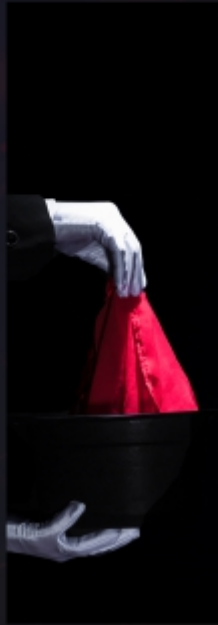


Edition 23, Apr - May 2021 | Special Edition

# Media TalkBack

# CREATIVE & PERFORMING ARTS



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# TABLE OF CONTENT

01 Introduction to Performing Arts	01
02 Categories in Performing Arts	02
03 Performing Arts in Various Time Periods and Cultures	04
04 Kalaripattyu - The Traditional Martial Art	08
05 Puppetry - Introduction and Forms	10
06 Kitabi-i-nauras	16
07 Greatest Play Writers in Indian Culture	17
08 Significant Dramas and Their Writers	19
09 Ragas in Sangeet Ratnakar	19
10 Impact Interviews - Mr. Salim Arif, Mr. Sushil Sakhuja, Mr. Rajesh Puri, Mr. Hitesh Rahlan, Mr. Sushil Parashar, Mr. Naresh Suri	23
<b>Spotlight Section -</b> Mr. Hemant Choudhrey, Ms. Manini , Mr. Jiten Lalwani, Dr. Deepti Trivedi, MS. Shaiphali Saxena, Ms. Hritisha Rewadia	
<b>Director's Cut -</b> Mr. Rajan Chawla, Mr. Vikas Bahari, Mr. Amul Sagar, Mr. Murugan Pillai, Mr. Devesh Nigam, Mr. Anurag Ramgopal	





Mr. Subhash Ghai

## Message from Chairman

MESC is a new revolution & evolution to the whole education system of India with full emphasis for skillbased education rather than memory based education.

It's one of the finest initiatives by the Govt. of India and I'm proud to be associated with MESC with a serious responsibility to develop a new generation of skilled man in every field. It is especially important in our sector of Media & Entertainment, to explore & think beyond obvious. I'm humbled & thankful to everyone who has entrusted me with this great responsibility of taking the council in the right direction for the next generation and I am sure that we have a good team to achieve our targets at the earliest.

## Message from CEO

I extend my regards towards everyone who supported and contributed in the completion of the 23rd edition of Media TalkBack based on the visionary industry of performance and performing arts. I believe reading is the most powerful tool we have for connecting and sharing the human experience.

Today, with millions of people around the globe staying close to home to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19, access to books, magazines and information is more important than ever before. Reading can offer incredible comfort: it reduces anxiety and makes us feel more accomplished and even happier. Through this, you will get an insight on one of the biggest aspects of the Media & Entertainment Sector with articles, information and one on one interview with some of the Top Professionals from the Indian and International Performance & Performing Arts industry giving scoops on their journey, upcoming projects, do and don'ts to have a successful career, etc.



Mr. Mohit Soni

Our goal is simply to ensure quality content for everyone as we settle into our new normal. We encourage you to take care of yourself and each other, and we hope reading can offer you solace during these difficult times.

Editor-in-Chief

Mohit Soni

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Designed by

Sumit Bhardwaj

# PERFORMING ARTS

# INTRODUCTION TO



The performing arts are arts such as music, dance, and drama which are performed for an audience. It is different from visual arts, which is when artists use paint, canvas or various materials to create physical or static art objects. Performing arts include a range of disciplines which are performed in front of a live audience, including theatre, music, and dance.

Theatre, music, dance and object manipulation, and other kinds of performances are present in all human cultures. The history of music and dance date to pre-historic times whereas circus skills date to at least Ancient Egypt. Many performing arts are performed professionally. Performance can be in purpose built buildings, such as theatres and opera houses, on open air stages at festivals, on stages in tents such as circuses and on the street.

Live performances before an audience are a form of entertainment. The development of audio and video recording has allowed for private consumption of the performing arts.

# The performing arts

often aims to express one's emotions and feelings.

## Categories in Performing Arts

### Acrobatics

The specialized and ancient art of jumping, tumbling, and balancing, often later with the use of such apparatus as poles, one-wheel cycles, balls, barrels, tightropes, trampolines, and flying trapezes.

### Ballet

Theatrical dance in which a formal academic dance technique—the danse d'école—is combined with other artistic elements such as music, costume, and stage scenery. The academic technique itself is also known as ballet

### Magic

Magic, which encompasses the subgenres of illusion, stage magic, and close up magic, among others, is a performing art in which audiences are entertained by tricks, effects, or illusions of seemingly impossible feats, using natural means. It is one of the oldest performing arts in the world.

### Mime

Mime is the most ancient performing Art in the world and, still today, attracts people in a very deep, intuitive way. In its portrayal of emotion, thought and experience through the body, mime transcends cultural barriers because it is based on expression and not on appearance. Mime is a spontaneous language.

### Music

Music is an art form which combines pitch, rhythm, and dynamic to create sound. It can be performed using a variety of instruments and styles and is divided into genres such as folk, jazz, hip hop, pop, and rock, etc. As an art form, music can occur in live or recorded formats, and can be planned or improvised.

As music is a protean art, it easily coordinates with words for songs as physical movements do in dance. Moreover, it has a capability of shaping human behaviors as it impacts our emotions.

### Opera

Opera is an art form in which singers and musicians perform a dramatic work combining text (libretto) and musical score, usually in a theatrical setting. Opera incorporates many of the elements of spoken theatre, such as acting, scenery, and costumes and sometimes includes dance.





### Puppetry

Puppetry is a form of theatre or performance that involves the manipulation of puppets - inanimate objects, often resembling some type of human or animal figure, that are animated or manipulated by a human called a puppeteer. Such a performance is also known as a puppet production.

### Stand-up comedy

Stand-up comedy, comedy that generally is delivered by a solo performer speaking directly to the audience in some semblance of a spontaneous manner. Stand-up, at least in the form it is known today, is a fairly recent entertainment phenomenon. In the United States, where it developed first and reached its greatest popularity, it had its origins in the comic lecturers, such as Mark Twain, who toured the country in the 19th century.

### Theatre

Theatre is the branch of performing arts concerned with acting out stories in front of an audience, using a combination of speech, gesture, music, dance, sound, and spectacle. Any one or more of these elements is considered performing arts. In addition to the standard narrative dialogue style of plays, theater takes such forms as plays, musicals, opera, ballet, illusion, mime, classical Indian dance, kabuki, mummies' plays, improvisational theatre, comedy, pantomime, and non-conventional or contemporary forms like postmodern theatre, postdramatic theatre, or performance art.

“ I regard the theatre as the greatest of all art forms, the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being.

Oscar Wilde

”



### Dance

In the context of performing arts, dance generally refers to human movement, typically rhythmic and to music, used as a form of audience entertainment in a performance setting. Definitions of what constitutes dance are dependent on social, cultural, aesthetic, artistic, and moral constraints and range from functional movement (such as folk dance) to codified, virtuoso techniques such as ballet.

There is one another modern form of dance that emerged in 19th-20th century with the name of Free-Dance style. This form of dance was structured to create a harmonious personality which included features such as physical and spiritual freedom. Isadora Duncan was the first female dancer who argued about "woman of future" and developed novel vector of choreography using Nietzsche's idea of "supreme mind in free mind".

### Ventriloquism

The art of "throwing" the voice, i.e., speaking in such a manner that the sound seems to come from a distance or from a source other than the speaker. At the same time, the voice is disguised (partly by its heightened pitch), adding to the effect. The art of ventriloquism was formerly supposed to result from a peculiar use of the stomach during inhalation—hence the name, from Latin *venter* and *loqui*, "belly-speaking.

# Performing Arts in Various Time Periods and Cultures

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## Western arts

Starting in the 6th century BC, the Classical period of performing art began in Greece, ushered in by the tragic poets such as Sophocles. These poets wrote plays which, in some cases, incorporated dance (see Euripides). The Hellenistic period began the widespread use of comedy.

However, by the 6th century AD, Western performing arts had been largely ended, as the Dark Ages began. Between the 9th century and 14th century, performing art in the West was limited to religious historical enactments and morality plays, organized by the Church in celebration of holy days and other important events.

## Renaissance

In the 15th century performing arts, along with the arts in general, saw a revival as the Renaissance began in Italy and spread throughout Europe plays, some of which incorporated dance, which were performed and Domenico da Piacenza credited with the first use of the term ballo (in *De Arte Saltandi et Choreas Ducendi*) instead of danza (dance) for his baletti or balli. The term eventually became Ballet. The first Ballet per se is thought to be Balthasar de Beaujoyeux's Ballet Comique de la Reine (1581).

## Modern era

The introduction of the proscenium arch in Italy during the 17th century established the traditional theatre form that persists to this day. Meanwhile, in England, the Puritans forbade acting, bringing a halt to performing arts that lasted until 1660. After that, women began to appear in both French and English plays. The French introduced a formal dance instruction in the late 17th century. It is also during this time that the first plays were performed in the American Colonies.

During the 18th century, the introduction of the popular opera buffa brought opera to the masses as an accessible form of performance. Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* are landmarks of the late 18th century opera.



## Postwar

Post-World War II performing arts were highlighted by the resurgence of both ballet and opera in the Western world. Postmodernism in performing arts dominated the 1960s to large extent.

Coming out of the social protest movement that arose during the years of depression in the 1930s, a more uncompromising method of bringing social issues to the stage was Documentary Theatre, or the Theatre of Fact.

“ A talent for drama is not a talent for writing, but is an ability to articulate human relationships.

Gore Vidal

”

## Eastern performing arts



### Middle East

The earliest recorded theatrical event dates back to 2000 BC with the passion plays of Ancient Egypt. This story of the god Osiris was performed annually at festivals throughout the civilization, marking the known beginning of a long relationship between theatre and religion.

The most popular forms of theater in the medieval Islamic world were puppet theatre (which included hand puppets, shadow plays and marionette productions) and live passion plays known as ta'ziya, where actors re-enact episodes from Muslim history. In particular, Shia Islamic plays revolved around the shaheed (martyrdom) of Ali's sons Hasan ibn Ali and Husayn ibn Ali. Live secular plays were known as akhraja, recorded in medieval adab literature, though they were less common than puppetry and ta'ziya theater.

### Iran

The Safavids continued to be important patrons of the arts under Shah 'Abbas @. 1587-1629). Among the artists of his time was Riza-yi 'Abbasi (ca. 1565-1635), son of the court painter 'Ali Asghar and pupil of the well-known Mu'in. Although he was heir to a very traditional form of painting, Riza introduced a new set of subjects to the Persian oeuvre (50.164). Semi-nude women, languid youths, and lovers soon came to replace the heroes of the Shahnama and the Khamsa in many an artist's repertoire. These fashionable figures were also copied in textiles, figural tile panels, and other media. It is not, however, simply the subject matter of his paintings, but Riza-yi's gift for capturing the inner emotions of his sitter and his famed calligraphic line that have earned him admiration. His work set the tone for much of the seventeenth century, as his students used it as a springboard for developing their own styles (1974.290.43)



### India

Gotikua folk dance is one of the well known performance performed by all boys group dressed in Indian ladies attire Saree.

Folk theatre and dramatics can be traced to the religious ritualism of the Vedic peoples in the 2nd millennium BC. This folk theatre of the misty past was mixed with dance, food, ritualism, plus a depiction of events from daily life.



The last element made it the origin of the classical theatre of later times. Many historians, notably D.D. Kosambi, Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, Adya Rangacharaya, etc. have referred to the prevalence of ritualism amongst Indo-Aryan tribes in which some members of the tribe acted as if they were wild animals and some others were the hunters. Those who acted as mammals like goats, buffaloes, reindeer, monkeys, etc. were chased by those playing the role of hunters.



Bharata Muni (fl. 5th–2nd century BC) was an ancient Indian writer best known for writing the *Natya Shastra* of Bharata, a theoretical treatise on Indian performing arts, including theatre, dance, acting, and music, which has been compared to Aristotle's *Poetics*. Bharata is often known as the father of Indian theatrical arts. His *Natya Shastra* seems to be the first attempt to develop the technique or rather art, of drama in a systematic manner. The *Natya Shastra* tells us not only what is to be portrayed in a drama, but how the portrayal is to be done. Drama, as Bharata Muni says, is the imitation of men and their doings (*loka-vritti*). As men and their doings have to be respected on the stage, so drama in Sanskrit is also known by the term *roopaka*, which means portrayal.

The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* can be considered the first recognized plays that originated in India. These epics provided the inspiration to the earliest Indian dramatists and they do it even today. Indian dramatists such as Bhāsa in the 2nd century BC wrote plays that were heavily inspired by the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*.

Kālidāsa in the 1st century BC, is arguably considered to be ancient India's greatest dramatist. Three famous romantic plays written by Kālidāsa are the *Mālavikāgnimitram* (*Mālavikā* and *Agnimitra*), *Vikramōrvaśīyam* (*Pertaining to Vikrama* and *Urvashi*), and *Abhijñānaśākuntala* (*The Recognition of Shakuntala*). The last was inspired by a story in the *Mahabharata* and is the most famous. It was the first to be translated into English and German. In comparison to Bhāsa, who drew heavily from the epics, Kālidāsa can be considered an original playwright.

The next great Indian dramatist was Bhavabhuti (c. 7th century). He is said to have written the following three plays: *Malati-Madhava*, *Mahaviracharita* and *Uttar Ramacharita*. Among these three, the last two cover between them, the entire epic of *Ramayana*. The powerful Indian emperor Harsha (606–648) is

credited with having written three plays: the comedy *Ratnavali*, *Priyadarsika*, and the Buddhist drama *Nagananda*. Many other dramatists followed during the Middle Ages.

There were many performing art forms in the southern part of India, Kerala is such a state with different such art forms like *Koodiyattam*, *Nangyarkoothu*, *Kathakali*, *Chakyar koothu*, *Thirayattam* and there were many prominent artists like *Painkulam Raman Chakyar* and others.

## China

There are references to theatrical entertainments in China as early as 1500 BC during the Shang dynasty; they often involved music, clowning and acrobatic displays.

The Tang dynasty is sometimes known as "The Age of 1000 Entertainments". During this era, Emperor Xuanzong formed an acting school known as the Children of the Pear Garden to produce a form of drama that was primarily musical.

During the Han Dynasty, shadow puppetry first emerged as a recognized form of theatre in China. There were two distinct forms of shadow puppetry, Cantonese southern and Pekingese northern. The two styles were differentiated by the method of making the puppets and the positioning of the rods on the puppets, as opposed to the type of play performed by the puppets.



In the Song dynasty, there were many popular plays involving acrobatics and music. These developed in the Yuan dynasty into a more sophisticated form with a four- or five-act structure. Yuan drama spread across China and diversified into numerous regional forms, the best known of which is *Beijing Opera*, which is still popular today.



### Thailand

Hanuman on his chariot, a scene from the Ramakien in Wat Phra Kaew, Bangkok

In Thailand, it has been a tradition from the Middle Ages to stage plays based on plots drawn from Indian epics. In particular, the theatrical version of Thailand's national epic Ramakien, a version of the Indian Ramayana, remains popular in Thailand even today.

### Cambodia

In Cambodia, inscriptions dating back to the 6th century AD indicates evidences of dancers at a local temple and using puppetry for religious plays. At the ancient capital Angkor Wat, stories from the Indian epics Ramayana and Mahabharata have been carved on the walls of temples and palaces. Similar reliefs are found at Borobudur in Indonesia.



### Japan

During the 14th century, there were small companies of actors in Japan who performed short, sometimes vulgar comedies. A director of one of these companies, Kan'ami (1333-1384), had a son, Zeami Motokiyo (1363-1443), who was considered one of the finest child actors in Japan.

When Kan'ami's company performed for Ashikaga Yoshimitsu (1358-1408), the shōgun of Japan, he implored Zeami to have a court education for his arts. After Zeami succeeded his father, he continued to perform and adapt his style into what is today Noh. A mixture of pantomime and vocal acrobatics, the Noh style of theatre has become one of Japan's most refined forms of theatrical performance.

Kabuki began shortly after Bunraku, legend has it by an actress named Okuni, who lived around the end of the 16th century. Most of kabuki's material came from Noh and Bunraku, and its erratic dance-type movements are also an effect of Bunraku. However, kabuki is less formal and more distant than Noh, yet very popular among the Japanese public. Actors are trained in many varied things including dancing, singing, pantomime, and even acrobatics. Kabuki was first performed by young girls, then by young boys, and by the end of the 16th century, kabuki companies consisted of all men. The men who portrayed women on stage were specifically trained to elicit the essence of a woman in their subtle movements and gestures.



“Love art in yourself, and not yourself in art.” Constantin Stanislavski,  
My Life In Art



# Kalaripayattu

Kalaripayattu is a martial art designed for the ancient battlefield (the word "Kalari" meaning "battlefield"), with weapons and combative techniques that are unique to India. Like most Indian martial arts, Kalaripayattu contains rituals and philosophies inspired by Hinduism.

Also known as: Kalari, Kalari Payat  
Meaning: "Practice in the arts of the battlefield"

Kalaripayattu, also known simply as Kalari, is an Indian martial art that originated in modern-day Kerala, a state on the southwestern coast of India. Kalaripayattu is known for its long-standing history within Indian martial arts. It is believed to be the oldest surviving martial art in India.

It is also considered to be among the oldest martial arts still in existence, with its origin in the martial arts timeline dating back to at least the 3rd century BCE.

Kalaripayattu is mentioned in the *Vadakkan Pattukal*, a collection of ballads written about the Chekavar of the Malabar region of Kerala. The art also bases medical treatments upon concepts found in the ancient Indian medical text, the *Ayurveda*. Practitioners of Kalaripayattu possess intricate knowledge of pressure points on the human body and healing techniques that incorporate the knowledge of *Ayurveda* and *Yoga*. Kalaripayattu is taught in accordance with the Indian *guru-shishya* system.

Kalaripayattu differs from many other martial arts systems in the world in that weapon based techniques are taught first, and barehanded techniques are taught last. Elements from the yoga tradition as well as finger movements in the *nata* dances, were incorporated into Kalaripayattu. A number of South Asian fighting styles remain closely connected to yoga, dance and performing arts.

