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Ten years after 26/11: Are we prepared?



Image: Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, Mumbai.

Source: Creativecommon

Khevna Pandit, Najooka Javier & Shoubhik Ghosh

Are Mumbai railway stations equipped to handle another 26/11? The INK Team comprising Khevna Pandit, Najooka Javier and Shoubhik Ghosh travel to Mumbai to find out that all is not perfect. Ink team checks in to find out...

It was rush hour in Mumbai on the 26th of November, 2008, when a batch of ten heavily armed Pakistani terrorists made their way through the Arabian Sea and disembarked at the Gateway of India. Minutes later, the country witnessed one of the most horrifying terror attacks in the world. Prime locations in south Bombay, including Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus, Hotel Taj Mahal Palace and Nariman House were under siege for nearly 60 hours. The attack left 166 dead and more than 300 injured.

Ten years later, the terrorist attack has triggered several security changes in the

financial capital. While the coastal security preparedness is yet to take course, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) got itself key security updates — including a full-fledged Integrated Security System (ISS) as well as a dedicated dog squad. Mumbai is home to 1.84 crore people, a vast majority of whom use the local railway network commute. The INK team visited Bandra, Dadar and Mumbai Central Terminus of the city to check out some of the security arrangements.

Bandra Terminus (BDTS):

At a distance of 850 meters from Bandra East local station, the Bandra Terminus welcomes its visitors through a manned baggage scanner. However, we found that it was easy to enter the station through an overhead flyover without being checked. According to IndiaRailInfo.com, 51 trains originate and terminate at BDTS. However, the station had barely one CCTV camera per platform. Sunil Kumar Jadhav, a Railway Police Inspector at Bandra Station, denied to comment on the situation and instead, urged us to dismiss

the report. Inspector D.B. Shelke was also reluctant in giving any information related to the matter.

Dadar Terminus:

One of the busiest stations in Mumbai, Dadar Railway Station is visibly guarded by several door frame metal detectors. Police inspector Nilesh Waje, said, “We had 40 CCTV camera back in 2008. But, after the 26/11 incident, we’ve increased the number to 146. We have ten armed men day and night, with AK47 machine guns apart from a dog squad.”

Contrary to the claim by security officials of having 10 working metal detectors, the INK team found that most of these were unplugged or not in a working state. A manned bag scanner was also what could only be termed as wastage of resources because most people walked past it without batting an eye.

Mumbai Central Terminus:

With outbound trains running in and out

every hour, the Mumbai Central Station was the only terminus we found that had implemented its security. Police Inspector G.K Rathod said, “We have a surprise dog squad visit on frequent basis. Apart from that we did increase CCTV cameras on our station but we’ve appealed for more. We have well-functioning telephone helplines and we cater to almost 20 to 30 calls on an average every-day.” Mumbai Central too, has armed guards with contemporary weapons. However, an official who insisted on being anonymous had a different story: “We have been promised the AK-47 since the incident occurred, but we’re still waiting for it. We have no one to complain to. Who will listen to us?”

A lot has improved after the attack which left a scar on every Mumbaikar. Many policemen seem to be confident about handling any such attack again. However, questions still hover around the adequacy of the improved security measures. It should be a cause of worry for all of us.

Heritage bridge in Pune in shambles

Supriti David

The Heritage cell of the Pune Municipal Council (PMC) launched the Heritage Sites Mission in 2015 to redevelop selected heritage sites in the city. One of them was Fitzgerald Bridge, which was the city’s oldest. It was redeveloped and named Bund Garden Art Plaza, to showcase and encourage local art exhibitions. The bridge today eloquently stands as a stark example of what neglect and apathy could do to a heritage site.

The PMC says that as there was a lack of interest from both people and artists, they would like to hand over maintenance responsibilities of the bridge to private players on a build-operate transfer basis.

Vinod, a PMC guard employed at the bridge site however has a different story. “There are at least 250 people coming in every single day for evening and morning walks. I have been working here for two years now and the bridge is rarely without visitors.”

Ratna, a student, who has been frequenting

the Fitzgerald bridge for several months was unaware that it was a heritage site, and that the PMC was spending money on its maintenance. “The bridge is as dirty today as the first day I came here. It doesn’t look like



any money is being spent on maintenance,” said Ratna.

