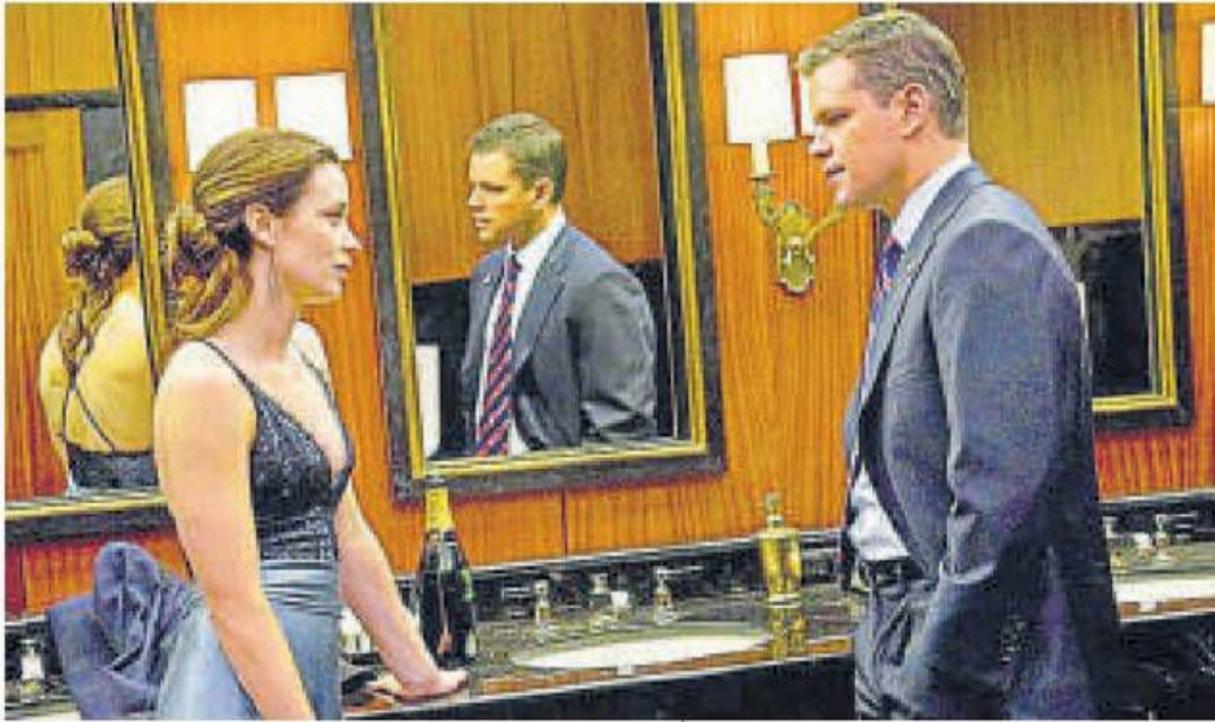
The non-worriers are the blessed among us. They are so insouciant by nature that nothing leaves them in the least bit frazzled. Not for them the incessant worry about whether they have packed their passport as they drive to the airport. At work they may do their best but you won't catch them

torturing themselves about whether the boss likes them or not. And they certainly don't worry about silly things like long-term life plans — in fact, they are barely aware that they even need one.

Just in case you're wondering, I fall squarely into the first category. In fact, you could even say that I →