Some of the choreographed sparring in Kalaripayattu can be applied to dance and Kathakali dancers who knew Kalaripayattu were believed to be markedly better than other performers. Some traditional Indian classical dance schools still incorporate martial arts as part of their exercise regimen.



Kalaripayattu includes strikes, kicks, grappling, preset forms, weaponry and healing methods. Warriors trained in Kalaripayattu would use very light, and basic body armor, as it was difficult to maintain flexibility and mobility while in heavy armor.

Unlike other parts of India, warriors in Kerala belonged to all castes. Women in Keralite society also underwent training in Kalaripayattu, and still do so to this day. Keralite women such as Unniyarcha are mentioned in a collection of ballads from Kerala called the *Vadakkan Pattukal*, and are praised for their martial prowess.

## Origin

According to legend, Parashurama is believed to have learned the art from Shiva, and taught it to the original settlers of Kerala shortly after bringing Kerala up from the ocean floor. A song in Malayalam refers to Parashurama's creation of Kerala, and credits him with the establishment of the first 108 kalaris throughout Kerala, along with the instruction of the first 21 Kalaripayattu gurus in Kerala on the destruction of enemies.

Certain historians believe that the combat techniques of the Sangam period were the earliest precursors to Kalaripayattu. Each warrior in the Sangam era received regular military training in target practice, horse and elephant riding.

They specialized in one or more of the important weapons of the period including the spear (vel), sword (val), shield (kedaham), and bow and arrow (vilambu). Other theories postulate that certain tribal groups inhabiting ancient Kerala founded Kalaripayattu in order to defend themselves against threats from similar groups.

During the medieval period, modern-day Kerala was divided into a number of principalities. Feuds and duels were common at the time, and Kalaripayattu was used for warfare and settling disputes. The accounts of that period are described in the Vadakkan Pattukal, a collection of ballads from Kerala. Kalaripayattu began losing prominence beginning with the European invasions of Kerala. Once European colonization began, the usage of firearms began to surpass the usage of traditional weaponry such as swords, and spears.



pic credit: Nithya Kalari Ayurveda Kendra



pic credit: Nithya Kalari Ayurveda Kendra

### Modern practice

The resurgence of public interest in Kalaripayattu began in the 1920s in Thalassery, as part of a wave of rediscovery of the traditional arts throughout southern India and continued through the 1970s surge of general worldwide interest in martial arts.

In the modern era, Kalaripayattu is also used by practitioners of Keralite dance styles, such as Kathakali and Mohiniyattam, as part of their training regimens.

# Puppetry

A puppet is one of the most remarkable and ingenious inventions of the man. It has been said that a puppet has to be more than his live counterpart for it is definitely the suggestive element that is more captivating and enduring in a puppet.

Ancient Hindu philosophers have paid the greatest tribute to puppeteers. They have likened God Almighty to a puppeteer and the entire universe to a puppet stage. Srimad Bhagavata, the great epic depicting the story of Lord Krishna in his childhood says that with three strings—Satta, Raja and Tama, the God manipulates each object in the universe as a marionette. Almost all types of puppets are found in India. Puppetry throughout the ages has held an important place in traditional entertainment.

Like traditional theatre, themes for puppet theatre are mostly based on epics and legends. Puppets from different parts of the country have their own identity. Regional styles of painting and sculpture are reflected in them.

Puppetry has been successfully used to motivate emotionally and physically handicapped students to develop their mental and physical faculties. Awareness programmes about the conservation of the natural and cultural environment have also proved to be useful. These programmes aim at sensitising the students to the beauty in word, sound, form, colour and movement. The aesthetic satisfaction derived from making of puppets and communicating through them helps in the all round development of the personality of the child.



## TYPES OF PUPPETS

In modern times, educationists all over the world have realised the potential of puppetry as a medium for communication. Many institutions and individuals in India are involving students and teachers in the use of puppetry for communicating educational concepts.

### String Puppets

India has a rich and ancient tradition of string puppets or marionettes. Marionettes having jointed limbs controlled by strings allow far greater flexibility and are, therefore, the most articulate of the puppets. Rajasthan, Orissa, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are some of the regions where this form of puppetry has flourished.



“ I regard the theatre as the greatest of all art forms, the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being.

Oscar Wilde

”

### Kundhei, Orissa

The string puppets of Orissa are known as Kundhei. Made of light wood, the Orissa puppets have no legs but wear long flowing skirts. They have more joints and are, therefore, more versatile, articulate and easy to manipulate. The puppeteers often hold a wooden prop, triangular in shape, to which strings are attached for manipulation. The costumes of Kundhei resemble those worn by actors of the Jatra traditional theatre. The music is drawn from the popular tunes of the region and is sometimes influenced by the music of Odissi dance.



### Kathputli, Rajasthan

The traditional marionettes of Rajasthan are known as Kathputli. Carved from a single piece of wood, these puppets are like large dolls that are colourfully dressed. Their costumes and headgears are designed in the medieval Rajasthani style of dress, which is prevalent even today. The Kathputli is accompanied by a highly dramatised version of the regional music. Oval faces, large eyes, arched eyebrows and large lips are some of the distinct facial features of these string puppets. These puppets wear long trailing skirts and do not have legs. Puppeteers manipulate them with two to five strings which are normally tied to their fingers and not to a prop or a support.



### Bommalattam, Tamil Nadu

Puppets from Tamil Nadu, known as Bommalattam combine the techniques of both rod and string puppets. They are made of wood and the strings for manipulation are tied to an iron ring which the puppeteer wears like a crown on his head.

A few puppets have jointed arms and hands, which are manipulated by rods. The Bommalattam puppets are the largest, heaviest and the most articulate of all traditional Indian marionettes. A puppet may be as big as 4.5 feet in height weighing about ten kilograms. Bommalattam theatre has elaborate preliminaries which are divided into four parts - Vinayak Puja, K o m a l i , A m a n a t t a m a n d Pusenkanattam



### Shadow Puppets

India has the richest variety of types and styles of shadow puppets. Shadow puppets are flat figures. They are cut out of leather, which has been treated to make it translucent. Shadow puppets are pressed against the screen with a strong source of light behind it. The manipulation between the light and the screen make silhouettes or colourful shadows, as the case may be, for the viewers who sit in front of the screen. This tradition of shadow puppets survives in Orissa, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.

### Gombeyatta, Karnataka

The string puppets of Karnataka are called Gombeyatta. They are styled and designed like the characters of Yakshagana, the traditional theatre form of the region. The Gombeyatta puppet figures are highly stylized and have joints at the legs, shoulders, elbows, hips and knees. These puppets are manipulated by five to seven strings tied to a prop. Some of the more complicated movements of the puppet are manipulated by two to three puppeteers at a time. Episodes enacted in Gombeyatta are usually based on Prasangas of the Yakshagana plays. The music that accompanies is dramatic and beautifully blends folk and classical elements.



### Togalu Gombeyatta, Karnataka

The shadow theatre of Karnataka is known as Togalu Gombeyatta. These puppets are mostly small in size. The puppets however differ in size according to their social status, for instance, large size for kings and religious characters and smaller size for common people or servants.



### Tholu Bommalata, Andhra Pradesh

Tholu Bommalata, Andhra Pradesh's shadow theatre has the richest and strongest tradition. The puppets are large in size and have jointed waist, shoulders, elbows and knees. They are coloured on both sides. Hence, these puppets throw coloured shadows on the screen. The music is dominantly influenced by the classical music of the region and the theme of the puppet plays are drawn from the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Puranas.



### Ravanachhaya, Orissa

The most theatrically exciting is the Ravanachhaya of Orissa. The puppets are in one piece and have no joints. They are not coloured, hence throw opaque shadows on the screen. The manipulation requires great dexterity, since there are no joints. The puppets are made of deer skin and are conceived in bold dramatic poses. Apart from human and animal characters, many props such as trees, mountains, chariots, etc. are also used. Although, Ravanachhaya puppets are smaller in size-the largest not more than two feet have no jointed limbs, they create very sensitive and lyrical shadows.



### Putul Nautch, West Bengal

The traditional rod puppet form of West Bengal is known as Putul Nautch. They are carved from wood and follow the various artistic styles of a particular region. In Nadia district of West Bengal, rod-puppets used to be of human size like the Bunraku puppets of Japan. This form is now almost extinct. The Bengal rod-puppets, which survive are about 3 to 4 feet in height and are costumed like the actors of Jatra, a traditional theatre form prevalent in the State. These puppets have mostly three joints. The heads, supported by the main rod, is joined at the neck and both hands attached to rods are joined at the shoulders.

The technique of manipulation is interesting and highly theatrical. A bamboo-made hub is tied firmly to the waist of the puppeteer on which the rod holding the puppet is placed. The puppeteers each holding one puppet, stand behind a head-high curtain and while manipulating the rods also move and dance imparting corresponding movements to the puppets. While the puppeteers themselves sing and deliver the stylized prose dialogues, a group of musicians, usually three to four in numbers, sitting at the side of the stage provide the accompanying music with a drum, harmonium and cymbals. The music and verbal text have close similarity with the Jatra theatre.

The Orissa Rod puppets are much smaller in size, usually about twelve to eighteen inches. They also have mostly three joints, but the hands are tied to strings instead of rods. Thus elements of rod and string puppets are combined in this form of puppetry. The technique of manipulation is somewhat different. The Orissa rod-puppeteers squat on the ground behind a screen and manipulate. Again it is more operatic in its verbal contents since impromptu prose dialogues are infrequently used. Most of the dialogues are sung. The music blends folk tunes with classical Odissi tunes. The music begins with a short piece of ritual orchestral preliminary called Stuti and is followed by the play.

The puppets of Orissa are smaller than those from Bengal or Andhra Pradesh. Rod puppet shows of Orissa are more operatic and prose dialogues are seldom used.





### Rod Puppets

Rod puppets are an extension of glove-puppets, but often much larger and supported and manipulated by rods from below. This form of puppetry now is found mostly in West Bengal and Orissa.

### Yampuri, Bihar

The traditional Rod puppet of Bihar is known as Yampuri. These puppets are made of wood. Unlike the traditional Rod puppets of West Bengal and Orissa, these puppets are in one piece and have no joints. As these puppets have no joints, the manipulation is different from other Rod puppets and requires greater dexterity.



### Glove Puppets

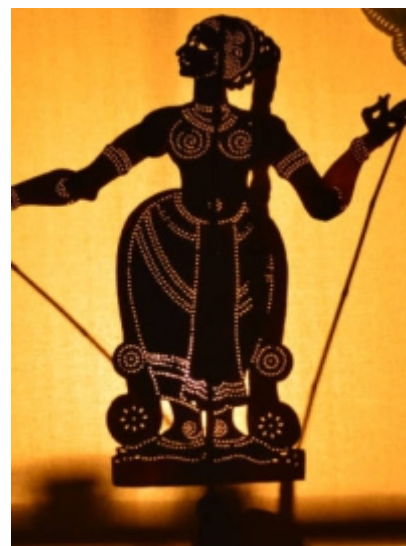
Glove puppets, are also known as sleeve, hand or palm puppets. The head is made of either papier mache, cloth or wood, with two hands emerging from just below the neck. The rest of the figure consists of a long flowing skirt. These puppets are like limp dolls, but in the hands of an able puppeteer, are capable of producing a wide range of movements.

The manipulation technique is simple the movements are controlled by the human hand the first finger inserted in the head and the middle finger and the thumb are the two arms of the puppet. With the help of these three fingers, the glove puppet comes alive. The tradition of glove puppets in India is popular in Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal and Kerala. In Uttar Pradesh, glove puppet plays usually present social themes, whereas in Orissa such plays are based on stories of Radha and Krishna. In Orissa, the puppeteer plays on the dholak with one hand and manipulates the puppet with the other. The delivery of the dialogues, the movement of the puppet and the beat of the dholak are well synchronised and create a dramatic atmosphere.

### Pavakoothu, Kerala

In Kerala, the traditional glove puppet play is called Pavakoothu. It came into existence during the 18th century due to the influence of Kathakali, the famous classical dance-drama of Kerala, on puppet performances. In Pavakoothu, the height of a puppet varies from one foot to two feet. The head and the arms are carved of wood and joined together with thick cloth, cut and stitched into a small bag.

The face of the puppets are decorated with paints, small and thin pieces of gilded tin, the feathers of the peacock, etc. The manipulator puts his hand into the bag and moves the hands and head of the puppet. The musical instruments used during the performance are Chenda, Chengilola, Ilathalam and Shankhathe conch. The theme for Glove puppet plays in Kerala is based on the episodes from either the Ramayana or the Mahabharata.



## Introduction to Performance Art

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A time-based art form that typically features a live presentation to an audience or to onlookers (as on a street) and draws on such arts as acting, poetry, music, dance, and painting. It is generally an event rather than an artifact, by nature ephemeral, though it is often recorded on video and by means of still photography. Performance art arose in the early 1970s as a general term for a multitude of activities—including Happenings, body art, actions, events, and guerrilla theatre. Performance art has its origins in the early 20th century, and it is closely identified with the progress of the avant-garde, beginning with Futurism. The Futurists' attempt to revolutionize culture included performative evenings of poetry, music played on newly invented instruments, and a form of drastically distilled dramatic presentation.

## Kitab-i-Nauras - Book of Nine Rasas (Essences)

Sultan Ibrahim Adil Shah II of Bijapur composed the verses that comprise the Kitab-i-Nauras, the Book of Nine Rasas (Essences) in the late sixteenth century. The fifty-nine songs and seventeen couplets of the book are written in Dakhni Urdu and indicate the ragas in which they were to be sung. Sultan Ibrahim was deeply devoted to music and was himself a dhrupad-singer and the player of a stringed lute-like instrument called tambur.

The Kitab-i-Nauras is known from some ten manuscripts in different libraries that were copied between 1582 and 1618. Most of these are powerfully calligraphed but are not elaborately illuminated. However, sources speak of one lavish manuscript that was written out by the royal calligrapher Khalilullah. So pleased was Ibrahim with Khalilullah's version of the Kitab, that he dubbed him badshah-i-qalam ("king of the pen") and made him sit on the throne as a reward.



“ The human mind is a dramatic structure in itself and our society is absolutely saturated with drama. ”

Edward Bond

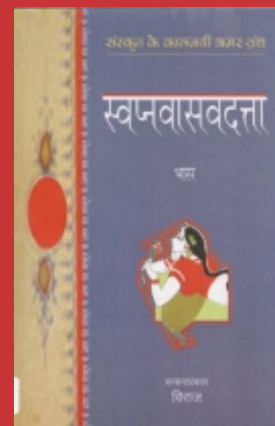
## Greatest Play Writers in Indian Culture

The Drama theatre in India is as old as the Indian culture which boasts its glorious association with illustrious Indian dramatists since its antiquity. The term Indian classical drama refers to the tradition of dramatic literature and performance in ancient India. During ancient India, there were great dramatists and their creation is magnum opus. In this article, we are giving the list of Famous Dramatists of Theatre in Indian Classical Period, which is very useful for the competitive examinations like UPSC-prelims, SSC, State Services, NDA, CDS, and Railways etc.

**There were seven Greatest Play Writers of ancient India.**

### Bhas

The Svapnavasavadattam is the most famous composition of Bas. His other famous works are – Pratijna-Yaugandharayan, Charu Duttam, Pancharatral, 'Karnabhara' 'Dootvakya', and Bat Charit, Abibharaki. Prupuk was written in Prakrit language staged by common people during social ceremonies Ramayana, Mahabharata and Puranas.

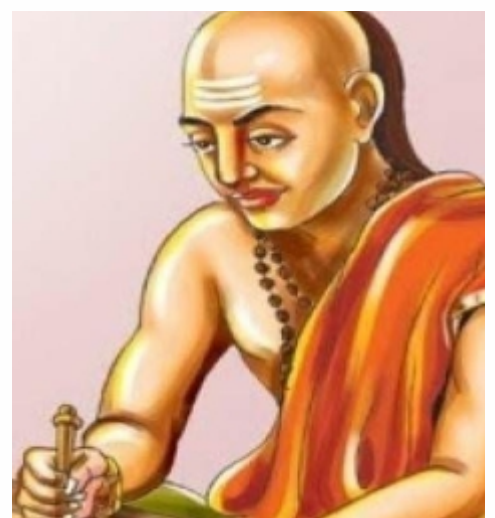


### Shudrak

His famous work was Mrichakatikam which means, earthen vehicle. His play reflects struggle in life which differentiates him from his predecessors. In his play there is a hero, heroine and a villain. The play is based on love story of Brahmin Charudatta and a prostitute Basantsena.

### Vishakhadatta

He was one of the most famous play writers of Gupta period. His two famous compositions are – 'Mudrarakshasa' and Devichandra Guptam. In 'Mudrarakshasa' he describes about the great emperor of Nanda dynasty Dhanananda and founder of Mauryan Empire i.e., Chandragupta Maurya. In 'Devichandragupta' he mentioned about Gupta emperor Chandragupta and his brother Ram Gupta. In Mudrarakshasa love, joy, heroine, comedy is absent.



### Kalidas

He was a famous play writer in the court of Chandragupta II. His most famous plays are 'Malvikagnimitram, Vikramorvsaiyam' and 'Abhigyan Shakuntalam.



### Bhavabhuti

He was a famous play writer of later phase of classical era. After Bhavabhuti there were no great Sanskrit play writer of Madhav and Malti is depicted in India. Uttararamacharita is another famous play of Bhavabhuti. His other composition is 'Malti Madhav' where love story tantric rites played important role but comedian was absent.

### Harshvardhana

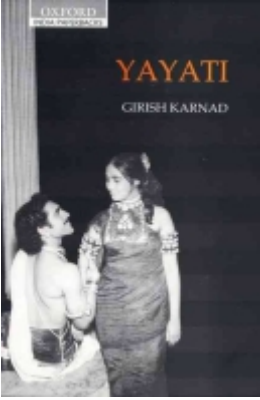
He was ruler of Kannauj. He composed three famous plays—Nagananda, Ratnavali, and 'Priyadarshika'. Naganand describes about prohibition of snake sacrifice. Ratnavali mentions about love affair between prince Udayan and his lover Ratnavali while 'Priyadarshika' describes about love affairs between Udayan and Priyadarshika.



