# SPECTATOR

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## Understanding GenZ

**Inside: A New-Age Storyteller**

**Flip to: Love in the Age of Social Media**

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Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson once said, "My goal is never to be the loudest, or the craziest, but the most entertaining."

We, at Spectator aim to be all three — loud, crazy, and of course, entertaining. When you hold a copy of the Spectator in your hand, you're looking at a land of magic, where entertainment isn't just about showbiz, it's about you.

– Editors, Spectator

# L O
## in the time of
## social media
# V E

### - Audita Bhattacharya

Some things must not change, like love. Life on the internet may have allowed youngsters to easily associate online, create connections, and be sure about themselves; yet it has also led to an understanding that all that is said and done online, and the persona that is created, is somewhat shallow. Everlasting love doesn't exist on the web.

This is on the grounds that affection is a deeply individual thing. You have to submit your entire self to that someone. You can't simply love a person at the click of a mouse. You can't judge how wonderful someone is through an image or a post. No selfie can catch the magnificence of an individual. You need to battle with the inquiries regarding existence with this one individual you love and revere, and be brave enough to endure the cruel responses you may get.

Youthful couples these days want the entire world to realize the extent of their love for one another. In times past, two spirits who wished to be as one, away from the world, felt that the one person that they needed be with so as to live was their one true love.You had to walk kilometers, dream dreams together, feel sadness and agony together, in the belief that the affection would go on un-

Photo by luizclas from Pexels

til the end of time. Today, many among the youth fear commitment. In any case, being cherished will last only when it is tied in with being acknowledged for what one is, not for what one appears to be. Today, young people who have recently graduated from college want things, travel a lot, and find satisfaction in their contraptions and applications. But for the more settled individuals, the online world does not always constitute reality. The virtual world is fraught with dangers, and you essentially need to battle unknown online warriors.

To experience passionate feelings for someone is to perceive that somebody exceptional is out there. Genuine romance exists, yet the harshest thing is that, occasionally, the individuals most deserving of it, don't find it at all.

As you become more seasoned, you start to search for better things, want numerous progressions in nearly everything, until you understand that having discovered someone else may very well mean a lot of realisations about yourself. When you love somebody, you will discover that it isn't tied in with needing to make this individual the same as you are, or of copying the happiness of other people around you, or of being praised by all of mankind of being equivalent of the timeless romance of Romeo and Juliet.
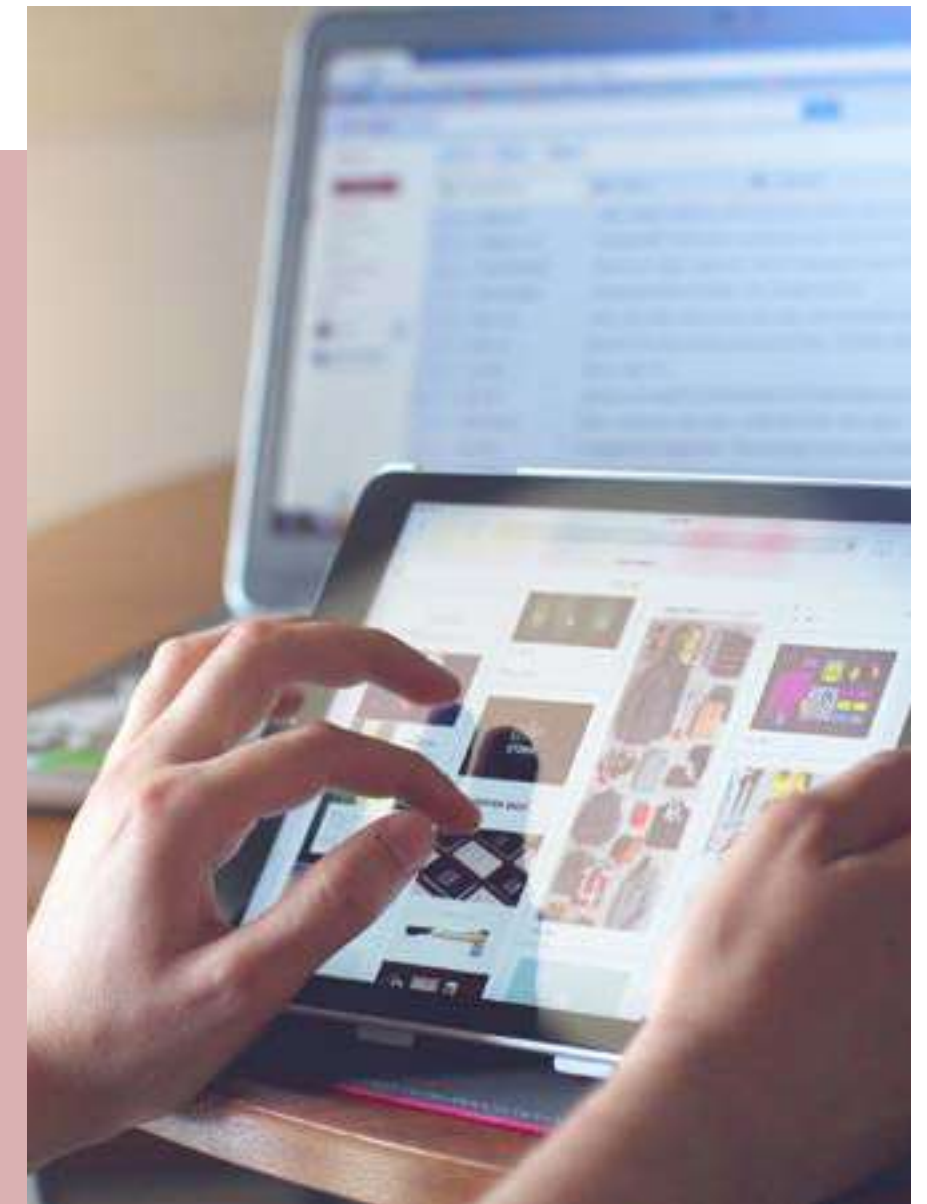
*Photo by Oladimeji Ajegbile from Pexels*