More than Rs 1.5 crores have been spent on the re-development and maintenance of the bridge, along with construction of facilities to use it as a platform to promote local arts and crafts. However only four art exhibitions have been held at the venue till date.

Sunil Mohite, Deputy Engineer of the Heritage Cell, acknowledges that an absence of infrastructure is deterring artists from displaying their work. He stated that a proposal

has been forwarded to the heritage committee for approval.

The proposal was forwarded in January this year. There has been no reported follow up on the matter.

Ashwini Pethe, organizer of the first exhibition held on the bridge, is dissatisfied with

the efforts of the PMC. “If the intention was to make it an art plaza, then wouldn’t construction of fixtures to display art be the first action to be undertaken? Once the bridge is handed over to private players, they will charge a heavy sum as rent for artists who want to exhibit their work and the encouragement of local art will completely fail.” While the addition of private players to the picture does increase the odds for better maintenance of the bridge, Pethe’s concerns are justified. Gurgaon based monument conservation activist Chetna Murari believes that it is the responsibility of the administration to ensure that a balance is maintained. She told INK, “As long as the administration shirks off its responsibilities, collateral damage in the form of negligence of the bridge will continue.”

Efforts are on to obtain the details of expenditure of the money allotted to the re-development of the bridge through an RTI application as the Heritage cell of the PMC were not ready to comment.

In picture: Fitzgerald Bridge, Pune

When will buses be able to take the load in Pune?



Image: Local bus in Pune

Sonal Gupta

Commuters face several problems while traveling by buses, from long delays to failures. The Pune Mahanagar Parivahan Mahamandal Ltd. (PMPML) plans on adding 1000 buses to its fleet to improve conditions. Sonal Gupta assess the road ahead.

Sonali Pawar works as a security guard at the Joshi Hospital, Deccan Gymkhana. Every day at 3 PM, she waits almost 30 minutes to catch a bus, for a 15-minute ride till Chaturshringi. On some days, the waiting time exceeds one hour. She's not alone in facing something like this. Many others have similar stories. Since the frequency

of buses are fewer, most of them are overcrowded. There are also several instances of bus failures that leave the commuters stranded midway.

Ragunath Kamle, a bus conductor on the Swargate-Alandi route, says there are delays in the schedules because there are less buses and it gets worse because of the traffic. Nitin Ghogare, the Swargate Depot manager agrees. "According to the population of Pune, more buses are required," he said. He receives an average of 10-12 bus failure complaints everyday despite regular maintenance checks. "It's because of the wear and tear due to potholes and traffic on the roads. As there are two bus stops within a distance of 500m,

there's an overuse of clutch-brake and gears resulting in faulty buses."

The PMPML website's statistics show a discrepancy of 3,837 between the number of scheduled trips and the number of actual trips taken. The number of buses actually on road is also less than the scheduled number.

"Ideally, the variation in number of trips should be 10% but we can manage up to 20% as well," says Siddharth Padmakar Shirole, Director of PMPML. For the last ten years, Shirole explains, the procurement of buses hasn't been according to plan. Pune requires 2500-3000 buses for the frequency to go down to five minutes. Further, on the maintenance of buses, Shirole explains, "a bus has a life of seven-ten years but we are still using 14-15 years old buses."

"We plan on procuring 1000 buses by August next year and 500 more buses in the next six months. 300-400 old buses would be written-off. By the next one and half years, we will have 2700-2800 buses and the frequency and ridership will improve," Shirole added.

With the Pune Metro coming up soon, PMPML has come up with an "integrated plan". "Our procurement plan is in accordance with the metro plan. The PMPML will act as feeder service to the metro and not as its competitor." While the buses on the routes along the metro will be feeder buses, they will function as primary transport on non-metro routes.