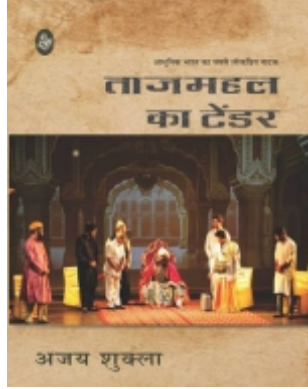
### Mahendra Varman

He was a great Pallava king. His famous play is 'Mattavillas Parahasana'. It is a satire that creates fun at the peculiar aspects of Kapalika and Pashupata cult. The history of Indian theatre is deeply buried in the long gone era of the Sanskrit plays. The eminent Indian dramatists since then have added a distinct shape to Indian Natya whilst exemplifying the nine Rasas of drama.

## Significant Indian Dramas and Their Writers



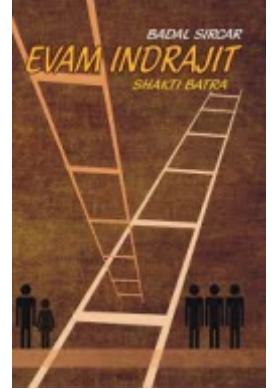
Yayati by  
Girish Karnad



Tajmahal ka Tender by  
Ajay Shukla



Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe! By  
Vijay Tendulkar



Ebong Indrajit by  
Badal Sarkar

## Ragas in Sangeet Ratnakara

Pt. Sharngadev wrote Sangeet Ratnakar in thirteenth century. There are seven chapters in this Sanskrit treatise referred to as 'Saptadhyayi'. The seven chapters are as follows:

- Svargatadhyaya
- Ragavivekadhyaya
- Prakeernakadhyaya
- Prabandhadhyaya
- Taladhyaya
- Vadyadhyaya
- Nartanadhyaya

## Major Performing Arts Festivals and Events

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Festival de Liège (Biennial—on uneven years) Location - Liège/Belgium  
<http://www.festivaldeliege.be/>

Push : Performing Arts Festival Location - Vancouver/Canada  
<http://pushfestival.ca/>

High Performance Rodeo: Calgary's International Festival of the Arts Location - Calgary/Canada  
<https://www.hprodeo.ca/>

International Theatre Festival of Kerala Location - Thissur/India  
<http://theatrefestivalkerala.com/>

Ishara International Puppet Festival Location India  
<http://www.isharapuppet.com/isharapuppets/calender.htm>

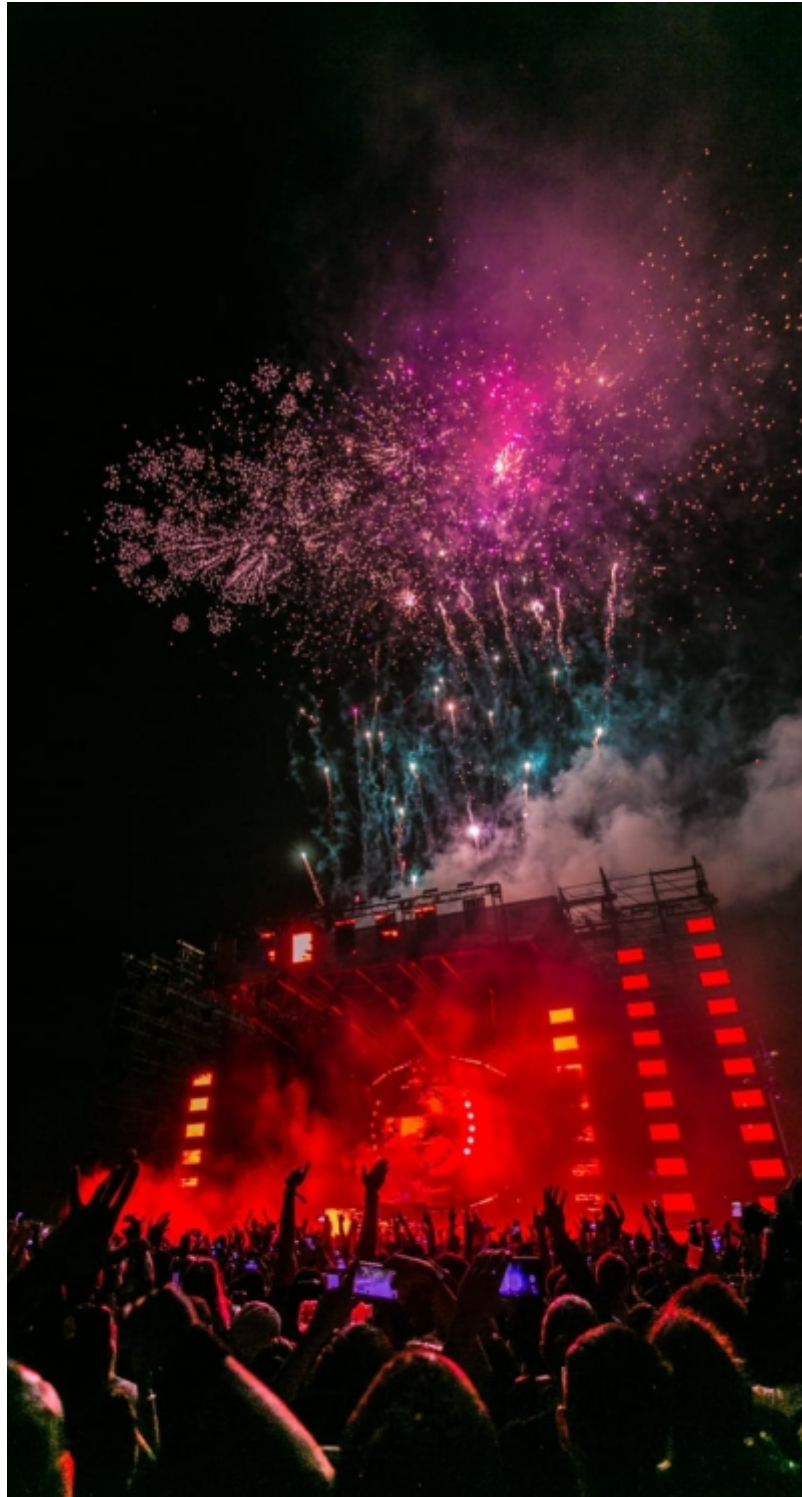
World Theatre Festival Location - Shizouka/Japan  
<http://www.spac.or.jp/>

Shakespeare International Festival Craiova Location - Craiova/Romania  
<http://www.tncms.ro/>

London International Festival of Theatre Location - London/United Kingdom  
<https://www.liftfestival.com/>

Leapfest Location - Chicago/USA  
<http://www.stagelefttheatre.com/>

Helsinki Festival Location - Helsinki/Finland  
<http://www.helsinginjuhlaviikot.fi/>



# Career Options you can opt for with a Degree in Performing Arts

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Performing arts range from vocal to instrumental music, dance and theatre to magic and so many other categories. All these categories reflect numerous expressions of creativity. Performing arts is an integral part of cultural heritage including rituals, festive events or oral traditions.

If you are a creative and expressive individual passionate about your craft, and if you have patience, perseverance, and stamina, then you might just be the right person to be pursuing

Even though, a lot of people find performing arts really fascinating, they're not really sure about the different jobs they can apply for with a Performing Arts Degree. Here are some careers you can opt for with a Degree in Performing Arts -



## Actor

Acting is one of the most competitive career options but with right amount of patience, talent and hard-work, you might just be the right fit. Although, there will be time periods where you might struggle to find work but you have to be patient if this is your true passion.



## Dancer

If you know how to interpret music through body movements, dancer may just be the job you're looking for. Dancers play a vital role in theatre plays, they express the vision of the story through focus and enthusiasm. If you're ever tired of dancing in theatre plays in front of the audience, you can always up-skill yourself by learning new dance forms and become a teacher or a choreographer.



## Musical theatre performers -

This one requires a lot of skill and talent. You have to be extraordinary in singing, dancing and acting. This can be a career which requires a lot of time, you might find ten shows in a week which can be really demanding. One must gain as much experience as they can to develop their skills, make strong industry connections and challenge themselves if they want to be a great musical theatre performer.





### Drama-therapists -

Drama therapy uses play, embodiment, projection, role, story, metaphor, empathy, distancing, witnessing, performance, and improvisation to help people make meaningful change. A Drama-therapists use activities such as group work or roleplay to encourage people to come to terms with their emotions and express themselves, helping them to overcome or progress on their social or personal difficulties.



### Theatre Director -

A theatre director is in charge of the creative vision of a theatre production. Their goal is to bring out the best performance from the actors and tell the story of the play in a compelling way. A theatre director oversees all the essentials to ensure the success of a play like costumer, set and design.



### Screenwriter -

A screenwriter writes content for visual mediums. They write screenplays for feature films, short films, television, commercials, and video games. They create the dialogue, the characters and the storyline of a script.

## Backstage Career Options in Performing Arts

- Arts administrator
- Broadcast presenter
- Film director
- Further education teacher
- Higher education lecturer
- Secondary school teacher
- Special effects technician
- Talent agent
- Theatre stage manager



## Impact Interview - Salim Arif

Actor and MESC GC Member

### Understanding Pandemic Impact on Industry Growth

Q. How has the pandemic impacted film sector's growth?

A. People who have now shifted in substantial numbers to OTT Platforms with changed viewing habits are going to impact the overall economy associated with public screenings of Films. We get a whole month of multiple content like the earlier book and magazine libraries to select from at our convenience, at a cost which is almost comparable to that of four persons visiting a Multiplex screen for a single show of a film in the recent past. The content, production and scale of our films may have to factor these aspects and restructure the whole system for a revival. I remember when Television and Home Videos created a dent in a few decades ago, Films had to become bigger with wider screens and 70 mm projections. Theatres had to change and improve in all areas.

Then came this multiplex phenomenon which today is suffering due to reduced numbers and lack of big releases. It is not commercially viable right now to run them and major films have been re-scheduled for better times. With an increase in affordable data and accessible digital footprint, the Mobile phone screens have become the most favored viewer ship platform and it will remain for a while. But I am optimistic. We need comprehensive measures from every associated sector of our Films to re-invent itself and come back with a renewed vigor and force. With the talent pool we have, it would not take long, I hope.

Q. How has the travel-ban impacted the business?

A. It has as much as it did several other businesses in various aspects. But on the flip side, digital data became the most consumed element in our homes during the pandemic. OTT and other portals and platforms became our only source for information and entertainment and kept us in a social loop for that time. The original production of Indian content for them has increased. Dubbed and language programming has created a wider choice for masses across the spectrum. It will impact the production cost and content in a big way.



Q. What risks have become apparent in this crisis, and how do you address them?

A. Exhibition sector has suffered in a major way, that has a cascading effect on all related aspects. But a bigger challenge faced by the traditional Film Sector post pandemic is to get enough numbers back into theatres and create a viable economic base once again. How do we lure our audiences once again to see our films on big screens will be the real hurdle to cross? Apart from production, the whole strategy of promotion of a film, its release and cost recovery will undergo a change. The other dependent sectors will also be impacted. Like I said earlier, it requires coming together and realignment of all aspects of our Film sector to overcome this major setback.





**Q. What have we learned from this crisis?**

**A.** We are now truly a Global Village bound together by the Digital Glue. The Webinars, YouTube, Facebook, Social Media and other channels have been put to an increased use. We have found ways to reach out that we neglected earlier. I see major changes happening with our physical spaces like school, colleges, offices and homes due to the way we managed outreach in the pandemic. We are going to inherit a new World Order. We will have two realities to cope with, Digital and Real. Our new content will come from there.

**Q. What do your new milestones look like?**

**A.** I think Live entertainment will become bigger and more in demand at public places. We will have to bring Larger Canvass, Spectacle and International Production Values and my new production will have that.



## Mr. Sushil Sakhuja Sculptor and MESG GC Member

Mr. Sushil Sakhuja is a self made artist and an eminent Governing Council member of Media & Entertainment Skills Council (MESG), working in Tribal area with tribal people with Traditional arts. For him, "Art is more of Passion than Business". He has made bronze my medium. He specializes in Bastaar Art which gets its name from the tribal village of Bastaar.



**Q.**How did you finally decide on becoming a sculptor?

**A.** I was born in a small village where Dhokra art has been followed as a tradition. I was already good at painting in school, but I was incredibly interested in the concept of sculpturing. Then, I started working towards my sculpturing skills with the local artists.

**Q.** How did you choose to specialize in animal figural sculptures?

**A.** Although, I love all the beautiful creatures in the world but I was highly attracted by the anatomy of animals.

**Q.** How does your artistic process start?

**A.** The entire process of sculpturing is a 9-Step process which starts with the mud and ends with the mud itself.

**Q.** How long does it typically take to create a sculpture?

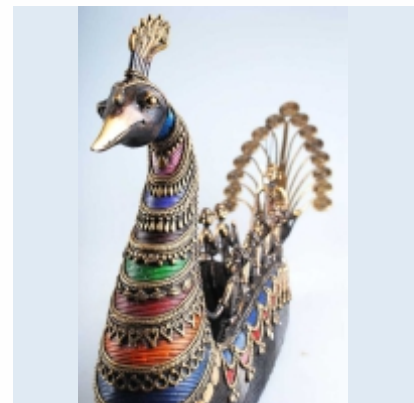
**A.** It all depends upon the size of the work, season and weather.

**Q.** How important is it to you to create global art which appeals to such diverse cultures?

**A.** It's extremely important for upcoming artists of any country to exchange ideas and culture in form of unique art forms.

**Q.**What advise can you give to beginning artists?

**A.** Art can change a society quicker than politics. It's not only imagination, it's emotions.



## Mr. Rajesh Puri - Actor, Director, Producer

Rajesh Puri is an Indian television actor. He acted in comedy serials like Yeh Duniya Gazab Ki. Rajesh also acted in a DD1 serial Aamrapali (TV serial) in 2002. He is also identified as Lalit Prasad (a.k.a. Lalloo) of Hum Log, the Television series of the 1980s. He is seen in mostly comedy shows like Hi Zindagi Bye Zindagi (Zee TV), One Two Ka Four (Zee TV), Ek Se Badh Kar Ek (DD National) and Fantush (DD Metro). In 2019, he played Sunil Bansal in Shakti - Astitva Ke Ehsaas Ki on Colors TV and movie Zindagi Tumse.

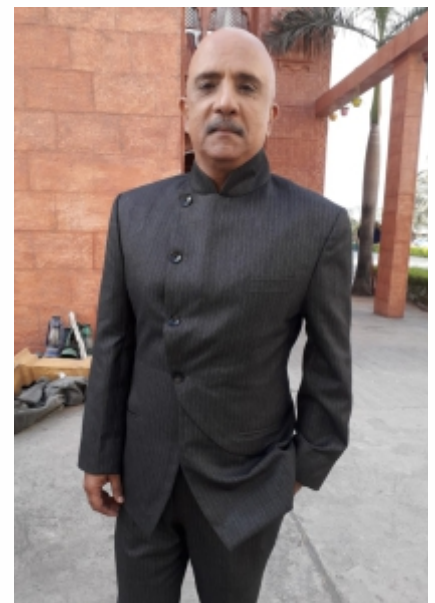
**Q. When did you find out that acting is what you wish to pursue in life?**

**A.** I have been doing acting since the age of 5. When I was 5 years old, I started doing many things, I was copying people, copying actors K.M. Singh and Prithviraj Kapoor at that time. They were stars of Dussehra. I was totally appreciated, and I never knew I had this talent in me and then when I was in school, when I was in college it just grew up. I had 3 professions on hand. I was a national level professional hockey player where I was paid by the clubs to play for them. And, I had my own orchestra, I used to play Hawaiian guitar and ornamental instruments, drums, and bass. I was in college in Delhi when I was selected by Tatas to play for them in Bombay. As an employee, as a hockey player. But as my parents were not ready to send me away from Delhi. So, I opted out of that offer. And then I became a professional actor at the age of 1975 when I was in college. I started doing professional theatre where I was paid to act.



**Q. What is something you know now that you wished you knew when you were just starting out as an actor?**

**A.** I think you get experience when you grow up when you grow with the profession with the people with the age. So, now I realize that at that time I was so passionate about doing any work that came across me. I was so passionate, and I was so honest to my profession that I never cared for money or name fame which came naturally because I was the first star being tempered by the audiences and from every part of life. So, that time I think I should refrain myself and should not do those films that do not require to be done. I just wanted to do everything which came across me because I was so passionate about this profession so now, I think had it been now I would have chosen few and left few and could have done a better job. Theatre is such thing that you perform in front of a live audience. So, you get the instant reaction. So that had given me so much confidence as an actor, so I knew what audiences like or what way they love to watch. So, accordingly I prepared myself as an actor and I knew the pulse of the audience. So, in theatre I used to play with the audience and improvised on stage and interact with the audience straight away. So, it was like fun and since that I mastered any role which came across, I could have done it very easily.



**Q. How do you prepare for a role?**

**A.** When preparing for a role, it all depends on the intensity of the role and not the length, length doesn't matter whether it's one scene, or a regular character or a cameo, or whatever. When I was in theatre, we used to do rehearsals for about 15-20 good days to come on stage for the final performance. That used to grow with us, the rehearsals, and the characters we used to improvise during the rehearsals and then come to a point where it was totally ready like you cook some dish. It takes time but eventually the dish is ready. So, theatre is like that. So, you prepare along with your co-actors, with your director, and with your technical team and it makes a good dish to present. But in serials and of course in films, it's not like that. So, there that theatre experience helps you. Over the period I've done so much.

I have directed few serials big serials for Sab TV and UTV. And we had done productions also. I had done a big serial called Mr. Pantush which was the first silent serial on Indian Television that was first telecasted in 1998. And it was appreciated on Doordarshan. That time also my wife was sick in Delhi and she was operated upon and she was in serious condition, I had to leave my directorial assignments and rush back to be with her. So, these challenges I've come across and so many other things. When we were in 50 theatres, we didn't have money and theatre never paid us. We used to survive in any way possible and I was doing a job in Delhi then I was doing theatre. I was in sales so the same kind of job I took up in Bombay to survive and I used to drive up to 100 Kms. I was driving a scooter and I was area manager so I was travelling to the area where I was assigned for. Then come to the theatre and then go back which used to cover 100 kms a day on a scooter for quite some time. So, this is how you know the challenges, it's not a rosy picture or it's not a very red-carpet way to achieve these things. You have to come across lots of challenges where you have to decide the priority and I think I have done a good job where these decisions were concerned.