On social media, you can just post what you feel not how you feel. Individuals can change their appearances and edit revolting posts, but not hide awful connections. Two decades or so back, courtship was difficult. Winning the heart of a truly exceptional woman had to done in the hardest way possible. You had show restraint in all things. You needed to really purchase and send her roses, chocolates and what not.

Love isn't just virtual nearness. It is the solid presence of someone, where not just their glow is felt, but the additional joy of their adoration and little demonstrations of care and affection.
It is this way: if you are online spending restless evenings doing what seem like moronic things, over and over again, at that point simply try not to.

*It isn't genuine romance.*

# Catsuits to Captains:

## the Evolution of Female Superheros on Screen

*- Shradhdha Das*

At the turn of the current century, there was a slew of female superhero movies. All of them tanked at the box office. Cut to 2020 – there are five female led franchises releasing this year alone, with three big Hollywood weekends reserved for them. How did we get here?

Marvel struck gold with Iron Man and began to capitalize on the superhero genre in 2008. Pepper Potts, introduced in the first Iron Man as Tony Stark's trusted Girl Friday was primarily a love interest – she worries over his health and safety, later taking over Stark Industries. She exists completely in his context; and although it's clear that she's essential to him, she never seems important to the plot.

Natasha Romanoff is the next major female character to be introduced, again as Tony Stark's demure, beautiful secretary, where she's placed to spy on him. The other characters treat her as a mystery, and she keeps cropping up in other people's films – assisting Nick Fury in assembling the Avengers. She's clearly a key character. But despite the long clamouring for a solo movie by fans across the board, the Black Widow movie was announced only after the character sacrificed herself in Endgame in 2019.

DC and Warner Bros' Wonder Woman was the definitive game changer that led to this long-awaited move. Releasing in 2017 after the first Women's March in the US and a renewed feminist movement across the world in the face of right wing governments, Wonder Woman was an instant success. Feminists and film critics both lauded the film for its portrayal of Diana Prince. The film is an origin story that explores how Diana is introduced to the man's world and how she ultimately saves it from itself. She values her femininity, unlike the cookie cutter strong female characters that the 2010s were populated with, and her mission to save the world is ultimately driven (and won) by empathy and kindness.

In the face of Wonder Woman's success, Marvel Studios was criticiezed yet again on the sheer lack of good, diverse representation of women in their cinematic universe. Taika Waititi's Thor: Ragnarok introduced us to Valkyrie. Tessa Thompson played the character, whose only 'likeable' trait was that she could kick ass in a fight. She is the complete opposite of Diana – cynical instead of hopeful, a mercenary instead of a saviour, disillusioned instead of amazed at the world around her – and yet, she is a superhero. Where Diana was perfect and good, Valkyrie is messy and selfish – and it's liberating to watch both of them have complete control over their stories on screen.