Inputs by Chinmay Indurkar

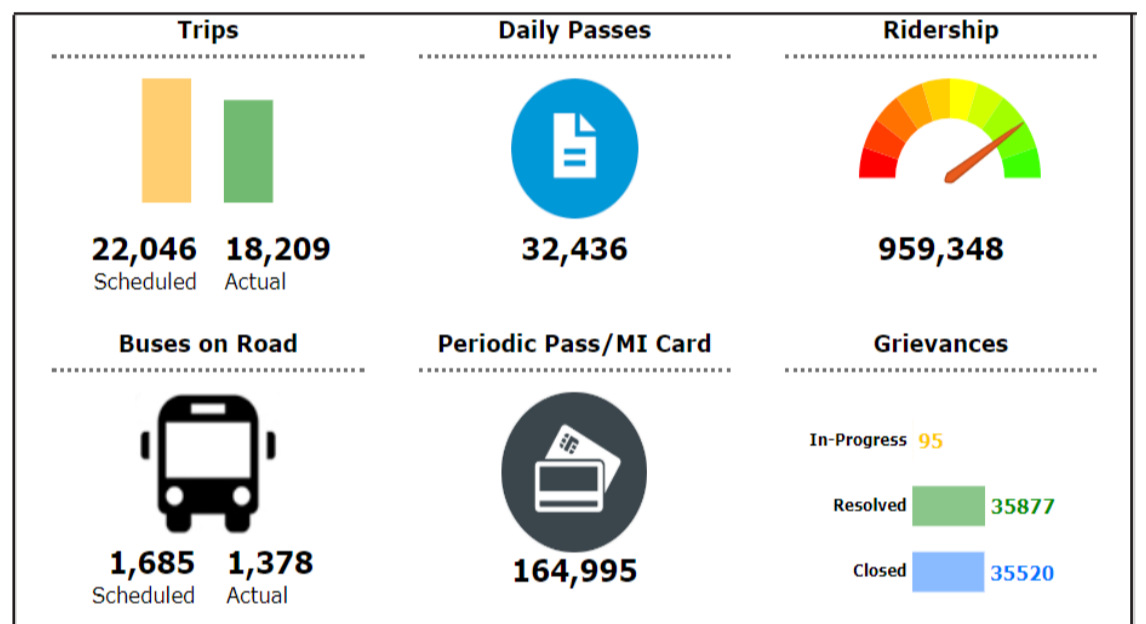


Image: Dashboard data as collected on December 12, 2018.

Beyond the Red Ribbon

A discourse around awareness and mental health and motivators of sexual behavior

Najooka Javier & Khevna Pandit

Rishabh Kumar (name changed) is 32 and works for an IT firm in Pune. He pursued his education in Chennai and hails from Lucknow. Rishabh has been living away from home for the last 6 years. A couple of months ago, Rishabh's life took a devastating turn as he was diagnosed with HIV AIDS. The news came as a shocker to him and has distanced him even



further from his family. Sadly, he is just one of the many youths in our country falling prey to sexually transmitted diseases.

Image Source: ProcuraMed

HIV AIDS, previously known as a poor man's disease, has started to grip more educated youth and young adults.

According to recent report released by the Health and Family Welfare Ministry, approximately 21.4 lakh people are infected by HIV in India. Out of this, Maharashtra is home to the highest number of people living with HIV (PLHIV), approximately 3.30 lakh. This constitutes nearly 15 percent of total population of PLHIV in India.

The last few years have seen a sharp decline in new HIV infections being diagnosed by 27% and AIDS-related deaths by 56%. However, in 2017, the number of new infections diagnosed went up to 88,000 from 80,000 in the preceding year and AIDS related deaths also increased from 69,000 from 62,000, as per statistics from UNAIDS, 2017.

On the occasion of 30th World AIDS Day, we talked to meet Dr Shirish Darak to get a better understanding of the situation. Dr Shirish is a Senior Researcher at Prayas, an NGO working towards providing clinical care to HIV infected people for the last 25 years. The NGO also works towards preventing mother to child transmission of the disease and has been conducting various research programs in and around the topic of HIV AIDS.

According to him, enough awareness has been spread around the topic of HIV and everyone in the country is now aware about the methods of preventing HIV. He says, "It is now important to move the discourse away from AIDS and STI sexually transmitted infections (STI) and shift it towards discussing sexual health and agencies that can help maintain sexual health." He suggests that addressing issues such as sexual abuse, gender bias and sexuality are as important as spreading awareness since these could be motivators of sexual behaviour and make youth vulnerable to infections.

National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) revealed that the government spends (Time interval of the spending, like every year or what) not mentioned on the site INR 196 crores to combat the AIDS epidemic. Government of India has employed various schemes through collaboration with several NGOs to provide the infected people with free checkup, anti-retroviral therapy (ART) treatment and several promotional campaigns. Unfortunately, these are not always available and medicine stock outs are common.