**Q. What is the one character that you have played that is close to your heart and why?**

**A.** I have done almost 140 films, more than that. More than 100 television serials, more than 200 plays and 5000 performances on stage. But there are very few characters which still have done some mark on my professional career and people's mind as well. And on top of that is the character that I just mentioned, the first television serial called Hum Log where I played Lallu. It's still a phenomenal and people of that generation still relate and call me Lallu. It is so deep down in their hearts and second of course is my Chaplin ad which has given me a lot of laurels which has earned me laurels from all over the world and then my munshi character in Buniyaad which was very appreciated. And then, of late I did Pravesh on Sony tv. And I played the head of the family with Rupali Ganguly and Shweta Tiwari's father. Rupali she's doing Anupama nowadays. So, there I had good content and good scenes to perform with these two fantastic actresses and other actors, of course.

And it lasted for about 2 and a half to 3 years on television. So, that I enjoyed the most and appreciated also by the audiences.

**Q. So, you have worked in 100 plus movies and 500 plus plays?**

**A.** 140 films, I have done Bhojpuri films. I have done Rajasthani films, Punjabi and of course Hindi and Gujarati also.

**Q. So, you know all these languages, did you take a course or something?**

**A.** No. I worked hard on them. And I dubbed all the languages myself. It was not that I did my shooting and dubbing was done by somebody else. I dubbed for all these regional films. You have to work hard to achieve the great.

Now, luckily for the past 1 and half to 2 years I've been awarded for various sides so people are saying you're getting so many awards after such a hard work. All my friends know that the journey was tough but of course I enjoyed doing it.

**Q. What will be your dream role?**

**A.** I am never satisfied after doing so many varied characters and at this point in age now I'm 60 plus. And of course, I would like to be doing fatherly characters and good negative characters of this age. In that series, of course they have a lot of scope for me in these characters. So, let's see if they come across and I'm waiting for them to approach me.



**Q. What message will you like to give to the aspiring artists?**

**A.** I am nobody to give any message because it's all circumstances. The actors which are aspiring at the moment have different way of life, different way of thinking. So, my experience is never giving up, gauge yourself as an actor first and then decide whether you want to go for acting, people will be kind of the acceptance is there or not. So, test that first. And once you're committed then never go back, have a passion, have trust in yourself and in god and you will definitely achieve it.

I've done about 200 plays with about 5000 performances on stage so far. So that helped me in preparing myself as an actor for a particular role. Some roles were challenging where you must prepare more. You have to take references and see some videos or when it's a difficult character, otherwise, now acting is on my fingertips and I just, it's like switch on switch off. We have been doing it, of late of course, initially we worked awfully hard and when we mastered the skill and then it was like then suddenly the shot is ready and we get into the character's skin and then we perform and then again come back to normal. So, it was like a daily job I was doing 6 shifts a day then I signed films and I was terribly busy. It was like you know off and on I was so zapped. 6 shifts a day means round the clock.



And I did that for a good 2 and a half to about 3 years. And I signed about 30 films in three months after Hum Log's success. Hum Log started in August and then by December I had already signed about 30 films. And I was busy round the clock, so it was like a switch on, switch off.



I did theatre for a good amount of time and in Bombay, I came in 81. From 81 to 84 we did theatre in 30 theatres and I did all artistic plays written by master shroff. Literature like Vijay Tendulkar, Agha Hashrith Ashmiri, Sri Lal Shukul and Bahadur Sarkar and Gurki and best. I have done varied roles and I've signed Hum Log because I did various characters in different plays. And my character of Hum Log, he saw 3 of my plays in a gap of few days and then he came back because I did all the three plays which he saw. My characters varied from 16 years old to 60 years old. At that point in time and I was hardly 23 - 24. So, then he said you have mastered the profession and I want a great actor who can go overboard doing Lallu because Lallu has a very thin line. So, Hum Log I signed in Bombay in 50 theatres. I'm the first TV star on Indian television.

**Q. What is something you know now that you wished you knew when you were just starting out as an actor?**

**A.** I think you get experience when you grow up when you grow with the profession with the people of the age. So, now I realize that at that time I was so passionate about doing any work that came across me. I was so passionate, and I was so honest to my profession that I never cared for money or name fame which came naturally because I was the first star being tempered by the audiences and from every part of life.

So, that time I think I should refrain myself and should not do those films that do not require to be done. I just wanted to do everything which came across me because I was so passionate about this profession so now, I think had it been now I would have chosen a few and left a few and could have done a better job. Theatre is such a thing that you perform in front of a live audience. So, you get an instant reaction. So that had given me so much confidence as an actor, so I knew what audiences like or what way they love to watch. So, accordingly, I prepared myself as an actor and I knew the pulse of the audience. So, in theatre, I used to play with the audience and improvised on stage, and interact with the audience straight away. So, it was as fun and since that, I mastered any role which came across, I could have done it very easily.

**Q. What has been the biggest challenge so far in your career?**

**A.** Every day is a challenge. I still remember I was shooting, we shot overnight because an episode had to go on air and I had a temperature of 104. So, I used to give the shot and lie down and people would put that cold band or strip on my forehead and ice packs as well for the temperature. So, I was shooting with a temperature of 104 degrees in the night. That kind of challenges I've come across. I've come across the biggest challenge of my life when my father expired and I was shooting in Chandigarh. And I came to know about this sad and shocking news. And I still shot and finished my work on that day and then went to Delhi to see my father who had expired. So, those kinds of challenges also we have come across and my wife was not well when I was directing.

## Mr. Hitesh Rahlan

Director

T Series StageWorks Academy / GKFTII

T Series Educational Wing

A young and immensely talented leader, the director of T-Series Educational Wing, His vision and dedicated efforts helped to expand the business internationally and helping for the inclusive growth of the entire educational wing. Under the exemplary vision and the dynamic leadership of Mr. Rahlan, T-Series StageWorks Academy and GKFTII have set the benchmark in the field of training and grooming the upcoming talents.



Q. For how many years have T-series Stageworks Academy been helping the budding aspirants of performing Arts?

A. For over 30 years of its existence, T-Series has excelled and exceeded in the Industry and rose to phenomenal heights. Taking the legacy towards the field of education, T-Series Stageworks Academy has been established. With a focused, well thought of strategy, the Academy is identifying, nurturing and creating a pool of immensely skillful and passionate professionals who can match national and global demands.

Q. What is the vision behind establishing this Academy?

A. The Academy has the vision to train and nurture the talents of aspiring enthusiastic candidates dreaming big to shine like a star in the horizon of performing arts. The academy helps such aspirants to live & realize their dreams. Formed with a commitment to foster creativity and talent by offering structured courses in the fields of Film, Music, Dance, and Performing and Media Arts, I am proud to mention that the Academy is achieving new milestones every day.

Q. What makes T-series Stageworks Academy special or unique?

A. Best performing artists of the date namely, Khushali Kumar, renowned bollywood actor and fashion designer and Tulsi Kumar, bollywood singing sensation are other directors of the Academy. Students are being trained under their mentorship and able guidance. T-Series Stage works Academy is unique from all aspects and one if its type where we integrate Arts and the Academics. The Academy not only envisions creating superstars but has already created many. Here the Live- training is imparted through renowned industry experts and immensely talented faculties in professional setups.

Q. What are the opportunities & scope of the performing Arts Industry?

A. Counting for the number of opportunities in the industry would be like counting the stars in the galaxy. The Internet and OTT platforms have proved to be a boon for the Industry. They have brought the performing artists across the globe closer and another and the artists all over got exposure to others' performances and performers, which they would otherwise have not. By adopting such new strategies and bringing in versatility through innovation there are uncountable opportunities and immense scope in the industry.

Q. What is your top piece of advice for aspiring performers?

A. I strongly believe that Great things never came from comfort zones. So, I advise them to inculcate everlasting passion, hard work, and consistency.





**Mr. Sushil Parashar**  
Actor

Sushil Parashar is a veteran Indian actor, known for his work in the Hindi television industry and in Bollywood. His films include Jaal: The Trap; Dushmani; Neal N Nikki; and Hulla. He works mostly in mainstream television serials like Bani - Ishq Da Kalma and is appearing in Balaji Telefilms's supernatural horror fiction TV show Kavach... MahaShivratri.

“

I regard the theatre as the greatest of all art forms, the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being.

Oscar Wilde

”

Q. How did you choose acting as your career?

A. My mischievous nature took the shape of acting.

Q. What have you learned from the directors that you have worked with throughout your career?

A. Some want spontaneous acting, some want method acting. So, we the actors have to be on our toes to gauge.

Q. What are some of the traits an actor must possess?

A. Education, observation and humility.

Q. Did you go through any formal training to get to where you are now as an actor?

A. Theatre. Seventeen years of stage and street theatre.

Q. What's harder: Getting started or being able to keep going?

A. Keep going.

Q. What would you say has been your most challenging role to play and why?

A. In the serial Maryada. As lot of grey matter was used for the characterization.

Q. Would you say that television has intensively progressed over the years? What is your take on it?

A. No, it has rather retrogressed. Reason being we are losing on the content.

Q. Any projects that you are looking forward to?

A. Hopefully yes but after Covid is over.

Q. What is the message you would like to give aspiring actors?

A. Give maximum number of auditions, say 3-4 in a day.



## Mr. Naresh Suri

Actor

Naresh Suri is an Indian film Actor, who has worked predominantly in Bollywood. Naresh has worked in popular movies like Happy Hardy And Heer, Aashiq Banaya Aapne. Naresh's previous film to hit the theatres was Happy Hardy And Heer in the year 2020.

**Q. When did you find out that acting is what you wish to pursue in life?**

**A.** I think around the age of 16... when I started dreaming of acting as my career. Though I had done nothing about acting till I did my BCom, except watching films and all kind of films. In films I used to imagine myself on screen. My goal was to complete my graduation and then plunge into it full time whole heartedly. One thing was very clear in my mind that I must learn the craft as I didn't know even A of acting. In 1970 after my final exams, I started looking for some introduction as I knew no body from this entertainment world. Through a family friend I was introduced to Late Mr. Om Shivpuri who was very active in theatre in Delhi, having his own group Dishantar, where great theatre actors and directors of that time were working in this group. They took me in and it is here I learned the basics of acting. I was lucky that I got chance to work with great talents here. In the beginning I got small roles, then gradually I started getting bigger roles...my journey as an actor had started.....and I was the happiest person.

**Q. How would you describe the evolution of Acting throughout the years in the Industry?**

**A.** What I have learnt over the years is that keep your performance as natural as possible unless you are performing in some stylized form.

**Q. What are you currently working on?**

**A.** At the time of first lock down in March 2020, I was acting in a play called 'Kusur' with Shri Amol Palekar who also directed it. This play we had opened in November 2019 and was a big hit. Many shows were lined up that had to be canceled due to lockdown. Outbreak of this Pandemic has changed everything. Your social life, your way of working, your thinking .....everything in general and for people of our age in particular. So, at present staying at home and trying to be as safe as possible.

**Q. How many films have you been a part of so far and what has been your favorite?**

**A.** I have acted in quite a few films, like...Rajnigandha, Charandas, Albert Pinto Ko Gussa Kyon Aata Hai, Mohan Joshi Hazir Ho, Dayavaan, Yalgaar, Sazaye Maut, Policewala Gunda, Duplicate, Zakhm, Angarey, Happy Hardy And Heer, The Xpose, Aashiq Banaya Aapne, Bardasht, Gunehgaar, Mai Aisa Hi Hoon, Tera Suroor, Youngistan, Aurangzeb, Mohan Joshi Haazir Ho etc. etc..

In theatre acted in many plays to name a few.....Adhe Adhure, Bili Chali Pahen Ke Joota, Tughlaq, Trishanku, Udhwast Dharamshala, Baki Itihas, Pagla Godha, Sheh Ye Maat, Tughlaq, Antigone, Glass Menagerie, The Road To Mecca, Yours' Faithfully, Swarg Ke Teen Dwar, Servant Of Two Masters, Jaat Hi Poocho Sadhu Ki, Beewion Ka Madrassa, Khamosh Adalat Jaari Hai, Ramayan, Kusur, etc..etc...

On Television I have acted in many shows, to name a few... Bin Baati Ke Deep, Chehre, Nukkad, Police Station, Shrikant, Ados Pados, Maha Shiv Puraan, Har Har Mahadev, Andaaz, Aashiqui, Milan, Tanhiaan, Astitva Ek Prem Katha, Kittu Sab Jaanti Hai, Satya Narayan Ki Katha, Sindoor Tere Naam Ka, Maayka, Chanakya, Jhilmil Sitaron Ka Aangan Hoga, Adhikar, Aangan, Adalat, Aahat, CID, etc, etc....

Have acted in numerous Radio Plays .... in Vividh Bharati and in Akashwani Dramas.. For me every character that I have been given is favorite as I put my best efforts to bring it alive on screen or stage, and then later on after analysis of my performance I forget about it.

**Q. Do you think that there's a shortcut to becoming a famous actor?**

**A.** There is no shortcut to success.

It's always your consistent honest hard work with understanding of your craft that will bring you love of the public. Of course luck factor is like an icing on the cake.

**Q. What do you think has been your biggest achievement so far?**

**A.** The word achievement is very relative. When I look back I feel very happy that I could pursue a profession of my passion and have no regrets, God has been very kind.

**Q. What has been your biggest challenge so far in your career?**

**A.** This profession of acting itself is challenging. Its full of uncertainties. But your focus and passion for this art makes you ignore all these hurdles and you make your journey more interesting by learning about your craft at every stage.

**Q. Is there a certain procedure you follow while preparing for a role?**

**A.** I take up any character, given to me, with open mind, then I read the script again and again and again. Absorbing the written words, digging the meaning in between the written lines, understanding the mind of the character and discussions with the director about his interpretation of this character also how he wants to present it, (this is important). It is very necessary that you be on the same page with your director. He is the one who has been working on the project, he will always have a vision for this character and an actor needs to gel with it, of course he can always give his inputs as per his understanding of the character but ultimately, he must not move away from the basic vision of the director though he can always enhance it with his performance. Yes, there can be exceptions, so an actor should be prepared for all kind of situations.



**Q. Which according to you is a more challenging field, working in movies for the big screen or theatre?**

**A.** Performing live on stage or in front of camera for any actor is a joy. One just has to adapt to these two different mediums. In both the mediums you can be very natural in your portrayal of the character the only difference is the degree of projection. On stage you are projecting upto the last row in the auditorium, so you need to perform to meet this requirement, while in front of camera your smallest gesture can be recorded effectively.

**Q. What message would you like to give to aspiring artists?**

**A.** This is a wonderful profession to be in but one needs to be very honest to oneself before plunging in it. Only desire will not be enough, one must know one's capabilities for the art and then the capacity for the hard work required to achieve one's desire. Learn, learn and learn your craft, its a never ending process. To realize one's passion you should be prepared to sacrifice various temptations in the life. When you get into it knowing the demands of this great craft, I will always say all the best go and achieve your goal.



## Mr. Hemant Choudhary

Actor

Hemant Choudhary (born June 5, 1981, Mumbai, Maharashtra) is an Indian actor who appears in Hindi serials and films. He is best known for his roles in the serials Jhansi Ki Rani, Veer Shivaji, Siya Ke Ram, Thapki Pyar Ki, Main Maike Chali Jaungi Tum Dekhte Rahiyo, Namah Lakshmi Narayan and more.

**Q. When did you find out that acting is what you wish to pursue in life?**

**A.** While I was in Delhi in the late 90s, I realized I can only do acting and nothing else.

**Q. How would you describe the evolution of acting throughout the years in the industry?**

**A.** I think you learn everyday because nobody is perfect, this whole life itself is a learning process to me, since my 1st assignment till today I am trying to learn my craft through various mediums like web series (Indian and overseas), films (Indian and Overseas) and more.

**Q. What are you currently working on?**

**A.** I am doing an unnamed project for Yash Raj Films and a web series named Dongri To Dubai for Amazon Prime (Excel Media).

**Q. How many films have you been a part of so far and what has been your favorite?**

**A.** I don't count the films I've worked in but I have worked in a dozen of movies mainly Border, Once Upon A Time In Mumbai-1, Azhar and Blank.

My favorite is OUATIM-2 because I only played a small part that became so popular that still people ask me about that scene.

**Q. Do you think that there's a shortcut to becoming a famous actor?**

**A.** I feel sad sometimes because of one or two daily soaps the channel and the media may unnecessarily make someone a star overnight but let me be honest, there is no shortcut when it comes to acting. If you want to be known for a long period, you have to slog and give constant commendable performances.

**Q. What do you think has been your biggest achievement so far?**

**A.** I don't know how can one count someone's greatest achievement but according to me, as I have been working as an actor in this industry for past 20 years, I would call it a big achievement in itself.

**Q. What has been your biggest challenge so far in your career?**

**A.** I assume my biggest challenge is to be able to survive in this industry without any prior family film background.

**Q. Is there a certain procedure you follow while preparing for a role?**

**A.** I do sometimes according to the demand of the script but mostly I obey what my Director tells me like a student.

**Q. Which according to you is a more challenging field, working in movies for the big screen or theatre?**

**A.** I think every medium requires hard-work, they both have pros and cons but it's important that you are passionate while working for both.