In a bid to appeal to increasingly diverse global audiences, Marvel Studios announced Black Panther and Captain Marvel – with diverse writers and directors working on both projects. Black Panther released first – doing extremely well at the box office, earning Marvel its first Academy Award nomination and becoming a cultural phenomenon. It arguably did more for female representation than all of the Marvel movies preceding it. The women of Black Panther were layered and multi-dimensional – Shuri is a genius scientist/princess, Nakia is a radical secret agent, Ramonda is the grieving but strong queen, and Okoye is the fiercely loyal chief of the king's guard. All of them are connected to Challa – through family, duty or romance – but their character arcs are never hindered by their respective relationships with the hero. Black Panther set a new benchmark for storytelling and representation in the genre, surpassing all expectations. The #MeToo movement erupted in 2018 and Brie Larson spoke out loudly in support. Because of her political activism & Infinity War's post credits scene leading into Captain Marvel, the movie was highly anticipated. When it finally released, the story it told was a distinctly female one. Carol Danvers is constantly told to rein her powers in, to not let her anger fuel her actions. She struggles with her emotions and instincts, not trusting them and believing that they're getting in her way. This has never been the case with any of the male Avengers – they simply acquire their powers and go trigger happy with them. There are innumerable funny montages set to quirky music, where male superheroes familiarise themselves with their powers, resulting in shenanigans. But Carol doesn't get this luxury, and it's frustrating to watch. Where their anger is righteous and just, hers is dangerous and unwelcome. She's the most powerful character in the MCU, and yet she's the only one forced to fight with one hand tied behind her back. Her memory is erased and she's then used as a weapon on the wrong side of the war – her agency is stripped in a manner that is jarringly reflective of the world we live in.

The definitive moment of the film is when she spares her mentor-turned-nemesis, but not out of the goodness of her heart. "I don't need to prove anything to you" she says, ris-

## "I DON'T NEED TO PROVE ANYTHING TO YOU"

*Image Courtesy: Marvel Studios*

*Image Courtesy: DC*

ing above male validation, quite literally. The film is a remarkably brazen and timely rejection of the many ways in which male perspectives and actions shape female lives. It also casually made a billion dollars at the domestic box office, despite a targeted trolling effort which significantly reduced its score on IMDb and Rotten Tomatoes.

Post Black Panther and Captain Marvel, fans started demanding an all-female Avengers movie. Avengers: Endgame featured a now iconic moment where all the female superheroes team up to help Carol get the infinity gauntlet across safely. As cool and badass as it was, the scene seemed like a cop out, so fans amplified their demands after news broke that the actresses had pitched an A-Force movie to Disney.

While an all-female Marvel movie does not seem likely anytime soon, DC made history

with the highly entertaining and blessedly free of male gaze, Birds of Prey. Harley Quinn has never been a superhero, let alone a feminist one (see: her abusive relationship with the Joker), but Margot Robbie's portrayal of her in Birds of Prey is hilarious, powerful and downright insane. It does away with all the unnecessary hyper-sexualisation and lets the characters be imperfect in a relatable and hilarious manner. They are not glorified and put on a pedestal, a phenomenon that has become sort of an occupational hazard with strong female characters across genres.

While representation seems to be heading in the right direction, it has not been an easy ride. All of these movies have been heavily criticised by misogynist fans across the world. There are versions of Avengers: Endgame on YouTube – in which all scenes featuring women have been edited out.

The actresses have been ruthlessly trolled online, sat across sexist interviewers who are only interested in tight costumes and overly sexualised by fans and filmmakers alike. The world of superheroes has always been unfair to the women who inhabit it, just like ours. The purpose of stories is to make a variety of audiences empathise with the protagonists and in turn, empathise with the people around them. For ages, these protagonists have been men. It's 2020 now, and empathising with a woman won't hurt anyone.

> HOW COME YOU GET THE REALLY INTERESTING, EXISTENTIAL, QUESTION AND I GET THE, LIKE, RABBIT FOOD QUESTION?

> - Scarlett Johansson on being asked about her diet right after a co- actor was asked about his acting process

# SLOW & STEADY

## FAST FASHION AND ITS STRUGGLE TO MAKE A NAME IN THE GEN Z-RULED WORLD

### - Tanushi Bhatnagar

Your Instagram feed is a rabbit hole and as you travel down it, you find an overdose of ruffles and flares; colorful sunglasses and fur-coated heels; neon jumpers; and frankly, numerous excuses for 'shirts'; which are just a few, albeit cynical, examples of what we call 'Fast Fashion'. Social media empowered the new age, creating a huge advantage for high fashion brands, which now use the perfect blend of influencer marketing and mind-blowing discounts. This contributed to the rising phenomenon of fast fashion.