Dr. Darak suggests that to combat the situation of HIV in Maharashtra, constructive measures should be taken to promote sexual health and hygiene. Considering the high-risk group of internal migrants and working professionals, open discussions should be conducted to address their mental as well as physical wellbeing.

He said, "Replacing resistance in the society with acceptance is the need of the hour to combat the situation."

“Section 377 is just the beginning...”

Rohini Banerjee



Image: Sharon Singh

In September last year, the Supreme Court of India decriminalized Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code that earlier criminalised homosexuality. However, four months after the law was nullified, have the LGBTQ+ community of India noticed any difference, or do they continue to face ostracization? Rohini Banerjee talks to two members of the LGBTQ+ community about their experiences.

“Think I’ve always known, but I was able to articulate my ‘non-heterosexual’ attraction as being a manifestation of my queer identity only when I was 17,” said Radhika, a 19-year-old, studying liberal arts

in Delhi. When asked about how society reacts to her being openly queer, she says the reactions range from supportive to homophobic. On being asked whether caste and economic background affects LGBTQ+ inclusion, she said, “Of course. Men from lower castes and classes continue to face unthinkable torture and discrimination on a daily basis. Rape crimes against Dalit-Bahujan women aren’t even reported. For someone from an already marginalised community to belong to yet another marginalised community is impossibly hard and often life threatening.”

Regarding political inclusion of the community, she said, “Politics, despite the apparent ‘rise’ in ‘hijra’ representation, is largely a heteronormative, patriarchal space in India. If Indian politics is not modified to be inclusive, gender sensitive, and self-representation isn’t made available through reservation, then a lot of other arenas directly related to development will be neglected. Also, trans-exclusion is a reality...

and we can only begin to address the issues surrounding gender and sexuality once we teach children to identify everyone as humans. Sex education should be introduced at the school level.”

Alisha, a 21-year-old media student in Pune feels that the verdict will bring certain positive changes. “Previously, if someone in a homosexual relationship was being physically abused, they could not go to the police and their very existence was criminal by law. Now they have the power to stand up against such abuse.” When she was asked if how she felt after the verdict, she said that she always knew whom she could trust with her identity and whom she could not. However, she points out that majority Indians do not come from a privileged background and the verdict has most probably made no difference for them. “There is a long way to go and the Section 377 verdict is just the beginning,” she added. (Names have been changed to protect identity)

Do windmills affect rainfall patterns?

Stephanie Rose Justin

It is a mystery worth investigating. Can windmills reduce rainfall levels?

Farmers in villages between Pollachi and Udumalpet towns in Tamil Nadu claim that setting up of windmills close to their farms has resulted in less rainfall. These windmills were set up by the Tamil Nadu Energy Development Agency with help of private companies in 2003. Farmer Balan Danadhanbani

pointed out that Punnankinar, Mookonam, Ganapathypalayam, Gomangalampudhur, Ragalbhavi, Kongalnagaram, Puhupalayam, Ravanapuram, Pedampatti, and Andhiyur which are villages situated in the North, South and West directions from Udumalpet have been affected. He says that in contrast villages in the east like Thamarapatti, Mazhayandigounder, Kanavanaikanur, Marudhupatti, and Sinnaveeranpatti that do not have windmills had no problems in receiving rainfall. The Deputy Director General of the Centre for Science and Environment, Mr. Chandra Bhushan told INK, “It is not really possible that windmills could lead to reduction in rainfall. The reason being that a windmill is eighty to one hundred and fifty feet high up. Tamil Nadu as a whole hasn’t been receiving

considerable amount of rainfall. These could be notions employed by these farmers because of a change installed in their habitat.”

The Conversation, an online publication that covers latest research in UK, said in a study in 2014 that climate change had occurred in the immediate vicinity of wind farms. However, it was an observational approach that was first performed by David Keith in 2004 that compared climate patterns in areas that contained windmills and areas that

agents. These brokers benefited largely from this business by selling them in turn for higher rates to private companies that set up windmills.” Srinivasan owns a coconut grove that hasn’t been performing well for the last 13 years. He has turned towards poultry farming because he thinks that it would back him up financially.

Farmers all over the country are facing challenges in agriculture like Srinivasan and it is a bit too far-fetched to assume that windmills are the cause of his misery.