**Q. What message would you like to give to aspiring artists?**

**A.** Never go for shortcuts, your perseverance and consistent effort with passion will only give you dividend.

## Ms. Manini De

### Actress

Manini De is an Indian film and TV actress who rose to stardom by playing the role of Katiya in *Sssshhh...Koi Hai*, the horror TV Series on STAR Plus, Pari Kapadia in Sony Entertainment Television's popular serial, *Jassi Jaissi Koi Nahin*. She is also well known for her role as Dr. Sonali Barwe in *C.I.D.*



Q. How did you start your journey as an actor?

A. To start off I was never one of those people who wanted to be an actor because my mother was a bureaucrat, so I thought that I would become an archaeologist, or I would probably be getting into the civil services. I have my own set up but acting was not even on the periphery of you know my imagination. I was a particularly good mimic, and I was a very observant. And you know, I was very amused with people mostly. I think as a kid, I've lived half my life in books. You know, I am a voracious reader, so I used to think that all of these people are characters from a book of life. I was very amused with people basically. So, how did I become an actor was basically destiny's choice for me. Honest to God I did not even know that this path was chosen for me. And I'm ever so glad that destiny held my hand and brought me to this point. Because I could entertain people and bring a smile to somebody's face and live out various multiple lives in one lifetime. So, Miss Delhi happened for me in '93 and Miss India in '94, I came back with a crown. As in the subsidiary event which was Miss Congeniality and Miss Personality of the year.

After that somebody known as Ms. Rashmi Dhirmani who is a very well-known producer and choreographer for Delhi picked me up for a show called *Manasi* which was a woman's issue-based show, rights, lifestyle, and issue-based show.

And from there on my journey with television started.

. And then very filmy story, a friend of mine was an AG on a show called *Vapalas* or was it *Akansha*, sorry it was years ago for television. The girl who was supposed to come in who was a model just did not turn up and he panicked. I used to model at that time, and he said please can you help me with this. So, I was like listen I do not act and all that. He said just give it a try, we need a hot looking and a pretty girl who's well-spoken. I reached there and my first co-actor is Harsh Chaya, Titu Gidwani and Krithika Desrai. Everybody I looked up to. I don't know what magic happened but the divine channelled through me and there was a soliloquy in the witness stand. And in one take it just went and I cried real tears. I didn't even know what was happening to me. And as a kid I used to go to All India Radio with my mom. My mother was a past academy winner. She was a novelist, she had 13 novels to her credit. So, any of radio plays used to happen I would just tag along with her. And that's how my journey with radio started. At 8 or so, I would do radio plays just for the love of it. I wanted to hear how I sound on the mike. I was so tiny, they used to put me on a stool and put the headphones. So, my romance with this started when I was 7 years old. I had no idea where this was going to take me.

So, that is how my journey started and my first break came when I was in Delhi. It was a show called *Bhawat* which was very well-known show for Sony. It was a crime-based show, I think. I got an opportunity to play various characters. And then there was *Amma and family* which was the series with the very legendary late Gaurav Seghal. And I went in for an episode and she looked at me and said you're very pretty and you emote very well. You know, you become the character, you know you should pursue. And I was like wow. Interestingly her granddaughter is one of my closest friends without me knowing that. So, life has been amazingly magical. Maybe life is a 70mm picture. Not a dull moment and I met lot of interesting people through my journey of being an actor. I still think it's just the tip of the iceberg that I've touched. There's a lot more to be allotted to me. So, every day is a first day for me. I never take my craft for granted.

**Q. How is it like to win Indian telly award for best actress in a comic role?**

**A.** Honestly, I was gob smacked. Honest to God, and I'm not lying about it. I was, if you saw my expression anybody sees that footage is like what happened to her. I didn't have any expectation and people told me that you're so good, your comic timing is fantastic, and your expressions are amazing. And I used to be like, thank you so much, they're so kind to me but I never thought that I would get this award. And the footage is, case in point to say "What? Huh?" meaning and my colleague Rachanda has to say "Mana, did you get an award?". And my acceptance speech was amazing because I said "Thank you to all the people who criticized me and who did not believe in me. This is dedicated to you because of you, I had to work extra hard. And I dedicate this to all the naysayers who didn't believe in my talent. Who called me this, that or the other. Thank you so much.

I hope this is a visiting reply to all of you. And I said you took long to come, and the entire crowd was laughing, and I didn't mean it like that. So, everybody is like, she's a mad girl which I'm very proud of. I'm happy, I'm somebody who is in the momentum of life, loving everything that is happening. I'm very savage it's second nature to me and I can't help it. What can I do? I meet people like that if I'm not savage, I might die myself. And I think humour is my weapon. It's my weapon to live life with sanity. You have to be a bit really insane in this world. That is the way I look at it. If you are not a little insane then people will make you insane. So instead, it's better if I just become insane first. And the good thing is that I don't take myself seriously which I think is a huge blessing and it has come from my parents especially from my mother who was a very accomplished writer, a very successful bureaucrat.

My father was from a good family and my mother was from a very renowned lawyer's family. So, her uncle was one of the first chief justices of India if I'm not mistaken. So, the lineage in both the sides was so illustrious I thought what was I doing here? I came here by mistake at the wrong time. And my friends really make fun of me because I'm like I have to go somewhere else they must have made a mistake. For me humour is especially important in life basically. I worked very hard, but I didn't know what I was going to get. Of course, everybody likes awards, and everybody likes recognition, but I don't keep that in mind, and I do my work from my heart. Do it but do it with honour that people say that this is love, this is passion for you work.



**Q. What has changed since you began your career in the performing arts industry?**

**A.** lot has changed in terms of the content that's coming out unfortunately it's becoming very regressive. I would have thought it would have become more progressive because when I came to Bombay in 2001, I think amazing television happened before that and amazing television was happening at that time. I think somewhere our thought of being a catalyst in changing society and making a change somewhere got compromised. And we started pandering to what had worked, the algorithm that worked, we just kept on doing that and that saddens me a lot because whenever a new concept comes up in three months it goes away. Give it a chance, you say that audience is not ready for it.

So, I can't be always baby mother all the time or I can't be a witch all the time. I'm a good mix of both. So little fellow solicitor little savage is necessary. If you eat something sweet you get diabetes and if you eat something bitter you feel nauseous. So, it has to be right balance between the two. So, I don't understand this negative positive. It is a character; it is a particular aspect of a human being. We all have it. I see everything as an adventure basically and every character is very amusing for me so I would do it with so much conviction and love that it has to be the best in my eyes. In that sense I would make it larger than life like you've been given this opportunity so how to make it the best. So, I play with it. I start enjoying the process and of course I cut chords with the character once I'm done with it. So, every character that I've done. Every character whether it was small, big, known or unknown I don't care a bit of my soul has been left behind with that character. If you are not honest and do not infuse it with that earnestness that character will never ever be able to come through and my job as an actor, as a performer is to bring to life the writer's vision. That is my damn job and if I can't do that and I'm saying that's it. I must tell you about this one time that one time lot of actors were sitting around me and each one was talking and I have great regard and respect for drama school actors because they have the skills and the training and the entire process of going through drama school. And they were all talking and they said, "What school are you from?". Now being who I am I turned around and I said I'm from NSD. They said "You're also from drama school. We knew you must be from drama school". And then they suddenly said "What batch?".

?" I said, "Ok, guys before we go any further, I need to clarify something, I'm from the natural school of drama batch of life. And there was silence and I cannot pretend that I feel like I didn't feel like doing a little dance there. I saw myself dancing in my mind of course. So, everybody looks at me like and then they started laughing and they were like "What, this is cool". I was like "Yeah" because I am not letting anybody make me feel small. I don't give that power to anybody anymore and I've been through that process where like people have really belittled me and have said horrible nasty things about my looks, my body which you have no right to but you can't stop people right and various things they've said to me. I have always believed in like Satguru says and I study with Satguru that every stone thrown at you use it to make your home. Anybody who say's anything I always say interesting perspective but I don't receive it. I will take constructive criticism but I will not take envious nonsense that means you're trying to level up with me and that's your problem. My only competition is me. I look up to actresses or performers who are amazing but I never feel lesser. I have that much of confidence in me "If you give me any job then I'll do it from the heart". But don't put me as somebody else, I'm not a clone I'm a very unique person. Don't try to put me in a box because that is not going to work. So, very feisty for being in an industry like this, which is my bloodline, I can't help it. I'm not here to earn the praises of anybody. So, very nicely my mother used to say, "You have to like yourself enough, that the praises of others are extra". You shouldn't be hinging on it and I personally have struggled with that for years and that's the reason I studied to be a therapist whereby I try to help people with low self-esteem or lack of self-love because I'm a living example of that. So, all this confidence that people see in me wasn't there always. Through acting I've also tried to help people realise their strengths. The acting for me is not just a means for making money. Of course, it is but it's also a means of instilling aspiring people.

Through my workshops I try to touch life, I do my workshop with children, I do my workshop in EQ, I do workshops in confidence and my only aim in life is to be able to touch lives, feel lives, lift lives. All this pain is very beautiful, it's very ephemeral, it can go. So, I have to use this platform to actually help people, that's very important for me. Maybe that's why God gave me this, you know, I see it as very divinely ordained thing. That I'm here because God wanted to give me a voice to be able to be a voice for somebody who's not got a strong enough voice. It's a blessing rather than a privilege for me.

**Q. So, what's challenging about bringing a script to life?**

**A.** First, completely surrendering to a character which is not to say that like a mule. To understand and not judge the character because we as human beings have this tendency of judging. And it is a part and parcel that we come with. It is to genuinely believe in the character and their motivation, their history, their context, why they are doing what they're doing. I want to know that why they have become the way they have, what are their motivations for what they are doing. I ask those kinds of questions. But once those are kind of put at rest I completely surrender to the character. I remember, again I will quote my mother "Be like water" and that kind of really helped me as an actor. So, I'm not one of those actors, my work is to translate the vision onto celluloid. So, it's necessary that I have to understand what my director's vision is. Unless it's something so stupid that's illogical which is "willing suspension of disbelief" in English literature. It's a middle path but honestly somebody who totally surrenders to their character and for me that's a good process.

How do you know audience is not ready for it? Give it time, audience is ready for a lot. So, I feel that this is just to tell yourself that stay in your safe zone. It's a known formula so I really respect and I bow my head to creators who stick to their conviction and stick it out. That's a really big talk. Somebody like Tony has always stuck to their conviction and that's why I have immense respect for them. So, makers who believe in what they make and there are many of them. Second, I think attitude has to be very different. Everything is about Instagram like casting is based on Instagram which I'm sorry but I think it's like the weirdest measure of somebody's talent. I'm sorry but I don't get it. How does a person's Instagram following determine their talent as an actor? Please let me know the collation or correlation between the two because I don't understand. And everybody's a celebrity today like seriously it's a slander I feel like it's an abuse. And people who call themselves celebrities I'm like seriously get a life for yourself. Go to Mars or something or go to Pluto because you can call yourself a celebrity like wow and what does it even mean.

. It's crazy and I don't understand what is going on here and faces come and suddenly disappear you know they'll be all over and they'll be nowhere. For me consistency is the name of the game. When you can consistently keep evolving as a performer believing in your talent and working on it not taking it for granted.



Sorry, that doesn't work me. So, these changes I'm seeing and also in attitude like the quality of people. The director's one has worked with and I'm very blessed to have worked with amazing directors throughout my career. The newer ones, the older ones you know like the ones who are coming in. I've actually been very lucky. So, I would say the quality of content and the approach to work has become more business-like. Where is the creativity because I'm not able to see it at all. Everything's about the numbers where is the passion for your work? I think I have to live with that. So, call me old world I don't care about that but I genuinely believe when your work is like worship, it should be a calling. It shouldn't be like let's just do a 9-5 which is alright as everyone needs money but it has a kind of divinity attached to it at least for me, I speak for myself.

There is a certain amount of sacredness to your work. It's not something that you just make money out of it. All your heart is in there that's very important for me. So that heartfulness I don't see you know copy paste is going like let's just do something. That kind of upsets me but okay that's the way right now maybe it'll change. Change is the only constant and I'm somebody who's very adaptive. You put me wherever and I'll adapt so easily that you'll think that I was from there only. That is the Guru mantra in life that whichever situation you have to adapt to it and it's not easy. And this does not happen with everyone which I used to think happened with everybody. Patience levels has also decreased in people. Now shows that used to go on for years it's a big deal if it goes on for months. Don't know what's going to happen tomorrow. There is not enough time given for the audiences to actually digest it and for people to understand what it is. I think business aside it's sacredness should not go away. How do balance that? I'm not a producer so I wouldn't know that. But definitely content is king, has been king and will be king. No actor is above the content, no actor is bigger than the story. For me the character is what it is. People fall in love with characters they don't fall in love with actor, that's a secondary thing. It's the character that you have to infuse so much of soul into that the people falls in love with the character even if it's a negative character. What is negative or positive? It's about the reality of life. I could be one part angel one part witch because we all are.





There's such beautiful dialogues and I got a lot of chances to say a lot of funny dialogues so Dugga Dugga came to me in my meditation. When I was naming the writers asked me can you please come up with a catchphrase for your character because she's such a powerful character and I was in meditation. I do transcendental meditation and immediately the one sound I heard during my meditation was Dugga Dugga. In Orissa and Bengal, a manner of speaking like when people say 'namaste' or when someone is on the go Dugga Dugga meaning be fine in the name of the goddess I bless you. So that just came, and it became so hugely popular, everywhere on my set, outside at airports when I was travelling. I didn't even realize that my dialogues would become very popular which again the credit goes to my writers. So, I would say I work as a team and I'm not a solitary player. I have a lot of sympathy that I'm a team player and I play very hard. I'm very competitive in nature when it comes to giving my sessions like I still remember playing football with the boys and I would see to it that I beat them.

Interesting, never thought about it. I don't know, good question. Should I ask my daughter, maybe she'll be able to help. I haven't ever thought about it that please write a book on your life because your life is so interesting. Somebody who's really feisty, somebody who's got the right mix of placidity and feistiness. Somebody who's very rooted, very grounded, somebody who is very real to her craft. I heard this quote somewhere that "Life is like a tightrope or a bed of feathers" and the answer was I'd rather walk a tight rope. I think in one sentence it would be an actress who's very awake finally rising herself. Somebody who's very aware of who she is. Somebody like Tabu actually, I love Tabu. I'm a huge fan of hers and the day I meet her I'm probably just going to hug her and just keep hugging her because I find her to be a very beautiful human being. It's amazing, she's all of these various dichotomies, she's these various polarities and she's all there. She's all woman and that for me is very important and she doesn't hide her flaws. I'm awfully fabulous. I think that will be written on my tombstone.

**Q. Is it easier to play a character or to be yourself on stage?**

**A.** I am myself even when I play those characters, I infuse a bit of me in those, right. And it's a bit boring to be yourself all the time. I rather be somebody else. I have that privilege in that sense where I can be somebody else so why don't I take up that opportunity. End of the day, it's a transaction between the character and the actor. The character comes a bit into the actor. There is some amount of symbiotic movement happening between them because the character comes to life. It's as if a writer is writing and suddenly the ink falls into place and they come to life. So, I am a huge Disney fan. I'm a huge animation fan. We were on paper and suddenly we get oxygen inside, the spirit into form. I don't see myself as that important, of course we are. We eventually translate things but I have a very different way of processing which people find very interesting. Of course, which is that the divine starts channeling through us. And I think it's the moment of magic between action and cut. For me, it's more spiritual process for me. I don't know how to answer this question and people ask me how did you do this thing. I'm like I don't know myself how it happened and it's not false humility. Something magic happened but what happened I don't know.

It's modesty but there are times when I don't know how the magic is happening. I'm a very instinctive and intuitive actor and I follow my gut apart from director's directions. If my gut says move, if my gut says sit down, I follow my gut say's something else, I follow my gut. That time itself everything starts processing in my body and my brain and it's like a live alchemy session happening within myself. And I'm talking to you, it should feel like I'm talking to you individually. That is the kind of power that God is given me right. So, when people used to say when we watch you that you're so natural it's like talking to us. I said but that's my job isn't it. When people say "When you do something it look like you're acting so when do you act?", I said that's it that is my biggest compliment that a non-trained actor can get, thank you so much. That means I've convinced you that I'm not acting. People feel like when I'm doing a scene that I talk like this only because the character talks like this only.

**Q. What is your favorite dialogue?**

**A.** There's so many. It has been 20 years that if I work in Delhi and I have spoken a lot of dialogues. I don't even remember and sometimes I have said dialogues that I've fallen I love with that I didn't want to get out of that moment. There was a beautiful show called Ashidva which was on DD1 one of the topmost shows and my friend Rajat Dyas. He's a fabulous writer and he speaks the language of my soul. As a friend he understands and some of his dialogues which were that I can't recall right now but speaking them felt like I've reached somewhere else.

Even Kuch Toh Hai, there were some dialogues which were so beautiful. For example, I'm a big fan of poetry and philosophy. I told you that I came from the wrong planet at the wrong time. I should have been born during Rumi's time because my thinking is like that. There was a dialogue I don't know what show where I did a cameo with Aneri Vajani. She's one of my favorite actresses. Shriti and Aneri are one of my favorite actresses, I love these girls. Personally, also I love them and otherwise also. And there was a line where "Is aadme ne mujhe kisse se pyaar karne layak nahi choda" meaning This man did not leave me to love anyone and the way she performed. I just looked at her and said "Oh My God" and that scene did not require me to cry but that moment between Aneri and me if I can call it surreal, spiritual, it was. We just kept looking at each other and there's something that it was like a shift between the two of us.





Q. What's the last thing you do before you step out on stage or the curtain goes up?

A. I say a prayer. Before I start anything, I always say "Baba, please channel through me". I'm a huge fan of Sai Baba. All my editors are very amused with me because I fold my hands, shut my eyes, look at the mic or wherever I am I say "Baba, please channel through me, come through me today I need to this and I need to do a good job". And it's a very sacred moment for me and once I finish, I say "Thank you so much for coming through me and I love you."

Q. Any advice you would like to share with a theatre aspirant?

My only advice is always to be open to learning and unlearning, it's very important. Actually, it's more important to unlearn than learn. Please unlearn what you think you have learned because when there is no space how will you learn new things. If your forehead is so full that you will never learn in life. Yes, I know. If you know then everyone won't be able to help like this. Be a curious 6-year-old. Be childlike and not childish. I do not like adults that are childish, that's my pet peeve. I would think be childlike, have the ability to unlearn, have humility to understand that there is a lot that you can work on yourself and the fourth and the most important thing is don't be delusional. Please, don't lie to yourself. The day when you lie to yourself, that is the beginning of the end.