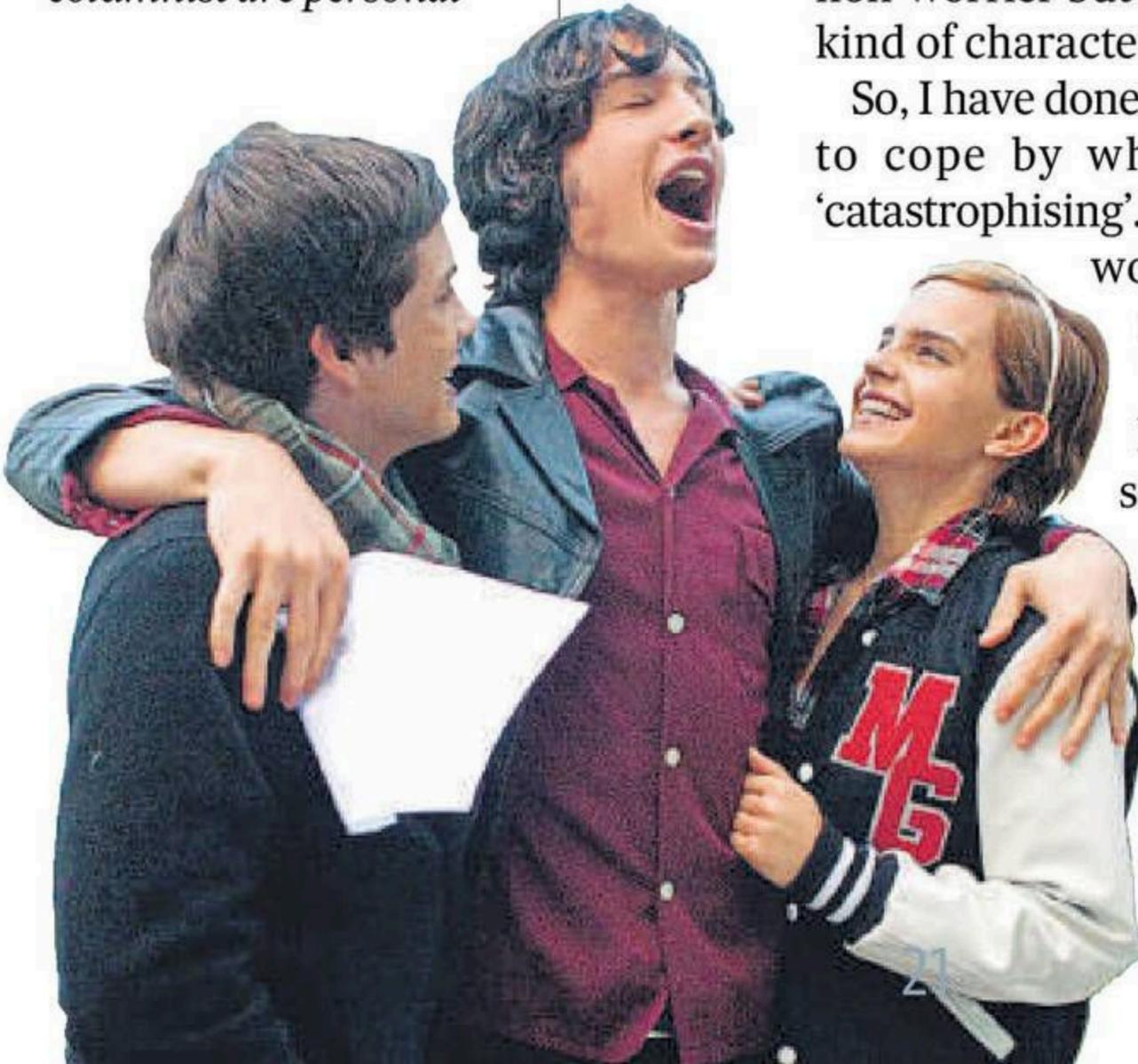


Anxiety often feels like a sign that we're in control, as the movie *Inside Out 2* depicts. But in reality, worrying doesn't help prepare us for any problems that we may face; it just ruins our present focus.



Even the all-knowing entity in *The Adjustment Bureau* (2011; above), cannot control the course of Elise's and David's lives. In the *Perks of Being a Wallflower* (2012; below), the characters find happiness in accepting who they are.