There are others who feel the windmills have helped them. Kandhasamy Mysamy, a textile worker from Kozhikutti, told INK, “The capacity of the windmills in the Gudimangalam range from 250-1250 Kilovolts. More the capacity better the power. The units collected from these windmills

are mostly used by spinning mills as it requires heavy electricity to function. Textile mills in Coimbatore and Tirupur districts have benefited from the windmills.”

India is the fourth largest wind power producer in the world according to Global Wind Statistics, 2017. Tamil Nadu tops the list. There is no Indian study on the effects of windmills on rainfall or climate patterns.



Image: Kartikeya during a game

did not. Another farmer, Sampath Srinivasan, an agriculturist from Pannaikinaru, told INK, “When the wind farm projects started in 2003, the government gave farmers Rs. 5,000 per acre as compensation. In 2005, these farms did not bring a profitable yield and were sold to local agents. The deal was Rs. 30,000 per acre. Most farmers chose to sell their land at this point to local

Confronting Molestation

Vasudha Kaukuntla

Many choose to stay silent in a world where molestation and sexual abuse is rampant. Dr Nishant Shah, Dean, Research, ArtEZ University of Arts in Netherlands, talks of a personal encounter while flying and what we could and should do to prevent such incidents and give victims the empathy they deserve. He spoke to Vasudha Kaukuntla. Excerpts:

What exactly happened?

I was on a flight back from Hong Kong to Amsterdam, after attending a conference. On the flight, I noticed that the man on the other side of my aisle was inappropriately touching the woman passenger sitting between us. When I realized this, I snapped and slapped him. It was an unthinking and instinctive reaction.

Did you sense what the lady was going through?

No. Obviously not. We had brief polite conversations when the flight took off. A couple of hours later, she had asked me if she could change her middle seat for my aisle seat. She never mentioned the abuse she was experiencing.

What was the molester’s reaction when confronted?

I think the initial reaction was disbelief. He really couldn’t believe that not only was I not endorsing his action, but that I was violently calling him out. Before that slap happened, he really smirked at me. He was crying saying he was unfairly targeted.

Do you think there is an impact of recent movements like #MeToo?

#MeToo has been one of the strongest movements for millennial women to finally find a platform through which they can find respite and solidarity in the face of abuse. These movements are critically important because they question what we take for granted. Empowerment is a slow process and needs continued, dramatic and structural changes that involves many different people to be engaged in it. #MeToo is an opening to it.

“Most of the abusers are cowards and they rely on the fact that the abuse person will have nobody standing for her or supporting her.”

What do you suggest to the youth of today to curb molestation of any kind?

The first thing is to step up. If the person being abused seems to be without the means and resources to escape that condition, use your own bodies, your privileges to stand in the way. Most of the abusers are cowards and they rely on the fact that the abused person will have nobody standing for her or supporting her.

Do you think we will see a day when anyone can feel the freedom to voice out their assault?

That is a utopia worth fighting for. We might never reach that world. But we must imagine that such a world exists. Only then can we reduce the amount of violence, educate people about abuse and create possibilities that women, sexual dissidents, migrants, and underprivileged people feel safe, protected and free. This is enshrined in our constitution and has to be the measure by which we build our future societies.



Modi used attire to define himself



Tiyashi Datta & Harsh Shukla

On a recent election rally in Dausa, Rajasthan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi described how Mahatma Gandhi used Khadi to make India self-sustainable. He then went on to attack the Congress saying the 'Fake Gandhi Clan' did nothing to save the Khadi industry. He talked of his khadi jacket and how he had gifted a similar one to South Korean President Moon Jae-In during his visit. The picture of

the jacket, he said, went viral bringing pride to India and its Khadi industries.

Modi is known for grabbing headlines with his dressing choices mainly to influence political communication. From his collection of hats to his jackets, he always manages to steal the show.

Be it the Assamese traditional hat 'Japi' during his rally in Guwahati, the 'Naga tribal costume' with a spear in hand during the inauguration of the Hornbill festival or the traditional 'sadhu' attire during his visit to the Golden Temple—his style remains impeccable.

Journalist and television anchor Rajdeep Sardesai, author of '2014: The Election that Changed India' described Modi as a trendsetter. "Always a natty dresser, he became even more trendsetting with his Modi kurtas, designed by Ahmedabad tailoring shop 'Jade Blue.' At different functions on a single day, he would always be dressed for the occasion, often changing 3 to 4 times a day."