Trace your shadow, embrace your flaws and know that this is your journey on working on yourself. You chose this karma to better yourself. Try to make the world a better place through your performance. You are an active agent of change. Please use this to be a catalyst of change, to touch lives. Eventually that is your biggest award. For me, that's the biggest award when somebody comes up to me and says that "you have made me smile when I was about to give up". And please don't give so much self-importance to yourself. Don't take yourself too seriously that is very important piece of advice I need to give you and be surrounded by people who help you in your growth process. People who make you question yourself and help you grow as an individual. And be vulnerable, it's very important.

And the last piece of advice is be authentic, do you, don't care about anybody who tries to change you. The things that are not working for you, work on them. There will be 50 million people telling you not good enough, I'm trying, at least I'm trying. Be very discerning about who you are, the minute you understand who you are nobody can minimize you. Don't give your power away to anybody, not to a man, not to a job, not to a situation. Find the solution and move ahead. If I can resonate with somebody at their soul level who I've never met then it feels that I'm on the right path.





## Mr. Jiten Lalwani

### Actor

Jiten Lalwani is an Indian film and television actor. He is best known for playing Kiran Virani on *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi*, Inder Kashyap in *Sasural Genda Phool*, and Samarjeet in *Naagin 3*. Jiten Lalwani made his television debut with Raman Kumar's TV series *Labella's*, which was telecast in 1994 on BI TV as *Café-18*. After that he has appeared in TV shows like *Vishnu Puran*, *Shatranj*, *Parampara*, *Hasratein*, *Kartavya* in 1990's, and then came *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi* in the year 2000 which is his most popular show.

#### Q. How did your journey as an actor begin?

A. I came to Mumbai in 1993 to be an actor, got my portfolio done, and started giving auditions. One day I gave an audition for a show called *Labella's* amongst 100's of boys and girls. I got lucky to be selected amongst them. This show was produced by Mr. Raman Kumar, and was telecast as *Café 18* in '94. As this was a college story, there were almost 40 boys and 30 girls in the cast and amongst them, Vidya Balan, Hiba Shah, Shweta Keswani, Divya Jagdale, Late Aashish Roy, Viqar Shaikh were also there. After that, I did many shows for Raman Ji like *Shatranj*, *Tara*, *Papa*, and *Raahat*. I also started working with well-known TV serial producer Manish Goswami and I did *Parampara*, *Karz*, and *Kartavya* for him. In total, I have done 70-75 shows.

#### Q. How is *Kahat Hanuman Jai Shri Ram* different from all the other serials you have done before?

A. KHJSR was an interesting show, portraying stories of Bal Hanuman. I played Kesari, Father of Hanuman, it was a very challenging role in terms of Execution, VFX, Makeup, and Costume, especially when you have to perform with a tail behind, say your lines with dentures in your mouth, and not to miss very heavy Crown on your head. Unfortunately, the show came to an early end due to Pandemic last year as there was a child artist involved in Channel and Producer who thought of his safety first.

#### Q. If you could choose, what three actors would you really want to work with?

A. Amitabh Bacchan  
Meryl Streep  
Leonardo Dicaprio

#### Q. How was your experience in *Yatri*? What did you learn from your debut as an actor?

A. *Yatri* was a play which was directed by Makarand Deshpande in 1993. I just came to Mumbai and got that play. Anurag Kashyap, Late Amit Mistry, Faisal Khan were my co-actors amongst many. KK Menon Sir was co-directing the play along with Mathan Deshpande Sir. That was my first experience on stage. I was having a small role but still I enjoyed and learned so much from all of them. After that, I did around 8-10 plays like *Sabse bada rupaiya*, *Baat Baat mein bigade haalat*, *Dil hai ki manta nahin*, *Mera naam Joker*.

#### Q. What is the scariest part of an audition? Share some tips and tricks to overcome the fear.

A. There is nothing to fear, you just have to prepare well. The most important thing is that you should understand your character first and then learn your lines.

Whatever character you have been given, bring all the characteristics of that character into your own personality and try to become that person, so when you go in front of the camera be confident and be fearless as the camera catches everything. Also, never be in a hurry and never go for an audition with your friend or family or boyfriend or girlfriend. Always be punctual, be polite, be gentle, follow all the rules of the studio and never be in a hurry when you reach the audition hall, keep ample time for it. All the best.

#### Q. What do you love most about your job?

A. There are many things but the best part would be you get a chance to become a new character in every show or in every movie, so you get to live so many lives in one life, that is the best part of being an actor besides recognition and love of your audience and fans.

#### Q. What is the hardest part of being an actor?

A. Waiting I suppose. First for the right break and once you have made it, sometimes you will have to wait in the green room for your shot, so you have to have a lot of patience in this job. So, my advice is to use that time constructively, keep learning your lines by rehearsing them till the lines become part of you, and try to be in your character throughout, don't disturb anyone by talking loudly or by playing loud music.

#### Q. What has been your favorite film recently and why?

A. Recently, I watched this show called *Serpent* which was based on Charles Shobhraj's life. I really loved that show, it was a very well performed and very well executed show. I also liked *Ajeeb Daastans Loved* all four stories but the one with Konkana Sen (Geeli Puchi) I enjoyed the most, Konkana has done a phenomenal job, I just loved her.

#### Q. What are some of the traits an actor must possess?

A. It's a very demanding thing to be an actor, you need to have a lot of patience and you have to be always on your toes, as there is cutthroat competition in this field so follow a strict diet, workout regularly, train your memory, be always positive, take care of your skin & hair and most important keep improving your acting skills, and learn something new every time you get an opportunity or time, also watch good movies, read good books and never ever sit idle.

#### Q. What would your message be to an aspiring actor?

A. Don't get into bad habits, avoid toxins, avoid toxic people and toxic thoughts. Believe in yourself, keep working towards your goal. Nothing is impossible in this world even the word itself says I'm possible. All the Best. Loads of Love and Success to you all.



## Dr. Deepti Trivedi

Vice President

T Series StageWorks Academy / GKFTII

T Series Educational Wing

She is the Vice President of the T-Series Educational Wing, Her brilliancy and leadership is the support system for the entire T-Series Educational Wing. Having a very rich experience of around 20+ years in academics, business development, and the media industry; Dr. Deepti Trivedi attained many milestones in her professional career. With her relentless efforts towards achieving the goals, T-Series StageWorks Academy is continuously growing and reaching new heights.

**Q. Can Performing Arts opt for a professional Career? What are the available options?**

**A.** History bears the testimony that artists have shunned their studies and could not even be confined in the sophisticated office cabins. People have chosen Performing Arts as their career and have brought laurels not only to their families but to the nation as well. This is a field of endless opportunities and scope. Right Direction and training lead to the development of skills in a professional context. Moreover, the OTT platforms have given a chance to the aspirants to be globally known artists.

**Q. What all has changed since Covid-19 in the world of Performing arts?**

**A.** The pandemic does have affected the field in an indescribable and unprecedented way as months of rehearsals and booked venues suddenly stared into oblivion. Obviously, there are no live shows. But, it is worth mentioning that this is the only field that has been affected by the pandemic in a minimal manner. The digital mediums have kept the fires of the soul burning and have paved the way for new opportunities for artists to showcase their talents. With improved digital competencies, technology embracement, and keeping abreast of the latest innovations, the industry is and could further propel to greater heights.

**Q. How important is training to choose Performing Arts as a profession?**

**A.** The right kind of training is the key to success in the field. What is more important is the selection of the right place to get the training. In the era of cutthroat competition, proper training from appropriate institutes creates good professionals.

**Q. Has T-series Stageworks Academy moved to a digital platform for training?**

**A.** T-Series Stageworks Academy, School of Performing Arts is committed to providing the best to its students with every possible means under all circumstances. As per the need of the hour, the Academy has embraced the latest digital platforms to provide e-learning to the students. Not only in India but also globally, the Academy is conducting specialized Virtual Workshops and running batches of various courses for International performers and aspirants.

**Q. Have you ever had to handle a difficult conflict in your career? What did you learn from it?**

**A.** Every day brings with it new challenges. I will not name any single. It is important not to lose hope and use them as stepping stones. Positivity always motivates me to enjoy the challenges.

**Q. What do you claim to be your greatest achievement?**

**A.** I firmly believe that each day brings in new possibilities. I am yet to achieve my greatest accomplishment.

**Q. What do you enjoy most about Performing Arts?**

**A.** All the performing arts are an edge over the other. They are expressions. But personally, I am more into music.

**Q. Any message you'd like to share with a performing arts aspirant so they can achieve their goal?**

**A.** Never give up and grieve. Right efforts in the right direction, stubbornness to excel and exceed, and perpetual passion will ultimately lead to success.



## Shaiphali Saxena

Co-founder, Angel's Music Academy

The founder of Angel's Music Academy, Shaiphali Saxena is a young entrepreneur who from a very young age is active in the field of music training. Being actively involved in the field of teaching since high school, Shaiphali's journey from a guitar tutor to becoming an audio engineer and music arranger has been quite exciting and challenging at the same time. After completing her graduation in Music from London's Trinity College, Shaiphali could have easily opted for a career in Music or Film Industry. However, her ambitions were something different and she enrolled for the diploma in sound engineering from A.R Rahman's KM Music Conservatory to learn the science and skills of music production.

**Q. Tell us about your journey in music?**

**A.** I started learning music when I was in 10th as I was suffering from migraine, my doctors suggested me to join music classes, so I joined nearby but that was my turning point & somehow my parents were happy that I chose music. Later I went to KM for further studies & completed my Music business diploma from Berklee & cleared the Apple certification exam. After pursuing my education, I came back to my city Jaipur & started my institute with 1 store room & at the time things started changing when Hritisha Rewadia joined and made that 1 store room to a 3 story building together soon we both started many business together. We both are quite famous for our sister duo. Now we both successfully run angel's and expanded it in various other art forms. So now Angel's Music Academy is Angel's Visual and Performing Arts.

**Q. How did you come up with the concept of Angel's Music Academy?**

**A.** Post her diploma in sound engineering from prestigious AR Rehman Institute, Shaiphali went on to found Angels Music Academy through her hard work and sheer dedication. It was during the summer of 2016 that I conceptualized the idea of opening the music institute along with her sister. Although the idea seemed quite desirable initially, funding the venture was something that made her quite uneasy.

Belonging to a middle-class family, founding the academy was not an easy task from any stretch of the imagination. But being a determined and strong-willed person that that I am, I endured testing times and toiled hard to collect funds for the venture.

It is during this time she along with his brother sold newspapers to collect almost 600 Rs to fund the venture. Since then, there has been no looking back and now she earns approximately 90 Lacs per annum, which itself is inspiring for millions of girls.

Q. Do you have a favorite venue to perform in? If yes, why?

A. I like to perform in open concerts and in opera theaters. This brings me to life. But my all time comfortable space to sing, practice, and try creativity is my "Opera Hall" in Angel's Visual and Performing Arts, my college (I'm its founder & director along with Shaiphali)

Q. Who are your favorite musicians and why?

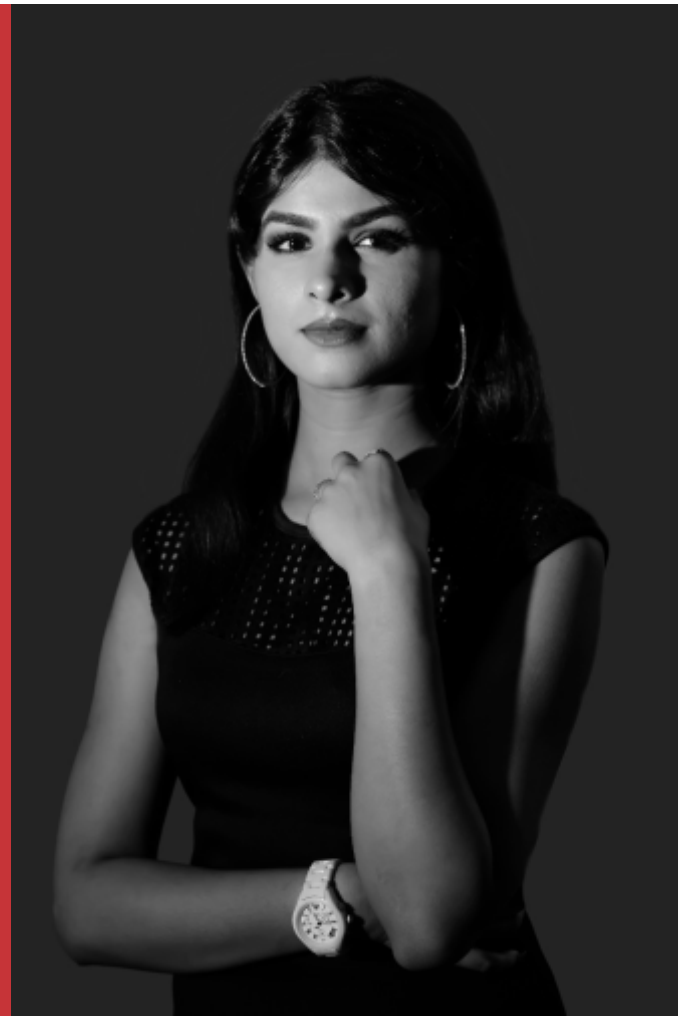
A. I follow many musicians worldwide and most of them are my favorites because every musician is unique and I get to learn a lot from each of them.

Q. What is your definition of success?

A. Success has a different definition for every person according to their perspectives. According to me, success is when I'll be happy and when I'll be able to make my country proud & help people around. It will be when I can say that yes, we are no less than any other country in variable art forms, including Opera.

Q. What do you consider to be the most important ideas and concepts to impart to aspiring musicians?

A. The only concept to do something new is believe in yourself & don't wait for opportunities, create them. And the only concept is "the only way to do great work is to love what you do." Its an incredibly famous quote I follow in my life.





## Hritisha Rewadia

### Opera Queen of Rajasthan

Hritisha Rewadia known as the Opera queen of Rajasthan was born and brought up in Jaipur. She holds many records for breaking glass by her voice and, also know for finest opera singer of India, in 2019 she was honoured by Bollywood singer Ankit Tiwari for the India's finest opera and western singer.

From her childhood days she participated in many singing competition and won many awards. When she was in 12th she decided to pursue singing as a full-time career. She joined Angel's Music Academy and took professional training from her mentor turns into sister Shaiphali Saxena. By her hard work she cleared grade 8 in western classical opera and rock and pop from Trinity college of music, London.

She is now the founder of Moksha records, the record label company and "The show" singing talent hunt. She is also the managing director of Angel's. She performed opera in front of almost each and every Bollywood celebrity. Recently she won the title of Best singer for the song "Jewels and fame" which was produced by Shaiphali Saxena, written and composed by the student of Angels Music Academy- Komal Panvar.

**Q. Who or what inspired to build a career in Opera?**

**A.** I always knew within that I had to do something unique in my life, although didn't know what that would be. And when I decided to make career into music 5 years back, I met my music teacher Shaiphali Saxena and she acknowledged me with various different subjects in music and that was the moment when I knew I wanted to go into Opera Culture.

**Q. What have been the greatest challenges in your career so far?**

**A.** Challenges are faced everyday of our lives as we learn new things and try them everyday. I am courageous enough to not to be scared for the things which nobody has done & don't underestimate myself based on other people's opinion. But do not confuse challenge with struggle coz I do not believe in struggle, but to achieve things by our own hardwork, knowledge & confidence.

**Q. Which performance are you most proud of?**

**A.** May it be a crowd of 10,000 people or just 10, I always give my best in each and every performance. And everytime I show something new to my audience and always sing opera for them along with their country language, and this is the moment of my performance which is closest to me when they appreciate opera the most.

**Q. How do you make your repertoire choices from season to season?**

**A.** I always love to change my repertoire every time I'm in concerts & these changes are based on people's choices and the will to introduce new art forms to people listening to me and hope they love it. I do not want to sound boring, & because of this reason I also get the chance to improve myself and increase my library.





**Q. What do you feel your biggest achievement?**

A. Dada saheb Phalke film festival award for the song jewels and fame.

**Q. What do you wish you'd known at the start of career?**

A. I always believed in knowledge. It is a greatest power which should be taken from anywhere we can. So today also the only things I crave for is knowledge.

**Q. Can you describe the challenges you had to face when you started your journey?**

A. We learn lifetime, thankfully my parents supported a lot in choosing music & sound engineering as my fulltime career, so I got the proper training & awareness from the beginning and faced every challenge with courage and positivity.

**Q. What could a musician keep in mind to stand out when they're going for an audition?**

A. Be confident, be prepared and then don't attach your hopes to the results coz you'll be wasting time and loosing other opportunities waiting for that 1 result. The world is never enough!

**Q. What advice would be on top of your list for an aspiring musician?**

A. I do not believe in keeping backups, because somewhere in our subconscious mind they make us weak on what we are doing. Then we rely on our backup with the thought that is this cannot happen I can go to my backup. Do whatever you want with full courage and believe in yourself that you can do it without changing your law of attraction towards other things.





## Mr. Rajan Chawla

Founder, Phoenix Theatre

Rajan Chawla is a director, actor, instructor, writer and theatre-in-educational theatre practitioner. He started his professional career in 1999, playing and conducting countless plays. He specializes in training actors and teaching drama as a school subject. An actor, teacher, writer and director for two decades, he has taught numerous successful actors in the fields of film, television and theatre. Mr. Chawla has co-authored a book entitled "Playing for real" which is an invaluable resource for actors and educators.

Presently he is the director of Phoenix Theatre-In-Education Company- the team is working towards the goal of reinventing learning through theatre. His is associated with a number of prestigious schools throughout India to develop innovative ways to bring theatre in classrooms, communities and on stage. He has written and directed numerous play productions for children and adults in a variety of styles such as proscenium, musical, mime, dance drama, radio play, folk, and street theatre. His students have won numerous accolades at the state and national levels.

Q. How did you come up with the concept of Pheonix Theatre?

A. In 2006 it all started with the initiative to give children and adults a platform to express their opinions and explore life in a non-threatening environment i.e., Theatre-In-Education Workshops. From the simplest task to the most complex calculation of the mathematics, how we learn has always mystified scientists, artists, and philosophers. However, it has been proven that children (and adults) learn best by doing and experiencing. Those interested in the mysteries of learning have looked at theatre to provide clues into the mechanics of learning process. Through theatre, learning becomes playful, leaving a lasting imprint on the total personality of the learner. Now it's been 15 years, the Phoenix comprises a team of qualified and dedicated actors, directors, drama teachers and playwrights who make education the focus of their work.