*The views expressed by the columnist are personal*



am a world-class worrier. I have yet to encounter any situation that doesn't send my brain whizzing into overload. It could be a routine medical test that leaves me traumatised until I get the results. It could be the task of packing enough medicines for a trip abroad (I keep feeling that I have missed out on something!) It could be something as innocuous as wondering if the roast potatoes I have made for my dinner party guests will turn out right. Or

even just torturing myself with the thought that I might have inadvertently offended someone.

Needless to say I can't help but envy the non-worriers among us who go through life whizzing along with minimal or zero mental strain. How remarkable it must be to live like that! To live each day with nary a care, and no fear or what lies beyond. I wish I could rewire my brain to become a non-worrier but I think at this late stage in life, that kind of character change is out of the question.

So, I have done the next best thing. I have decided to cope by what can only be described as 'catastrophising'. That means that whenever I begin

worrying about a situation (which is nearly all the time) I ask myself: "Okay, what is the worst that could happen?" I then run the worst-case scenarios through my mind and try and convince myself that I could — at a pinch — live with them.

On most occasions, this works for me. If you are also one of life's worriers, you might like to give this a try. God knows it's better than the alternative! 🍷

# When art blurs borders



PAYAL  
ARYA

**Shilpa Gupta's work maps our collective imagination. It confronts the viewer with questions of nationhood and belonging**

**S**hilpa Gupta adapts her modes of working to fit each new work. The one I'd like to talk about, though, is 100 Hand Drawn Maps of My Country, an ongoing series that began in 2008. Gupta invites 100 people to draw the contours of their nations from memory. She then superimposes these 100 drawings upon each other, in blue over a white background, to create a composite map that is more telling precisely because it is inaccurate.

People from Mumbai, Cuenca (Ecuador), Delme (France), Gwangju and Seoul (South Korea), Tel Aviv and Jerusalem (Israel) and other nations whose borders are contested have contributed their recollection of the maps. Each person leaves out spaces according to what they know. In India, some leave out Kashmir or the North East. People are also asked to engage and think about the nation and what it means to them. It's so interesting to see what remains, what is excluded and how the borders of the nation can be defined through a collective imagination.

I'm fascinated with how our country arrived at its present shape after Partition. Borders were created back then by someone sitting far away. How did this translate in the minds of the people in the country? The mapping exercise can help reflect on the idea of nationhood.

Even the use of "my country" in the title is poignant. It instils in the viewer a sense of 

**In 100 Hand Drawn Maps of My Country, Shilpa Gupta invited 100 people to draw the contours of their nations from memory.**

*Drawing Room is a fortnightly series that gets Indian artists to share their favourite work and what makes it so special.*



responsibility and attachment to the subject. Since 2008, many boundaries have changed, by war, the climate emergency and other factors.

So, this work is at once a record of its time, a timeless snapshot of collective memory, an inauthentic document. It inspires me because it is so simple yet so powerful.

I show this work in one of my classes, when we do a mapping exercise. The idea is to start a conversation about what mapping a location means and the various ways in which it can be done. It could be sonic mapping, or images of movement, mapping through stars, maps of the past, among other things. Then, I encourage my students to draw maps of their campus. One student, inspired by Gupta, chose to interact with faculty members and security guards to

observe the different degrees of access they had to sites on campus.

One of my own works focused on my Nani (maternal grandmother), who was from Pakistan. I made a film about her reclaiming her land through memory, even as Karachi's coast is being reclaimed by the sea. While Gupta's work examines the assertion of one's claim over their land, I seek to question if this is ever actually possible. 🌸

**Payal Arya spoke to Noor Anand Chawla**



**In Gupta's work, *For, In Your Tongue, I Cannot Fit* (2017 - 18), pieces of paper on metal spikes bear the poems of writers who were or are incarcerated.**

*Payal Arya is a mixed-media artist and arts educator at Jindal Global University. She creates site specific and immersive installations which seek to blur the parameters of the rooms they are made in. She explores notions of distance, position, and bodily tolerance, to question the concept of agency.*