People have different opinions when it comes to Modi's choices of attire. Shekhar Gupta- editor of The Print, told INK, "It is all about the product. Good packaging makes the product look beautiful. The product has to look good to sell otherwise it might fail. Sometimes, it works and sometimes it fails. It's mainly for communication. There is a similarity between Modi's dressing styles and that of Indira Gandhi. Even she used to wear different kind of traditional sarees depending on the place she is visiting."

In 2007 Modi hired APCO, an international PR agency, to globally market himself and to sell the "Vibrant Gujarat" image. Since then, there has been a notable change in his dressing style. However, the most controversial dress was a pin-striped coat with 'Narendra Damodardas Modi' em-



broidered on it. It grabbed more limelight than the visiting former American President Barack Obama and his wife. This was the first time in the history of independent India that a Prime Minister was wearing a coat with his name on it. This draws attention towards the remark that Rajdeep Sardesai makes in his book- "Rumour had that he spent at least half an hour a day before the mirror, a habit that suggests early traces of narcissism."

Image source: Twitter

2018 was the deadliest year for Kashmir

Tiyashi Datta & Harsh Shukla

On September 29, 2016, the Indian Army carried out a surgical strike in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK). It was a retaliation against the 'Uri attack' which killed 18 jawans. Paratroopers from the Special Forces went to PoK and killed 38 terrorists and two Pakistani soldiers. They also destroyed seven terror launch pads. According to government sources, Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the strike as it would "turn off the tap of infiltration at its root".

But two years down the line, data tells a different story. According to the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), the total number of militants killed by India's security forces in 2018 is 270, the highest in the last decade. Journalist Ashraf Wani says that there is a new pattern in the militancy of Kashmir. "The type of militancy changed in the last few years. The 90s were different as the insurgency was sponsored by Pakistan openly. Now it is more by the people of Kashmir," Wani said.

Mujahideen. This particular act was a turning point in the increase of militancy in Kashmir. Ashraf points out, "the killing of Burhan gave birth to 100 more militants."

The same pattern of increased militancy can also be seen in south Kashmir. The number of militants killed in south Kashmir in 2018 was 146, quite higher than the 82 in its northern counterpart.

"In South Kashmir there is more ground and logistical support. People are providing food and shelter to militants," said Ashraf. "This year, 13 militants were killed in the Shopian district of South Kashmir in a single operation in April," he added, drawing attention towards the similarities in rise in militancy in south and north Kashmir. The ongoing military answers to militancy have resulted in heavy casualties on both sides. Since Burhan Wani's encounter, the rise has not just been in militant deaths. There has been a proportionate rise in the casualties of the defence forces. It is a fact we often tend to overlook.

Year	No of Militants killed	No of defense officials killed
2014	114	46
2015	116	43
2016	165	88
2017	218	83
2018	270	95

On July 8, 2016, The Indian Army successfully carried out an operation to terminate Burhan Wani – the commander of Hizbul

All stats as per South Asia Terrorism Portal as updated on January 1, 2019.

Inkomik

Shoubhik Ghosh



SHOUBHIK GHOSH

TEJ PRATAP YADAV ANNOUNCES RETURN TO POLITICS; INVOKES LORD KRISHNA

Esports catching up in India: Kartikeya Behl



Image: Kartikeya during a game

Sonal Gupta

India's esports industry is worth over \$890 million, according to a Forbes report. It rises every day. Young players across the country are gaming professionally. Kartikeya Behl, a 21-year-old from Delhi, has competed in over forty local and international tournaments. He represented India in the Asian Football Gaming Championship 2017 conducted by Gaming Monsters. He became the first Indian to win an international tournament. Three years of professional gaming and he is currently amongst the top three FIFA players of the country. He spoke to INK's Sonal Gupta. Excerpts:

Over the past few years, we have observed a rise of esports in India. How is the country faring according to international standards?

It is catching up, If you compare it with other countries like European level, it's not at par. There's more representation for the country now, like Tirth Mehta bagged the third spot in

Asian games this year for Hearthstone. People have started recognizing India as an esports nation so it's growing but there's definitely a long way to go.

How easy is it for Indian players to take up esports professionally?