Q. How would you describe your style of training?

A. It's completely opposite to chalk and talk method! I am not in the favor of approach where teacher plays the jug and students are mugs in the classroom. Theatre means freedom of expression. Acting is all about getting under the skin of a character and behaving according to the given situation. To learn how to prepare for a role an actor goes through a process of characterization and before jumping the gun, self-awareness is especially important because the closest person or character to an actor is himself. If one knows himself then understanding and role-playing other characters become uncomplicated. An Actor must be given the time and space to discover his potential.



**Q. In your creative process, which part do you enjoy least? Why? How do you tackle it?**

**A.** Theatre is creative process and being involved in creativity is transcending and thriving. I cherish every aspect of it whether it's teaching actors, playwrighting, direction, sets, lights, costume designing or whatever. Theatre is like a sport, a group game that calls for teamwork, punctuality, and discipline. When you are working in a play, every member is as significant as the lead actor and every workshop is important because it leads to next level of development, if an actor is perpetually being absent or late for the rehearsals then that jeopardize the process and his chance in the production.

**Q. During your career, have you ever received a particularly insightful piece of criticism? When and what did it say? What made it especially important for you?**

**A.** Ah, so many! You learn every day because mistakes are the best teacher and to be creative, we need to lose our fear of making mistakes. Recently I've been told that I don't promote or market Phoenix, but for me, business and art don't go hand in hand.

**Q. Who inspires you and why?**

**A.** My Guru Mr. Barry John has always been a source of inspiration. I consider myself lucky to have been trained directly by him. I remember in 1999 when I started learning from him, I was shy but, in a few months, I could feel the metamorphosis in me. While I worked with him for so many years, I watched his theatre work change the lives of many students.

**Q. What is your greatest achievement?**

**A.** When I see my students grow and develop as artists and confident individuals, so every day there is a feeling of accomplishment. It's great to see them experiment, improvise, go off the beaten track and learn more about their bodies, voices and minds.

**Q. What do you like most about the theatre?**

**A.** Theatre is rehearsal of life! That's where life is! Drama compasses everything, you get to explore, experience and express all the emotions, various issues and topics related to self, family, education and society.

**Q. Any advice you'd like to share with a theatre aspirant?**

**A.** If you are passionate about it then you must pursue it because that is going to give you happiness. But patience and perseverance are also required with passion. I keep getting enquiries saying "How will I get the big break in Bollywood?" Most actors aspire to work in films or web series but they need to understand that it takes time and effort to be confident enough by going through the process of training and theatre experience so that finally they gain the awareness about the kind of approach they should have while portraying a character in front of camera.





## Mr. Vikas Bahari

### Founder, Prism Theatre

A young aspiring Delhi based graduated theatre practitioner. With more than a decade of experience in theatre with direction and acting in more than 20 plays. He is a Theatre diploma holder from the Madhya Pradesh School of Drama, Bhopal, 2011. He is the founder and artistic director of Prism Theatre Society. He inspires a new era of stage and theatre art for all.

He has conceived, written and directed many theatre plays and some of his famous plays are 'Ajnabi' based on Albert Camus French novel 'Stranger', 'Couple Trouble', 'Hatya Ek Akaar Ki' and his recent creation is 'Khidki' which is written, designed and directed by Vikas Bahari himself.

**Q. How did you come up with the concept of Prism Theatre?**

**A.** Prism came up with an idea that an equal ground would be provided to everyone. Where everyone gets an equal space. A space that could pave way for new thoughts, new people who want to do theatre. And even we the members who formed prism were doing all the things themselves. We were writing ourselves, figuring out a lot of things ourselves. All the young people, young actors who wanted to do the type of theatre that we thought wasn't happening around us. That in our sense we thought should be done but was not happening. On top of that when we started prism. At that time in Delhi theatre circle. It was just trend following.

Mostly people were doing comedy plays and repeating the same thing. No one was even trying to get into non/linear stories and realistic stories happening around you. Out on the streets, in the offices, even in our homes. No one was venturing into that and bringing it up in theatre. The concept of audience and ticketed shows wasn't much practical.

So eventually we ended up coming up with this space - Prism where even if you are new and less experienced but you have a thing to say, whether it's wrong or right, whatever it is, if prism ends up amplifying that voice, doing something to bring it out irrespective of right or wrong. The purpose would be served. The slightest of the contribution would have been a healthy beginning and we came a long way since then.

**Q. How would you describe your style of training?**

**A.** There are no fixed training routines. But yes, we have workshops where we try to include many people from different fields, from acting schools and other spheres of society that are interdependent. There is not any training but a constant process of learning where we try to learn from each other and from the experts too. Coming to style of acting, there is nothing specific again. But Everything follows the core concept of having equality in opportunity. There should not be any hierarchy, a space where one shouldn't feel that someone is superior or a better actor. Keeping in mind the aspects of theatre rather than just acting. Theatre is a vast thing, it is a lifestyle. It is not just acting. Acting is an exceedingly small part of it. There is an entire system of values, traditions, and techniques. That is why it is mostly more than acting. A collective learning experience.

**Q. Who inspires you and why?**

**A.** Inspiration has come up from so many people, so many teachers, so many senior theatre artists. Singling out and naming someone is not possible when it has been a lot of people who have inspired, whose work have inspired us to at least to something like them. And they continue to inspire, so inspiration is a constant.

Apart from this, theatre itself was a big motivation, the way theatre teaches you things, brings changes to your life and world. The way how theatre teaches to express, do, and accept different things. How it teaches you to absorb a lot of things around you. How it teaches you to understand a lot of thin and subtle things in the society. So, it is theatre that overall has inspired.

**Q. What is something you are most proud of?**

**A.** We are not proud to be honest but extremely happy how our journey has come up till now. The entire process and the journey have been overwhelming. So proud wd be a negative word but yes there have been little achievements like the shows we have done till now through prism, from last 8-10 years. The way they have been received by the audience all around the country. We have done so many shows, one of the good things is, the number of shows that we have done is a lot and all of them have been accepted by the audience around the country with similar passion. And mostly we have done plays written by us and fortunately they have come out exceptionally good every time. And collectively we have created a space out of nothing.

We did not have many facilities in the beginning but now we are at a point where we have a lot especially in Delhi. And now gradually we have moved to Mumbai as well, bringing our new-age theatre to Mumbai is satisfying. So, yes we are still learning and the only thing that we are happy is that yes we are able to do theatre in a way we want to and are also able to give an equal space to everyone. That is the only thing we strive for and is the only and the best achievement. We hope we continue to do so.

**Q. What Do You Like Most About the Theater?**

**A.** The thing about theatre is, that is not just a medium where you get on a stage and perform. That is just the visual part. Apart from that it is an entire value system, a cultural space, that transforms you for the good. You join theatre easily and, in a go, but theatre starts accepting you slowly and once it accepts you it won't leave you. Once theatre enters you it stays there forever. And one of the most beautiful things about theatre is, it makes you understand about equality and it teaches you about understanding others. Thinking just about oneself doesn't grow anything. When you sit in a group, you sit together, you eat together, you plan things together, and work as team overall then you understand how important everyone is. How important is each tiny contribution for big things to happen? So, if I had to conclude I feel the entire process of making a man a human overall is what theatre is. It's a school. There is no second opinion that if you really connect yourself to theatre, it will evolve you into a better human-being. But only if you are true about it.

**Q. Any advice you'd like to share with a theatre aspirant?**

**A.** The only advice is, everyone should do theatre and do it with all its heart and honesty. In our times a lot of things are a little not on the right track. This happens with every generation; people tend to find short ways to achieve bigger things. They are running in a rush of grabbing things faster. In theatre also new people tend to fancy just one aspect and they do crash courses and head to Mumbai, I feel they should slow down a little, wait and try to learn instead serve the small purpose. Every time should give sometime from their heart to the theatre. 2,3 years as much as it is possible for one, one should give that time honestly. With discipline and truth, Work with a theatre teacher, learn from him overall, work with a group and give theatre a significant time. Try to co-include with whatever you are doing if you can't do it full time. But you need to give it time. The more you give time the more you develop a sense and instinct of theatre.

The more natural sense will develop once you start giving time in true sense. Apart from this do not just take theatre as a medium for you to go to Mumbai and become a hero. Even if you don't become an actor, you don't want to work in films, you don't want to go to Mumbai, apart from all this one needs to understand theatre in itself is a beautiful medium and an entire system. Rather than taking it as a step on your ladder to reach Mumbai, and with all your truth and honesty, you should give time to theatre. As it should be given to any art form and you will see it will excel. You will come out as a better person, a better artist any day.



## Mr. Amul Sagar

Founder, Black Pearl Arts

**Q. How did you come up with the concept of Black Pearl Arts?**

**A.** There is a time in life when we do not really know what we want to do. In my case, my profession chose me. I have been writing poems, stories, dramas since my college. I like to believe it was hereditary because my grandfather used to write as well. I started working with a friend in theatre arts. During this time, I lost my job, and I was given a choice to either look for a new job or choose the profession which has already chosen me. That is when Black Pearl Arts was formulated, 10 years back.

**Q. How would you describe your style of training?**

**A.** Being a theatrical director, the most interesting part is preparation of the play. During this time, the actors have an intense excitement wherein they feel like they can achieve anything they set their minds to. When we distribute the roles, they try to develop the character through self-analysis and come back prepared with their role to portray someone else's life story as their own. The way that they express various emotions in reality is the most enjoyable part of preparation. When they try to discover themselves, I try to evolve with them by comprehending what they're going through. The best part is when the actor and the director discuss to find the colliding point where in they understand the vision.

**Q. During your career, have you ever received a particularly insightful piece of criticism? When and what did it say? What made it especially important for you?**

**A.** I believe criticism is a vital step in developing someone's character towards a better direction if taken positively. There is nobody who is working towards their goal, who is not criticized for the things they are doing. Although, it also ensures skill enhancement for people who work on those points to make themselves better.

A lot of questions were raised on the play I wrote called Maharathi, based on Kinnors when we performed it. We received a lot of criticism, but we worked on the betterment by taking the criticism positively. I always welcome people who criticize because I believe it is important for improvement of myself and my work.

**Q. What do you like most about the theater?**

**A.** Everything that has happened during my journey of theatre arts including rehearsals, debates, learning new things, creating the set, choosing the dresses for the play, drinking tea all day with my team, motivation, playing dabli and other instruments, singing. It is a complete package full of excitement. It is absolutely beautiful, and it makes me feel alive.



**Q. Any advice you'd like to share with a theatre aspirant?**

**A.** The only advice I would like to share is that don't come to theatre with the mindset that you want to work in Bollywood or films. Theatre will help you enhance your artistic side and most importantly, your human side. You would learn a lot of things like behavior, empathy, observance or accepting the truths of life. So, be open and be dedicated while joining theatre. Do not think about profit and loss. Theatre will teach you the way to express yourself.



# Murugan Pillai

## Founder, Nithya Kalari Ayurveda Kendra

Murugan Pillai Gurukul, Principal Teacher and the founder cum secretary of Nithya Chaithanya Kalari in India has been decorated the honorary Gurukul title, signifying that he has received the master-ship from all his previous gurus in his lineage of this art. He is also the Honorary General Secretary, Delhi Kalarippayat Association and Joint Secretary in Indian Silambam Federation.

Murugan Gurukul has revived the art of Kalarippayat in North India, gave a new life, zest of excellence, coordination and made number of disciples in and outside India. Murugan Pillai is one of the few existing people in modern times who know the ancient art of Kalari Marmma Chikitsa (Ancient Indian Touch/Healing System) or knowledge of vital pressure points in the human body used in ancient warfare and medicinal system for treating several untreatable diseases.



For spreading the Kalarippayat Art and Knowledge, Murugan Pillai has visited many places in India and abroad viz Israel, Palestine, Mauritius, Reunion Island, China, Australia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Germany, etc. His work was very well appreciated in every country and was felicitated everywhere for the same. A few achievement award and felicitation details as given below.

## Achievement awards / Felicitations:

- Awarded by Persatua Silambam Malaysia (Malaysian Silambam Association) Honorary Black Belt – Silambam in 2016.
- Best Stage performance in Delhi at 18th National Cultural Festival felicitated by India Cultural Forum, Delhi in 2016.
- Special Honour awarded by M.D.D Bal Bhawan, Karnal towards contribution to Kalarippayat in Northern India (since 1993) in 2017.
- Honour Awarded by National Integrated Forum of Artists & Activities (NIFFA) for best stage performance in Harmony – 2017 held at Karnal in 2017.
- Achievement Award - 2017 by All India Malayalee Association (AIMA) towards contribution to spreading Kerala Martial Art in worldwide.
- Udog Patra Award – 2018 by Pravasi Bharat (Kerala) contribution towards spreading Kalarippayat & Kalari Chikitsa in Northern India and abroad.
- Felicitated by Senthamizh Peravai (Regd.), Mayur Vihar Phase – III, Delhi on their Chithirai Thiruvizha Celebration- 2018 on account of 25 years continuous contribution towards spreading Kalarippayat & Silambam in northern India.
- Life Achievement Award – Dr. G. P. Gautam Award by Physical Education Foundation of India (PEFI), 2018 towards coaching of Indigenous Martial Arts of Kerala (Kalarippayat) in India and Abroad.
- Felicitated by National Service Society (NSS), Delhi Chapter on the occasion of Mannam Jayanti towards contribution in spreading Kalarippayat & Kalari Chikitsa worldwide.
- Felicitated by Sri Hayagriva, Delhi & Lok Kala Manch, Delhi on the occasion of 10th Thyagaraja Aradhana for contribution towards Cause & Promotion of Women Empowerment and Health.

**Q. What inspired you to create Nithya Chaithanya Kalari Ayurveda Kendram?**

**A.** In 1991 when I came to Delhi, all I could see was other martial arts everywhere Karate, Judo, Taekwondo etc. And as I was a Kalaripayattu Artist I wanted to keep our ancient Martial art alive. As still many people don't know about what it actually is. I wanted people to know that besides Karate, Kung fu which are not from India, We Indians had our own form of Martial Art and which is also considered, the Mother of all the Martial Arts as all the other Martial arts are made from Kalaripayattu itself. And as in North India this Martial Art was now to be seen. People had not even heard about it that time. So, myself and group of south indian people had showed the interest to started this in Delhi. Project in 1991 and after lot of hardships I started my Nithya Chaithanya Kalari Ayurveda Kendram. And after that we were being recognised for not only teaching Kalaripayattu in Delhi but in various parts of the country and showcased our art worldwide so that people could at least be aware that such an indigenous Martial Art exists.



**Q. What do you claim to be your greatest achievement?**

**A:** For me, I started this as a single person. And all I aimed was to people make aware and know about this art. And that was a time when people were asked about this, all they could tell was about Karate, Kung fu and other martial arts. We were the first to Introduce Kalaripayattu in Northern India. Even in 2017, Delhi saw 10th National Kalaripayattu Championship. These all come under our works and as remark of what we did from the last 25 years. And as per me this was my greatest achievement so far. Moreover, stretching of art form had travelled Israel, Palestine, China, Nigeria, Mauritius, Reunion Island, Malaysia, etc. Now not everyone but at least a higher rate of population recognizes this Kerala art form as our own country's traditional Martial Art.

**Q. Have you ever had to handle a difficult conflict in your career? What did you learn from it?**

**A:** To start something new in a new place and in a completely different environment is not that easy. When I started, I faced a lot of hardships and conflicts during this. It was in an awfully bad condition that even if we had to show a demo of this art, we had to raise the funds and manage by ourselves. I started small with no resources, no funds & no support. As time passed by, our institution grew more, with more performances and gradually today we are one of the biggest institution of Kalaripayattu in India having branches in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Hyderabad, Vishakapatnam, Kerala, Maharashtra too.

**A:** Kalaripayattu is basically a Vedic tradition and maybe other art forms doesn't count in them. Kalaripayattu is something about a way of Healthy life and disciplined life. I admired this art for the discipline it has, that is the guru-shishya parampara and till date am following that and maybe other art forms doesn't have. Kalari was based on the gurukulam system where a child would or can start learning Kalarippayattu at the age of 7 as same in the Vedic system where children were sent to gurukulam at the age of 5 where 2 years they were taught Vedas and at the age of 7 children were taught the basics of Kalaripayattu and gradually were completely trained. I noticed that all these things had a proper sense of art, culture, tradition, gurukulam system, guru-shishysya parampara especially a proper discipline and healthy lifestyle That anybody can follow.



**Q. How is Kalaripattyu an important aspect of Indian Culture?**

**A.** Human life have 4 basic stages Viz- Balyam , Kaumaram, Youvanam, Vardhakyam. In the first stage Balyam, everything with brahmacharya is needed to be taught as a warrior, self-defence, as a healthy life and also, as a responsible citizen. All these things are required to be taught at that age inorder to be successful life. In Indian history wherever you would have a peek in, let it be vedas, Upanishads, puranam there was a war system. In a war field Kalaripayattu has the best role. Also in Ramayana or Mahabharata u can clearly see the system of a war where Kalaripayattu plays a very important role as this was a tradition followed by them and our ancestors and plays a important role in our culture.

**Q. How important are the expressions of ferocity in Kalaripattyu? How can someone master these expressions?**

**A:** Since decades its been seen that there is no certain time limits to learn a particular art. Because it's a guru parampara. U can learn how much you want to. It depends on you that do you respect and are dedicated to that art form or not. There is no such specific time. The more you are dedicated the more you will learn. In our modern system if someone must learn instrumental music, the first question they would be asking would be, in how much time can they learn it? Noone is ready to dedicate their real time to an art form rather than they are in a hurry and want to learn it as soon as possible. It depends on the person, if the person is more dedicated, he would maybe learn in a lesser time but would continue learning. And if a person is in a hurry just to learn it as soon as possible even after 10 years of practicing the person would lack quality and expressions in them.