### So, what exactly is Fast Fashion?

Fast fashion is the mass production of clothes that are affordable, low-quality, and more often than not, high-fashion rip-offs. They are usually produced in third-world countries with minimal consideration for the labor-force, or the environmental effects they might have. Its popularity comes from the fact that these clothes make the wearer look like they're wearing something luxurious.

It started out as a gimmick to grab the 'millennial attention'. Fast fashion was rather easy to market back in the '80s and '90s. Brands like H&M, Zara, Forever 21, are the ones to hold in contempt for cashing in on this concept based on the phenomena of 'instant gratification'. Millennials branded themselves around the identity of the brand they shopped for and thus encouraged the idea of fast fashion.

*Image Courtesy: Gurbani Sandhu*

Most of the brands marketing themselves as the caterers of fast fashion have a booming online presence. Their hassle free service and break-neck speeds of delivery have become hallmarks of the industry. Their reliance on social media comes with a consequence – they sometimes speak out about the causes the new generation is interested in. However, with the sky-rocketing cost of living, a ₹900 dress is more desirable to a 20-something than a house or a car. It's actually a very simple choice – why should one end up with debt trying to buy an apartment when they can just buy a replica of Kylie Jenner's Balmain outfit for a fraction of the cost?

# WHAT ABOUT THE CLIMATE, THOUGH?

We have all watched the viral video of the Gen Z prodigy, Greta Thunberg, attempting to pierce the uncompromising boomer hearts with a "How dare you!" We are also profoundly affected by air pollution, increasing every Diwali. However, we conveniently overlook the effects our clothes can have on the environment.

Fast fashion, because of the dearth and the high production cost of natural fibers, is quite literally made of plastics and oils. When washed, these clothes release toxic microfibers and microplastics into the water bodies, which in turn affect the marine ecosystem. Their production reportedly emits more greenhouse gasses than the plane that transports them from one place to another. Unsold products, which could very conveniently be donated, up-

cycled or recycled, often go to landfills where they are burnt.

Fast fashion producing companies rarely care about the environment; however, they do like to pretend that they do. A jumbled stew of vague terms like "sustainable," "life," "consciousness," and "recycled" mixed in with corporate drivel are used to distract the consumer and give a false pretense of caring about the same causes as them. Adding a "25% off on your next purchase" coupon simply acts as click bait to get consumers to buy more of their clothes.

## HOW DARE YOU?

If there's one difference between millennials and Gen Z, it's that millennials grew up knowing of a climate crisis, and the Gen Z grew up acting upon it. Being a generation born in a cradle made of smartphones, they have rarely seen life outside of the internet and social media.

### GEN Z and its contribution to sustainable fashion

Gen Z is changing the shopping norms around the world. They care about their ideologies being reflected in the brands that they invest in. Apart from being at the top of their game on social media, they care about the effect those clothes have on the environment as well. In these tumultuous times of fighting

for acceptance, it is somewhat ironic to say that the Gen Z is so used to accepting differences that it is almost odd if one does not showcase anything supposedly 'distinct.'

Our generation has a deep understanding of fundamental human rights, environmental causes, and the moral concept of right and wrong. Dozens of brands have lost their credibility and gone out of business, owing to their relentless and wasteful ways of production. Forever 21 is one of the most commonly known examples.

Brands, which only catered to millennials so far, now have to rethink their marketing strategies or will be easily pushed out of the market. Personalized advertisements, a call-to-action social campaign, and talking about pertinent issues are essential to building trust with their fresh-out-of-the-womb consumer base. Therefore, the shift from 'being seen as the brand wishes to' to 'being perceived through influencers as the customers want to' was gradual but struck a chord with Gen Z.

The new generation is often seen as fickle and constantly oscillating between capricious fashion trends. Raised by a generation shaped by the recession, they are actually rather practical with their money. Monetary value matters to the Gen Z as much as the emotional value attached to the brand they shop at; hence, they rarely are loyal to any one brand.

Recycling clothes is one of the most effective solutions in this age of social media where be-

ing seen twice in a dress already immortalized in a picture online is almost a cardinal sin.

Gen Z is more comfortable in buying second-hand clothes from thrift shops, garage sales, and clothes renting apps than any other generation. More and more brands are taking up ecologically conscious projects and providing rental services. Instead of the 'instant gratification' granted by buying fast fashion, these options not only give a chance to showcase a distinct style and identity but also give the feeling of 'doing good for the environment.'