It's definitely not as easy. It takes as much effort as it takes in learning any other skill. So you have to put in time. You have to sacrifice a lot of things...you have to practice a lot. It's a lot of mental strain. Also, in India, you have to first convince your parents and the money doesn't come in that easy. You don't get paid too soon and if you're not getting paid for it and you're doing it for seven-eight hours a day, the option kind of fades away. It's not viable. It's a lot of struggle.

Do gamers face a lot of flak, since gaming isn't considered a "real sport"?

Oh of course, you get this all the time. Initially I was playing football a lot until I had to give it up for studies. So I used

to play FIFA since it's merely a simulation of the actual sport. Eventually I got good at it but there were still myths attached like-how can you game all the time? And, this can just be a hobby, can't be your passion. In the beginning, my parents were not that supportive because it's still a very new field for them to understand. But as soon as I got some recognition and brought medals, trophies and certificates back home, they were pretty happy and ever since then, they have been very supportive.

What about women representation in the industry? Shagufta Iqbal is one good player I know from Pune, who plays Counterstrike. There a few others. But yes, it's a very male dominant field, not because we are better than them-definitely not, but the numbers... Girls don't easily partake in gaming in India. There are a few, and they are doing exceptionally well. You have just been recruited by an international team. Tell us about that.

I had actually been searching for a team because even though I had a platform here, I wasn't getting support in terms of finance or social media exposure, which you need to grow as a player. I had been looking for a team for a year now and but had to face a lot of rejections. Christian Fuchs who's a footballer for Leicester City started his own team. I applied and finally got selected. I represent them in India for now. Another two-three months and I could be representing them in international tournaments as well.



Image: Kartikeya after a victorious tournament

Beyond Price Tags: The True Cost of Fashion

Akshaya C.

Price of clothing has been decreasing for decades while the human and environmental costs are growing dramatically. Few fashion labels are setting examples to make the shift from fast fashion to a more sustainable means of fashion.

It's tough to resist the urge to buy clothes and store them for longer when we are faced with a tempting array of offers in shops and as clothing hauls on the internet. With Outfit of the day (OOTDs) and hashtag shopaholics, there is a trend of fast fashion setting in where clothes are viewed as an easily disposable commodity. Before you head out into the January sales of irresistible deals, spare a thought for the impact that fast fashion is having on the environment.

Karishma Shahani Khan, the creative director of her Pune-based label 'Ka Sha,' continues to celebrate design and handcraft for seven years now. On seeing the unethical practices in the fashion supply chain, she decided that her label would stand for everything that fast fashion did not. For starters, 95% of their fabric is procured from the farmers and weavers, cutting the middlemen in the process. This ensures that the farmer receives fair wages, right kind of assistance in the process, and the environment doesn't choke with chemicals. Most of the products are naturally dyed to guarantee minimum water wastage. Moreover, clothes are produced only on 'order to order' basis making sure there is no inventory lying around. The leftover fabric remnant in the post-production process is upcycled to create functional products.

"The slower the process is, the lesser the wastage, and more conscious is your clothing line," she says.

Sustainable fashion labels are few in number and in its formative years, where it is currently accessible only to a certain section of the society. Karishma firmly believes that whenever

something becomes a luxury, it quickly trickles down into the masses because masses are always aspiring for it. Even if the shift is happening only amongst luxury brands, it still continues to amount to something, because everyone is aping all luxury brands. To make sustainable fashion accessible and affordable to different strata of society, consumers, designers and policy makers should work together.

There are no well-defined policies or systems that regulate the textile industry hence sustainable fashion brands often fail to sustain. Designers need to start conversations and consumers need to raise more questions about who is making their clothes.

"How we buy is a vote for the type of world we want. Buying less and using more has always been in our Indian culture. We need to bring it back."



Image source: Canva

“Bollywood is regressive!”



Pic: A still from the award winning movie Jonaki.

Sucharita Ganguly

Aditya Vikram Sengupta, a National Award-winning filmmaker from Kolkata, recently won two awards at the 2018 Jio Mumbai Academy of the Moving Image film festival for Jonaki, his second feature film. He bagged the National Award for Best Debut in 2014 for Asha Jaoar Majhe (Labour of Love), his first film. Currently he's working on his third project, Aquarium. He spoke to Sucharita Ganguly on a range of issues. Excerpts:

Has the audience reaction to Jonaki matched your expectations?