**Q. Do you have a specific routine to be a Kalaripattyu artist / Practitioner?**

**A:** As I already told you Kalaripayattu follows the gurukulam system, and gurukulam always starts in the early morning that means around 3 or 3:30 am. After that we do all the routine things that a person does. Then we start the practice around 4 - 4:30 am till 6-6:30. After that there is a healing system in Kalaripayattu which I do around till 10:30. Then checking and prescribing medicines to the patient. And evening also we do the training. But the best time for training and practicing this martial art is the morning time that too in Brahmamuhurta that's around 4:30 to 6 am. According to all the Vedas and gurus, physical activities should always be done in the morning time.

**Q. Any advice you'd like to share with aspiring performing artists or Kalaripattyu aspirants to help them achieve their goals?**

**A.** Yes, one thing has to be made clear Martial Arts is not for fighting purposes, it should always be taken as a way of living a healthy and disciplined life, developing and helping the society as well as improving themselves physically and mentally. Never use martial arts for wrong purposes or to hurt someone physically. This martial art and its discipline is created by the great rishi's. As in the Kalari system we have 2 gurus, Lord Parasurama in Northern System of Kalari and Sage Agastya in Southern System of Kalari, both are coming from a Vedic Purana tradition. They taught this Martial art for a self-discipline and to protect others not for a wrong purpose or in a way to hurt people or not for the fighting purposes. I am also following the same tradition and I want the aspiring performing artists from any of the martial arts to follow the same.





## Devesh Nigam-

Founder, Cineaste

His is a story of a qualified engineer who decided to follow his heart and not his degree. While his batch mates were celebrating their passing out from the prestigious Delhi College of Engineering, Devesh Nigam was nurturing a secret desire in his heart. A desire to write stories, a desire to act.

Devesh Nigam (35), an engineering graduate from prestigious Delhi College of Engineering (DCE) is now at the helm of affairs at Cineaste' - his multifunctional Production and Casting company running successfully in Delhi & Mumbai.

### About Cineaste'

Cineaste' founded in 2012 for exploring new ideas and opportunities for creative minds. We are of belief to open the envelope rather than just pushing. The canvas of Cineaste' comprises of adaptability to all formats, genre, methodology and enriched with the blend of classics with contemporaries **We Aspire** to transform the ocean of craziness, zeal to entertain, and abundance of enthusiasm into spell bounded entertaining yet thought provoking content. Every monumental success is based on the strong pillars of foundation. And our pillars are our Core Team & audiences' critical feedback which serves us as the guideline and road map for our work ethics.

**Q. How did you come up with the concept of Cineaste productions?**

**A.** We started a theater group in 2012. We were group of five people who were hardworking and enthusiastic. I was doing theater with some theater group in Mandi house where I used to watch performances, plays, attended workshops and did street plays and a lot of other things. So, what happened in 2008? Let me take you a few years back in 2008. I graduated from Delhi College of Engineering. I did jobs with some MNC for six months to check the fact that I couldn't do it anymore.

I realized nine-to-five Job was not my cup of tea. I used to be creative in my college. I used to write, poems, short stories, discuss concepts, used to watch a lot of movies. In college we used to discuss a lot of movies. was exposed to the world of cinema when it comes English, Korean, Japanese movies. To be frank, I was an average student who managed to pass his exams. After graduating from the college in 2008, I did a job only to realize that it's not something which I would want to do for a lifetime.

Then recession came into the Indian subcontinent, that was a blessing in disguise for me, because I found an excuse to tell my parents that I don't want to do the job as there is no job in the market and I would prepare for IAS Exam. So, for a noticeably short period of time I used to live in Katwaria Sarai in Delhi near IIT and JNU. It is a small hub where the students, mainly engineers, live for preparing IAS or IES exam. Then one day, a friend of mine introduced me to this term theatre. One fine day, I went to mandi house to watch the play Charandas Chor, in which Omkar Das Manik was in lead, I was mesmerized by it and I felt I should do it; I wanted to learn how it is to perform live, so I got associated with a theatre group called Delhi Asmita Group and I developed my writing side when I started writing play. I left my IAS preparation and I devoted my full time in performing arts.

In 2012 we started Cineaste Theatre. We performed our first play in LTG in Mandi House and the audience received it well. I incorporated many cinematic elements like music, choreography, multimedia in the background just like the Broadway musical.



**Q. What sets your Cineaste Productions apart from others?**

**A.** It is not like we are unique, or we are offering something that others are not providing but the major difference is the presentation

We have four major departments in Cineaste - We have a theatre group, an acting academy where we nurture and polish the raw talent. We get them enrolled in a course where we teach them the basics of how to learn the craft. We also cast our students in our own in-house projects and the projects that we receive from the clients of other production houses. We have a department of Stand-up comedy in which we have provide platform to the young and raw talents.

Along with that, we have a department of filmmaking and documentary. We created and produced a short film Masik, to spread awareness about the hygiene issues faced by women in rural India, are still facing. I think we use our resources well to provide the students with relevant theatre experience. Due to covid as most of the auditoriums of performing arts are not operative. Therefore, we have decided that we will focus on online learning on digital platforms. Earlier there used to be walk in auditions and studio auditions, but since 2020 most of the casting is being done online.

**Q. What are the major challenges you have faced during the early years and how did you overcome them?**

**A.** The major challenge when I started out were the parents who were not willing to let their children get into theatre and acting. But now this has changed, the parents are supportive and educated enough to tell their children to do whatever their heart says. The major issue was that people were not well-aware of theatre arts. There were misconceptions that the theatre guys wear kurtas and roam in Mandi House now this has changed as well. When we started in 2012, we did not have various platforms where we can perform so we missed out on a lot of opportunities.

In earlier days, casting was not considered a grateful job but over the years and due to our seniors Mukesh Chhabra, Shanoo Sharma, and others the scenario has changed. As in casting, we save a lot of effort, money, and headache of the production faces. I have noticed that casting is a respectful job now which was not the case when we started it. I would say that now the new generation is more enthusiastic, visionary, energetic and they know what to do and how to do it as they are exposed to platforms like OTT, web series, modelling sites. Also, YouTube has given them platform where one can make their content and let the world see what they have created. The challenge that we faced was we didn't have a proper resource infrastructure and space to practice. The prices of Auditorium used to be exceedingly high, which was one of the difficulties every new independent group faced.

**Q. What is your plan with Cineaste in next 10 years?**

**A.** There is no plan as such. It has been 10 years and we are doing well in the industry in Delhi and Mumbai so we haven't thought of it but because of Covid I have realized that we should have plans whether or not those are successful and also, those which have a scalability to change and improve according to the new technology and situation. As in the current situation, basically the work scenario has shifted into the digital domain so, we are thinking of trying to do something in the digital domain. Now, we have active departments in Stand-up's theatre. We have an active academy; we have a well dedicated production team. We are working as a production team for last 2 years. We want we do qualitative work not quantitative. From the starting, we were not in an expansion mode, we just wanted to become famous in other cities apart from Delhi and Mumbai so, we will be working on it. Also, we are focusing on improving our Production departments as rest of the departments are doing good. Our vision now is to put our existing plan in right zone doing some qualitative work.

**Q. What has been the proudest moment of your life?**

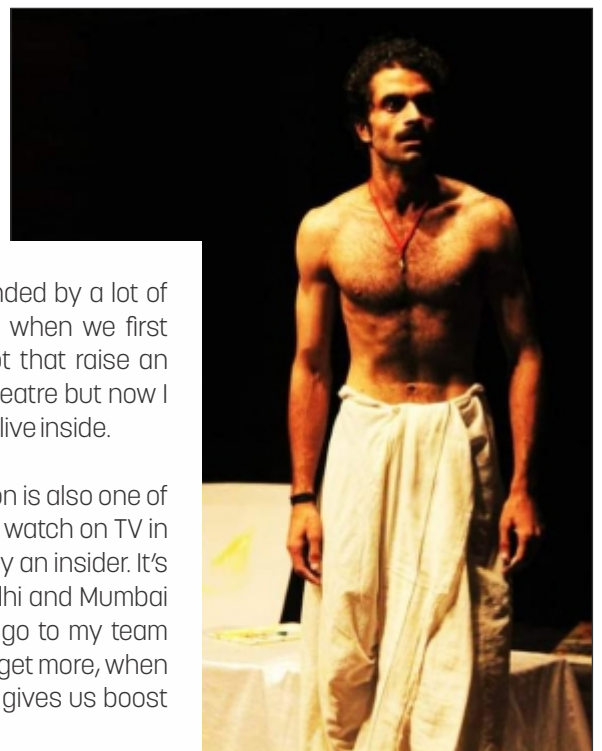
**A.** There are no such proud moments where we felt overwhelmed, but over the years there are many small incidents where our team felt we have achieved something. Like the first time we performed in LTG auditorium (Little Theatre Group) in Delhi, and the audience was fully packed. In 2016 when we performed in Mumbai in Shree Ram Centre where famous actor, Yashpal Sharma performed, and it was directed by NSD Banaras director Shree Ram Ji Bali. We learnt a lot from them during rehearsals, it made me feel I was fortunate. When we performed first Nukkadh in Delhi Haat, we were surrounded by a lot of people. That was certainly an overwhelming feeling or the time when we first introduced our Documentary "Masik". I always pick up the script that raise an issue, give a message apart from entertainment. I got this from theatre but now I am much more into film making and other things, but theater is still alive inside.



There are no such proud moments where we felt overwhelmed, but over the years there are many small incidents where our team felt we have achieved something. Like the first time we performed in LTG auditorium (Little Theatre Group) in Delhi, and the audience was fully packed. In 2016 when we performed in Mumbai in Shree Ram Centre where famous actor, Yashpal Sharma performed, and it was directed by NSD Banaras director Shree Ram Ji Bali. We learnt a lot from them during rehearsals, it made me feel I was fortunate.

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When we got nominated in best team category in an award function is also one of proud moments for us. We are working with the people we used to watch on TV in our childhood and we are constantly in touch with them. I am totally an insider. It's great to see that after such hard work and struggle, people in Delhi and Mumbai know about Cineaste. This is an achievement for me. All credits go to my team working with me. There are so many incidents and I hope we would get more, when we work on anything it seems nothing has been done yet, which gives us boost and inspires us to do something good in the future.



## Mr. Anurag Ramgopal

Founder, LMB Productions

Anurag's approach to directing, writing, and editing is defined by his relationship with stories – it is a dedicated & disciplined devotion to the craft of filmmaking. His passion for visual storytelling led him to start LMB Productions in 2012. Over the last decade, he has been involved in over 300 projects as a writer, editor, animator, producer and director. His varied experience in everything visual from documentary to feature films has taught him that the true exhilaration of cinema is found when you push the boundaries, when you create worlds and characters and let them be stranger than fiction. As is the mark of a true creative, Anurag is always learning something new, be it playing the guitar, a language or how to skateboard. Meeting him means talking either about films, music, books or about the kind of ramen, breads or sauces he plans to create next.



**Q. What inspired you to create Let's Make Better Productions?**

**A.** Everyone has a story to tell. And no matter what that story is, I believe together—we can make it better. It was this core belief and a passion for visual storytelling that led me to set up a video production company in 2012 at the age of 24. Let's Make Better, or LMB Productions, was born out of the fact that there was no collaborative space that genuinely allowed you to explore different things, different mediums, styles, technologies. Filmmaking marries all these things together, and yet in the industry, all these spheres are siloed away in separate spaces, rarely interacting.

We wanted to do things differently; we own our equipment, we have writers, cinematographers, producers, directors, animators, and editors all under one roof. This brings every single aspect of filmmaking within a single space. We can now come up with highly creative concepts and have the ability to execute them because of how we are structured. We can self-produce incredible work because of the same reason. It allows us to maintain a level of control over the production rarely seen in traditional production companies.



Over the past nine years, we have created it all, from awarding-winning music videos, short films, web series, and feature films. We have conceptualized, written, shot, directed, edited, and presented these creations with pride. What may have started out as my brainchild has become a force of its own, and now as our name suggests, we strive to do better!

**Q. How do you choose your filmmaking projects?**

A. All our projects have to meet one primary criterion: It has to resonate with emotion and have a strong core message. To simplify – the answer to "what are we trying to say with this project" should be crystal clear. I feel more often than not, people get carried away by themes. When big themes take centre stage, people forget that a story is about people and not about incidents, like an action sequence. A topic or theme should never define the story. The story should dictate what themes and topics it covers.

Focus on what kind of message you have, focus on what you want to say about that person, about society, on something important to say. Then that core storyline and thought will weave into any theme and lend it authenticity. If you go the other way, theme first then story, the storyline feels forced. So if you want to do Sci-fi and romance, great! But what do you want to SAY as to do them?

Essentially, I look for that authenticity, if it's there or not - that one aspect makes it pretty easy to pick projects. Each project must be authentic, must say something and most importantly, make people feel something. Or at least make me feel something as a filmmaker.

**Q. What do you look for in a script?**

A. Good characters. I think more often than not, when people are writing scripts, they tend to just run over their characters. They won't describe the characters or their history properly. It

is crucial that we are able to visualize the characters and see them through the story. Because of course, in a script, I'm looking for a good story. That goes without saying. But apart from a script being good and having a great story, having great fleshed out characters that couldn't exist anywhere BUT in your story, characters that are unique to the world that you have built in your script - that is for me the most important thing.

**Q. What is the best part of making films. Why is this something you have dedicated your life to?**

A. That's actually a really personal question...I don't think I have a clear cut answer to it, but I'll try. I would like to say that it is very rewarding, which it is. I would like to say that it is good to see an audience reciprocate and resonate with your work. I would like to say that the act of creation itself is gratifying. But I don't think that is the best part of this industry or why we dedicate ourselves to it.

At the end of the day, it is a very personal choice in terms of how you want to spend your life. And I think for me the real reason is that I just enjoy it so much. I literally can't imagine myself doing anything else. So most people who say they feel trapped in their jobs... actually feel like heroes to me. I feel like anybody who can do anything else other than what they are truly passionate about...that IS heroic. As for me, I feel handicapped, I couldn't possibly do anything other than what I am doing right now and that is the real, honest reason why I do it. I enjoy it, I'm good at it, and I can't possibly do anything else.

Q. What would you change in a movie you produced that you believe would make it better?

A. So our self-produced feature film is called 'Laal Maati.' It is a young boy's coming of age story in rural Maharashtra and was selected as one of Film Bazaar's recommended feature films of 2018.

For a young production house entering the feature film space, I am personally very proud of how that film turned out, but if there is one learning that has really stayed with me from this project, it is that we should have shot it a little slower. Although budgets and a lot of other factors come into play, what I learnt is that after you calculate your schedule, just add another 10% of the time estimated to complete the project and shoot that much slower. If we had done that for Laal Maati, it would have really allowed us to push characters, the team and the story just another 5% extra. Which sometimes can make a world of a difference.

My suggestion? As independent filmmakers and producers, we will always be chasing the schedule. But right from the beginning, secretly keep 10% of your days handy. Allow the director to take the whole day to get a few crucial moments right.

Q. Have you ever had to handle a difficult conflict in your career? What did you learn from it?

A. Filmmaking is a physical and not a solitary effort. It is an art that cannot thrive in isolation. The isolation was probably the most challenging part of this pandemic. For a while, when the crew couldn't assemble, we couldn't ideate, could not shoot, and ultimately could not create the way we used to. Demand for our live-action filmmaking services dried up as the world entered survival mode.



But we knew we had to adapt, and we did so rapidly. We focused on what we COULD do. We refocused our energies on internal projects and brand building. We started promoting our animation services as a safe and viable option for our clients while building a game plan to shoot safely. I am very proud of my team and the community we build by supporting each other. We didn't let go of anyone despite the tough financial situation.

I had four key takeaways from the whole situation:

1. Learn to evolve rapidly
2. Don't make hasty financial decisions (that may hurt you in the long term)
3. Your team is your biggest asset (Do everything in your power to support them)
4. Don't be afraid to have honest conversations (with your team, your client or even your landlord)

We are luckily back in our studio today, taking all the necessary precautions but so glad to be back in the space we all love. So far, so good, and hopefully, LMB will continue to innovate and grow. We are taking each challenge within our stride.

**Q. What do you claim to be your greatest achievement?**

**A.** We will always be chasing our greatest achievement because of the kind of studio we are. Also, I started this film production house when I was very young – 22-years-old. So, our journey has only begun. Right now, the thing that I am most proud of is the feature film. Laal Maati is in the process of being acquired by the National Film Development Council (NFDC). I am just so proud of not only THAT we did it, but HOW we did it. We did it entirely on our own without any external funding.

For a studio of our size to have self-produced a feature film confirmed what we had always known. It was a validation of the fact that the LMB system that was set up in 2012, actually works. It was a validation of the fact that when we decided to vertically integrate talent, equipment and commitment – it allowed us to create something unique and special. And looking to the future, I feel that the way tech and things are changing and the way we are working, in the next few years we will be able to create without any outside interference. Being able to create in a place that is not Mumbai and have a system ready to support world-class filmmaking is something we are very proud of.

Now that we know how to do it, we can replicate it easily. The only reason we didn't make a film this year is due to the pandemic. We hope to get right back on that track next year and every year after that.

**Q. Any advice you'd like to share with aspiring filmmakers and storytellers to help them achieve their goals?**

**A.** One of the things that I have noticed among young filmmakers is the lack of empathy. As filmmakers, you need to be empathetic. You need to empathize and feel for your characters. And have something important to say. Don't get carried away by just what your story is, where it will be set, or that it incorporates modern themes. BE empathetic about your characters and what you are talking about, feel for what you are doing.

Anyone getting into this field knows that there is struggle and hardship here, so I won't go into that. But as an artist and especially as a filmmaker, cultivate your eye in terms of being able to see the beauty and character of the things around you. Cultivate your visual sense to be able to recognize beauty. Because the biggest trap I feel filmmakers fall into is that they try to make a copy of a copy of a copy. A film inspired by another, inspired by another and another. That is a bad idea as it has no basis in reality. Just like how you have to practice photography to cultivate a sense of visual aesthetic, you also need to practice with your mind's eye. To build a mental pallet for being able to empathize and see stories and characters around you. And see them as real people. You can then use this pallet to build stories that feel Authentic.

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