"It is imperative that now we start thinking of more sustainable ways to look fashionable while rocking a clean and green earth as our runway."

# 10 REASONS WHY THIS GENERATION CANNOT HELP BUT PRESS "NEXT EPISODE"

*- Kavisha Manwani*

## 3 An escape from reality

Amidst the draining, machine life that we are living, there is a constant need to vent frustration and ease up every now and then. Maybe that's when an escape from reality seems like a soothing idea to take up. The idea of cozying up in beds and couches in front of screens comes across as nothing less than a welcome refuge.

## 4 Not all Saturdays are about partying

No weekend plans? Netflix and chill is always a backup for all failed plans or no plans at all. The idea of ice cream or popcorn, and an entire season to watch sounds like the 'me time' you need.

## 5 Procrastinating is the way

When there are 500 things to do and you can't figure out the way with all the deadlines and stress that comes with them, Netflix and other streaming platforms can be a great way to let your mind loosen up for a while and give you a fresh breath of air.

## 6 Content is the master card

Apart from all of the reasons above, the content Netflix and other OTT platforms stream are very different from mainstream content and that proves out to be the USP to hook the binge watchers. Un-censored content opens up the gates for diversity and attracts a broader range of audience.

## 1 Lot of Catching up to do

Imagine a show is really popular among your friends, and while everybody gets the inside jokes from the show, you cannot participate in the conversation. Uh huh? That is exactly what leads to binge watching a show, even if its much later than its scheduled timeslot. Stats show more than 61 percent of watchers watch more than four episodes of the same show in a day only to "catch up!"

## 2 Intrigued? Well Yes...

32% of viewers deliberately put off watching an entire season of a show until they can watch it all at once, and 39% say some shows are just better when watched back-to-back-to-back. (Hint: You Know You Love Me. Xoxo Gossip Girl)

## 7 The race with the spoilers

Binge watching the shows with latest updates and new episodes are a must to stay away from the floating spoilers on the internet. They are everywhere and the only way you can beat them is by watching everything before somebody spills the details. For example, "Brian Stark sits on the iron throne... Oh shit! You haven't watched it yet?"

## 8 Recommendations and suggestions

Tweeting and recommending shows is a great way of exploring like-mindedness and broadening perspectives towards new content as well. This proves to be beneficial not only for the user-base but also the marketers of the products.

## 9 You have the remote, literally

Streaming OTT platforms are very user centric, unlike mainstream conventional television. Here, the viewer has control over the hours and amount of the content he wants to consume. In this fast paced world, they can decide how much to watch and when to watch according to their convenience and flexibility.

## 10 Tailor made interface

As a viewer, these platforms give the liberty to enhance mood in a particular situation and help people stay in their comfort zone. If you have had a bad day at work, a nice comedy show might be the answer. Having the power to watch whatever you feel like gives a sort of independence. "More like this" or "because you watched this" are some examples of this.

The fact that the concept of binge watching is accepted as the new normal is not only telling about the environment that's evolving, but also about the choices that we as audiences are making. The post play function, next episode, skip intro and other options are right in our face, nurturing the viewers in a particular mould. Even though the bingeing culture that has come up in this generation does not only limit to watching, binge watching relates to all. It is no longer a choice, it's a feeling.

"ON THE INTERNET YOU GET CONTINUOUS INNOVATION, SO EVERY YEAR THE STREAMS ARE A LITTLE BETTER."

– Reed Hastings

Courtesy: Gurbani Sandhu

# FIT IN OR STAND OUT?

*– Hamsini Narasimhan*

Collectively as a society, we survive on myths. Unfortunately, we rely on them as much as we rely on oxygen. Everything, ranging from the memory of goldfish being limited to three seconds to "purification" rituals widely prevalent in remote regions of India, relies on myths.

Contrary to popular belief, chameleons don't change the colour of their skins in order to camouflage, but to communicate with each other or regulate their body temperatures. Therefore, classifying people as social chameleons is quite ironic. Social chameleons are those who pay attention to social cues and blend seamlessly. Whereas, ideally, it should be those who can be themselves fearlessly.

After spending nearly two years in college, I believe that we are all social chameleons, regardless of the existing dichotomy between the interpretation of its definition. We are either tired of fitting in or from standing out. In a major academic stream like communications, we are often expected to think different. More often than not, this very expectation is the root cause for us being held captive in the dungeons of idealism. I still remember my first day in college, everything was "new". However, "new" doesn't necessarily translate to "nice". We, as a species, are conditioned into thinking that anything new is nice, because we often associate the term with adjectives such as fresh and exciting. The newness experienced by me was rather similar to that of sour candy, it is an acquired taste. Everyone, from my cousins to my parents' cousins advised me relentlessly on how one must overcome the various obstacles during their college life. Ironically, they would contradict themselves in their pursuit of "preparing me for the real world".