*The views expressed by the artist are personal.*

# Crack the secret open

10 Easter eggs you may have missed in your favourite films. Some broke the fourth wall, some snuck in nods to real people. Some are simply silly

Karishma Kuenzang

letters@hindustantimes.com



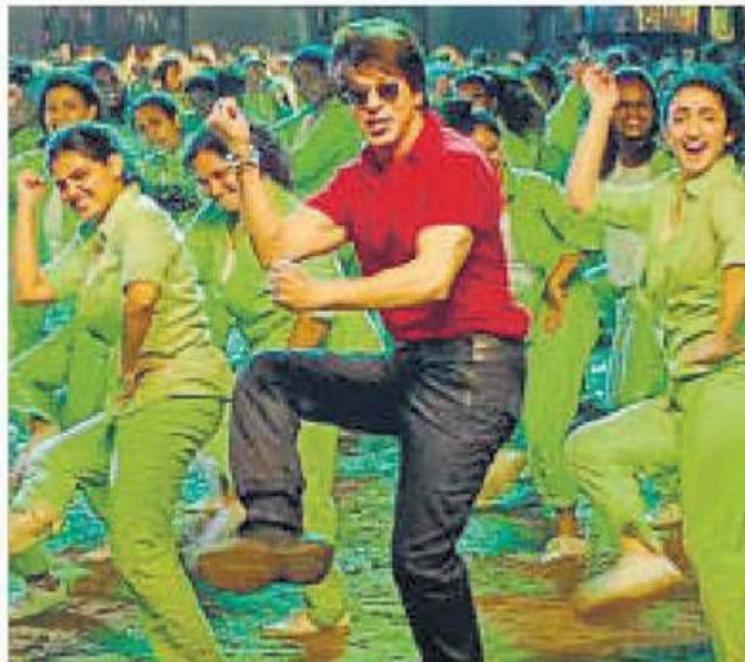
**1 Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani (2013).** The meet-cute between Kabir (Ranbir Kapoor) and Naina Talwar (Deepika Padukone) seems banal. Asking someone if you've met them before won't get

you anywhere. But it's a throwback to Kapoor and Mukherji's previous film, *Wake Up Sid* (2009). Kapoor takes a guess that the woman he's met is Aisha, Konkona Sen Sharma's character in that movie.

**2 12th Fail (2023).** Manoj Kumar Sharma (Vikrant Massey) beats the odds to become an Indian Police Service officer. The story is based on a book by Anurag

Pathak. The film has a scene in which Kumar and his wife play extras in a restaurant. It's a fleeting glimpse but enough to give viewers a little taste of the real hero.





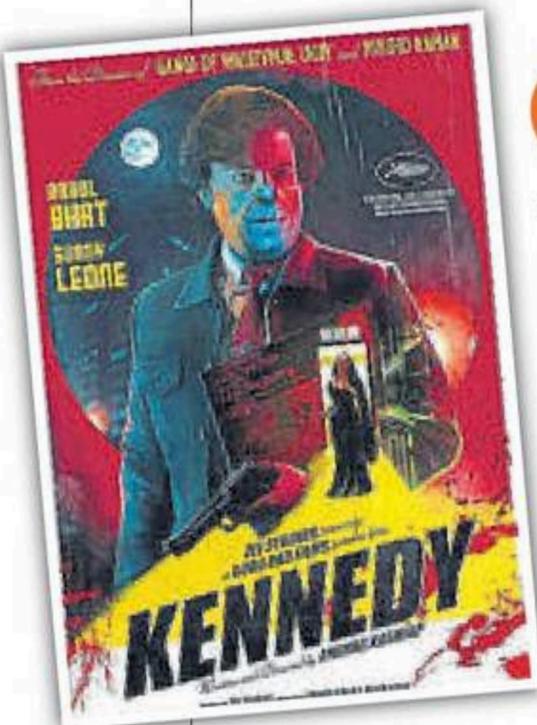
**4 Jawan (2023).** So many eggs. Shah Rukh Khan brings back his famous line "Rahul... Naam toh sun hoga," from Dil Toh Pagal Hai, even as he plays Vikram Rathore in the 2023 film. In addition, Priyamani's

character helps a young girl (Ashlesha Thakur), who played Priyamani's daughter in The Family Man (2019-). Then, Sanjay Dutt cameos, walking in, singing the title song from his 1993 movie Khal Nayak.