No, I don't expect anyone to watch my films to begin with.

Why not?

There were no expectations as it was a very personal film and very self-indulgent. It was a very personal story about my grandmother. What I shared with her and dealing with the fact that she wasn't there... A huge part of what I am today is because of her.

Why did you decide to make Jonaki surreal?

I started seeing a lot of dreams about my grandmother and various things, and dream a lot. Whatever dreams I remember and wake up with, I remember. Dreams have this strange quality of stirring up buried emotions which lie deep. They are different from the emotions in your day to day life. You wake up and you'll feel like "mon ta khub bhari lagchhe" (My heart's too heavy today), and you don't know why. But it's probably because of a dream that you've seen but that heaviness of the heart, you won't be able to explain. It's a very abstract feeling. After my grandmother died, I used to have very graphic dreams that would make me feel a certain way, which I cannot define through words or through anything but only by recreating them. So, it was just an effort to recreate all the feelings and longings and love.

Is it a conscious choice to have minimal dialogue?

No. It's not about that. I like to show rather than tell because

I feel people watching films are very intelligent and not just that, even if they're half as intelligent they'd understand, because if you see something, you'll know what is happening. You'll know the story behind it. It's just a matter of how attentively you're watching. I like to create scenarios, where it's more of showing than telling. So, dialogue is like my last resort. When I cannot tell the story through anything else, then there are spoken words to say something, expose information or get to some back story.

Have you watched any good Bollywood films recently?

Yeah, there are content driven films. Other than that, your commercial stuff is fully irresponsible and completely idiotic.

Do you see this trend ending anytime soon?

No. This will never end... It's like religion ending in the country... If you say people will stop worshipping Shiva or whatever... No! It'll not happen! People will still do things like that. They'll still walk to Tarakeswar and (laughs) pour milk on the God's... You can't fight with logic or do anything about it!

The #MeToo movement raised a question of whether we can or even should separate the art from the artist. Would you like to weigh in on that?

That completely depends on the person at the receiving end, isn't it? It doesn't have anything to do with the person doing it. There are a lot of people who'll be able to differentiate that and accept it. Like in school, I was a terrible student and really naughty. But all my art and other works were much appreciated and supported by all teachers who did not support me otherwise. I felt that was a great quality and a very human one.

So differentiating and appreciating the art, while criticizing the artist...

Why just art? It can be anything else. I mean work is a different personality of a person. Work is done which affects people and what he has done also affects people. Doing something to a certain person is also affecting that person. I'm not saying that I'll not say anything about what he has done just because he makes good films. Then why should it be the other way

around? Isn't that right? But I understand you know, when people can't differentiate, I mean that's also human.

What would you like to say to students who want to pursue filmmaking as a career?

First of all, I don't know how filmmaking can be a career to begin with (laughs), because the economics of at least my kind of filmmaking is ridiculous.

Would you say that any kind of work in the field needs to have social sensibility?

No, not necessarily. You can only entertain, if not enlighten. But it's always good to be enlightened along with being entertained. The problem is that I feel Bollywood is regressive. Even the Bengali serials nowadays are regressive. It's kind of pulling society down. If you can't do anything good, it's fine, but don't do anything bad. It's (serials) the most influential form and you need to use it responsibly.

Most people say that the online streaming platforms are great for independent or different types of projects. Do you agree?

Maybe yes. When these companies started off, they started off like Ola and Uber who gave the drivers a lot of money, so they gave the films and filmmakers a lot of money to acquire as much. And suddenly when they had acquired everyone, they dropped the prices. Now Amazon, Netflix rates have gone really low- so low that the entire financial model has gone for a toss. Especially for films that are mid-range, if you're making a film absolutely low, like 20-25 lakhs, you're okay. Or if you're making something really big, like an Aamir Khan production, you're okay. The moment you make a mid-ranged film, you'll just end up nowhere. So that's become like a huge challenge and then there's a lot of re-modelling going on. Everything is going through a lot of changes at this point, Filmmakers, mediums, exhibition platforms, everything.

Is that a good thing or a bad thing?

It's an inevitable thing. It had to happen. Good or bad, I don't know, we'll see to it later. Even if it's bad, it'll be good for somebody.