Looking back, it was rather foolish of me to let their notions determine the quality of my decisions in college. At that point in time, my decisions were based on others' advice more than my own instincts. Everything was about "what one should do". It was so unlike me. However, I decided that "fitting in" would perhaps be the best decision, considering how I would remain uncriticized. I was wrong. I was criticized more than ever.

I was deemed to be fake, naïve and more importantly, "incapable of making rational choices due to my extreme emotions", according to the "incredibly wise words" of a fellow classmate whom I considered to be a close friend at the time. I was devastated after they said that to me. However, it also gave me a reality check. I decided to be me, regardless of whether that was perceived as "fitting in" or "standing out". I decided not to give these perceptions the authority to determine my character.

It suddenly didn't matter to me, if being myself meant that I would be "missing out on college life". In the constant fear of missing out, people end up doing things that they are uncomfortable with and which they often come to regret. It is definitely not worth it. I made my own choices, whether it meant that it was something that my family and friends would disapprove of.

We live in a society where people misuse the liberty of what they claim to be "standing out" as a means of garnering attention, often a vehicle for meaningless popularity. "Standing out", often serves as a medium to make a statement. However, one must unapologetically be themselves while doing so.

> In the end, our individuality matters most. Every choice that we make must rely on our own perceptions. Suddenly, it wouldn't matter if doing so meant that we were "fitting in" or "standing out".

# GEN Z
## AND *Femininity*

**RESIST**

UNCONVENTIONAL

THE
REVOLUTIONIST

*Image Courtesy: Gurbani Sandhu*

# LIGHTS CAMERA ACTION

**T**he degree film season is right around the corner, and the Audio-Visual Communication Batch of 2020 is coming out with not only short films, but also documentaries. The Spectator brings to you a sneak peek into the amazing content to look out for, as the director describe it themselves –

*Curated by: Gunjan Hariramani*

## THE FILMS TO WATCH OUT FOR

# Onto Better Places

Onto Better Places is the story of Jai accepting and moving on from his younger sister's fate due to her ill health. He takes a literal journey of acceptance in a fantastical land when he's been kidnapped by two rather mysterious characters. He's supposedly the "Chosen One" and must lead these two characters toward a "Creator" who threatens to destroy their world if one of his possessions is not returned to him. Will they be able to return this possession in time and save their world from being destroyed?

**Director: Arnav Pingale**
Core Crew: Meha Madan, Varun Menon, Sarthak Verma, Aishwarya Narayanan, Parth Rahatekar, Prithvi GM

# Pain in the Present

This story speaks about a woman who is going through emotions that are best described and expressed through the form of dance whilst keeping the abstract nature of this film intact.
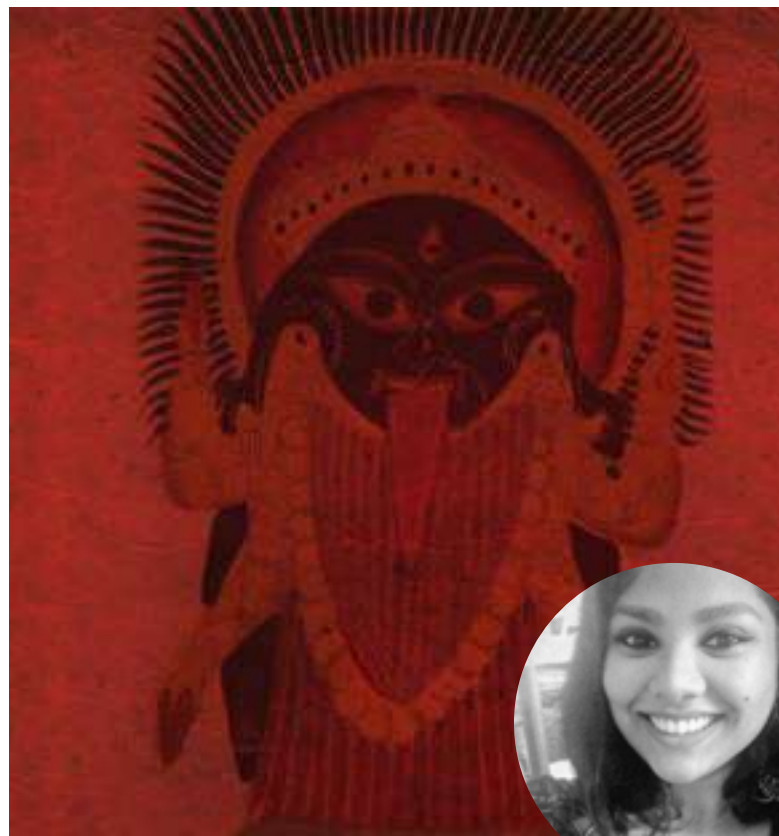The story speaks of the manner in which a woman in an unhealthy relationship tries to cope and struggles each day to get back her family to care for her and to love her back.