**3 Om Shanti Om (2007).**

The film is built on premonitions and part of it is set in the 1970s. The cool bit is when Om (Shah Rukh Khan), says "Dosti ka usool hai madam, no sorry, no thank you" to Shanti (Deepika Padukone). Watch as the shot zooms in on a man eavesdropping nearby. He's meant to be young Sooraj Barjatya, who made Maine Pyar Kiya (1989), and uses the line in the film. But no

kabootars, alas.



**5 Kennedy (2023).**

This one's not in the movie. The poster is a clever nod to director Anurag Kashyap, featuring bits of his older works. The typeface of title echoes Black Friday (2004). The black-yellow font colour is from That Girl In Yellow Boots (2010). The blood spatter is from Gulaal (2009). Even the blue-red light is inspired from the Raman Raghav (2016) poster.

**6 Go Goa Gone (2013).**

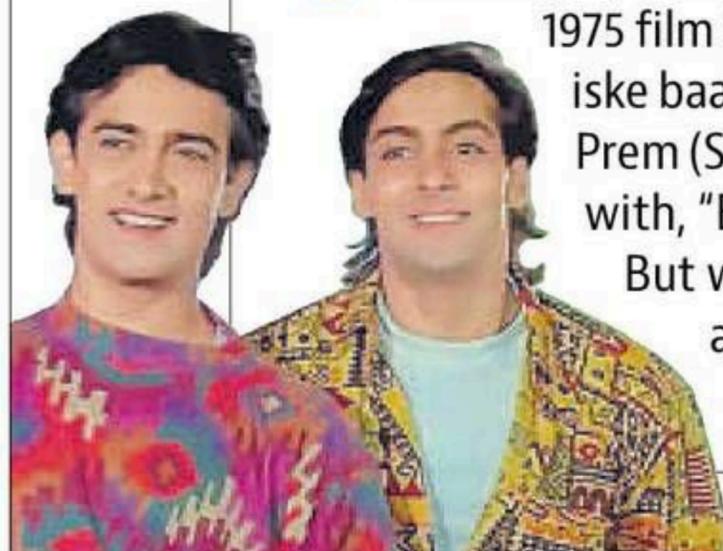
Viewers sense something is suss when Boris (Saif Ali Khan) doesn't seem like a Russian druglord. It's a build up to his iconic "Arey main Dilli se hun \*\*\*" line. In a scene in which the guys reach Goa and spot zombies, they dismiss them as random partygoers. Had they paid attention, they'd have ended up on an island right at the start. ➔





**7 Yes Boss (1997).**

Shah Rukh Khan's Mumbai home, Mannat, has been showing up in movies before it became his home. In Yes Boss, Rahul (SRK) sings Chaand Taare as he tours through Mumbai. The song is about how he dreams to make it big and features the mansion. It's the one Shah Rukh Khan would buy four years later! Dreams do come true, and get caught on film.



**9 Andaz Apna Apna (1994).**

Someone asks Amar (Aamir Khan) if he has watched the 1975 film Sholay. Amar replies: "Haan, iske baap ne likhi hai", pointing to Prem (Salman Khan), who responds with, "Baap pe matt jaa." It's a joke. But where's the lie? Sholay was actually co-written by Salman's father, Salim Khan.

**8 Chef (2017).**

Roshan Kalra (Saif Ali Khan) gets fired from his job and goes about setting up a food truck with his kid, Aari. While they bond over cooking and the business, Kalra has a typical dad moment, during which he mentions that he once took an epic trip to Goa



with his friends. It's a reference to Khan's 2001 film Dil Chahta Hai, which gave all of India Goa-travel goals. And it made us see Saif as a great actor too.