**Director: Sanjana ND**
Core Crew: Ajay Babu, Rhea Fernandes, Miyanka Sekhri, Meher Dhillon

# Chingri Debi

Chingri Debi is a Bengali film, shot in the streets of Kalighat, Kolkata. The film highlights the presence of the Goddess Kali in every woman with a duality in her nature; both love and destruction. The story begins with 7-year-old Chingri who lives in an adjusted state of reality with her mother Baishnobi, who she believes is slated to marry Bhairaba. It follows Chingri's life in parallel to that of the several women in her vicinity, each in their own 'Kali' moment, carrying out their daily chores in an ordinary fashion – despite feeling intense rage from the wrongs that they have faced.

**Director: Stuti Sengupta**
Core Crew: Ronit Soin, Prithwish Patra, Rahul Kamble, Prachi Rawal

# Untapped Underground

Untapped Underground is a documentary about the underground dance scene in Bombay which is still unexplored. It focuses on how the entire hip hop dance scene in Bombay started and who were the pioneer crews and their members. The documentary explores how the people involved in the scene economically, socially and culturally affected.

**Director: Amar Kate**
Core Crew: Khushi Khurana, Ajinkya Bhalerao, Vidushi Singh, Sneha Mendes

# Boondi ke Laddoo

The city of Mumbai has crores of stories living in its dark and bright, narrow and wide corners. In Boondi ke Laddoo, two such stories are intertwined via fate. In the unlikeliest of scenarios, two characters are faced with obstacles that test their relationships with their loved ones like never before.
The film studies a contrast in characters that makes a statement about the stereotypes and hypocrisy in our society while making you chuckle at the hysterics of these unorthodox characters faced with extraordinary situations.

**Director: Smera Juneja**
Core Crew: Ritika Dwivedi, Tenzin Dasel, Arghya Das

# Blue- bird

Blue Bird is a short film about 20 year old Grace, whose life comes crashing down after a shattering expose on social media.
Blue Bird is a story that reflects the world we live in – a world where the internet is just an extension of our reality. Through Grace, we discover the many shades of grey that exist in a world that strives for black and white. And we ask the question that all of us must answer, one day or another, for better or worse: Have you ever lied on the internet?

Team: Krysanne Martis, Aishwarya Narayan
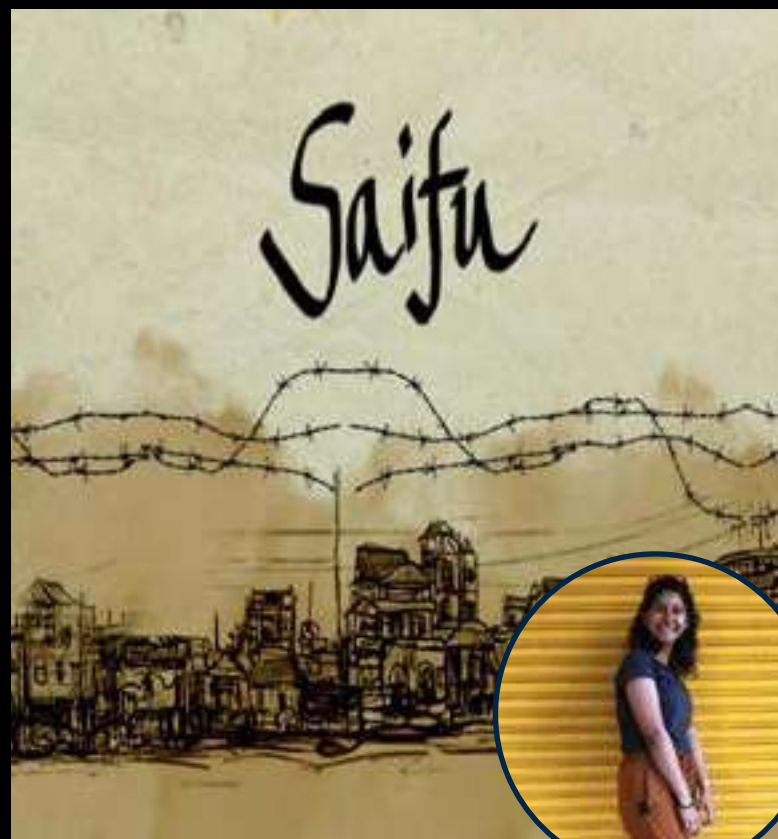
# Saifu