**10 Golmaal Returns (2008).**

Obviously there will be references to the OG. But here's a clever one: When Gopal (Ajay Devgn) is showing off to Ekta (Kareena Kapoor), he lets loose a string of words

that weave in Devgn's greatest hits: Phool Aur Kaante, Masti, and Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam. Then, Laxman (Shreyas Talpade) chimes in with Devgn's string of

flops: Aag, Raju Chacha and Cash. Gopal bristles. He knows this too. 🌸



# THIS IS US

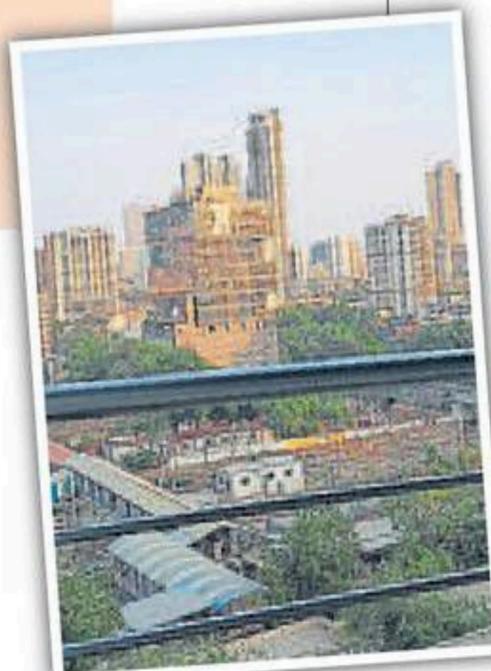
**For advertising and marketing enquiries:**

Gautam Buragohain  
gautam.buragohain@hindustantimes.com

Find Hindustan Times Brunch on Facebook. Follow **@HTBrunch** on Instagram and Twitter.

Drop us a line at: **HT Media Group**, 8th Floor, Lotus Tower, Block A, Friends Colony East, New Delhi 110025.

**Email: letters@hindustantimes.com**



**Editorial**

**Editor:** Rachel Lopez

**Assistant editor:** Urvee Modwel

**Correspondent:** Christalle Fernandes

**Deputy art director:** Azad Mohan Panwar

**Cover:** Designed by Azad Mohan Panwar



**{ A LITTLE EXTRA }**

**Christalle Fernandes** completed three months at Brunch this week. Between figuring out the tone of the magazine (a sweet spot between witty and instructive), figuring out which headlines work (a rare aha! moment) and being banned from using the word "protagonist", she feels like it's been three years. The best moment: When she worked on the story about rare plants a few weeks ago, and got a sneak peek into the world of plant enthusiasts. (There are two Brazilian Lucky Wood plants in her house now). A close second: The view from the Mumbai office. 🌿

# Ali Merchant

**Actor and DJ, @AliMercchant**

Veenu Singh

letters@hindustantimes.com



ADOBE STOCK

**Today I'm craving:**  
Sheermal and galouti kabab from Lucknow.

**Currently I am:**

Prepping my set for Royal Stag BoomBox.

**High point in life:**

Getting married.

**Low point in life:**

When one of my pets passed away.

**On my playlist:**

Yeh Dil Deewana from Pardes; Subah Hone Na De by Mika Singh and Shefali Alvares. Let's Nacho by Badshah, Benny Dayal, and Nucleya.

**Last thing I ordered online:**

Something for my wife.

**Advice I'd give my 18-year-old self:**

I think you should be



emotionally strong and be in touch with your feelings. It is the only way to lead a beautiful life.

**My favourite subject in school:**

History.

**I'd swipe right on:**

World cinema.

**My secret skill:**

I write poetry.

**A superpower I wish I had:**

The ability to go back to being 18 again and know what I know at 38.

**One thing I would never buy:**

Tight-fitting jeans. 🍀