A young boy who does not understand politics, religion or the reasons behind them is faced by a situation where all these factors are cultivating riots. To be or not to be, where to go and who to be are all questions he deals with. 'Saifu' is a film that puts us in a scenario where we all are currently, human beings being separated by the fences of religion. Divided neighborhoods, hatred for the 'others', violence and chaos were the central driving forces. Was it the people who had hatred for each other? Or was it the ones in power behind the manipulation? Saifu is our window to these subjects in 1980, but is the situation any different today?

**Director: Ritika Dwivedi**
Core Crew: Richa Nagare, Nikhil Kujur, Arghya Das, Tenzin Dasel, Swati Trivedi

# Seasonal Greetings

As the seasons hum the melody of love, shedding flowers to the amours, Seasonal Greetings is one such snippet of a florist who stumbles upon an unexpected event as she meets someone along the route of life.

**Director: Tanmay Madhukar**
Core Crew: Prapti Kesarkar, Sahej Nandrajog, Adharsh Thangamani, Naimish Joshi

# What's in a name?

Frustrated by their names being butchered all their lives, two sixth graders form a secret club to assert their unique identities and make strong bonds of friendship in the process.

**Director: Pradyumna Gaikwad**
Core Crew: Krysanne Martis, Nikhil Kujur, Simran Alwani, Ritesh Gupta, Sai Vandana

# Fleeting Beauty

A woman who loses her sight as a child regains her sight for a fleeting moment & is in search of answers, if she can truly regain the sight.
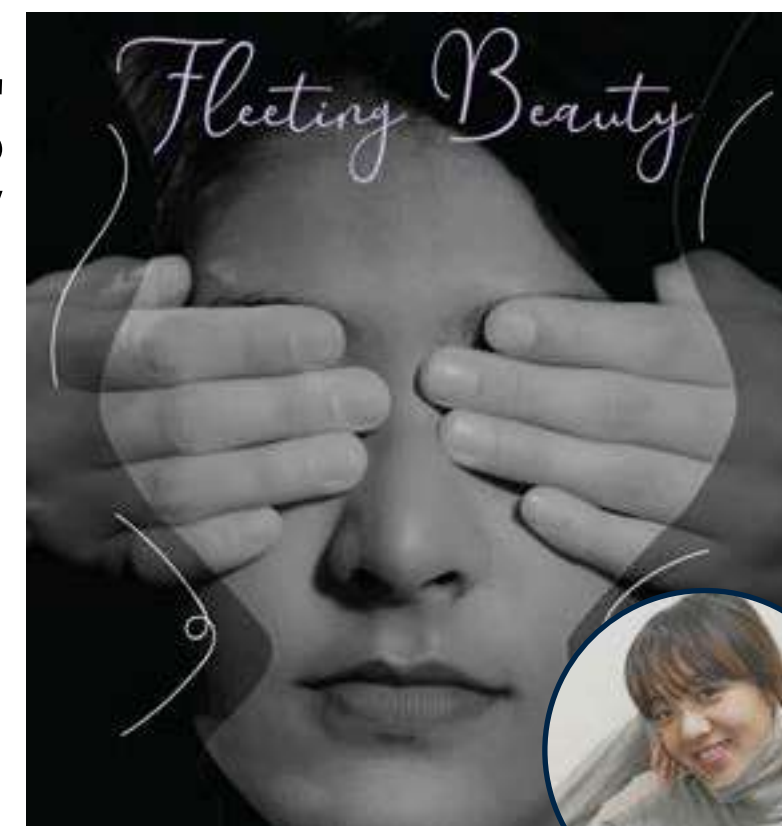
**Director: Kinley Pelmo**
Core Crew: Thinley Wangchuk, Imkomkongkumzuk Jamir, Chimmi Dorji

# Swiping FOR Change

**As she swipes through the plethora of people that come on her screen, she stumbles upon a certain bio that piques her interest. "Looking forward to having conversations about our environment", it reads. As she swipes a little more, she sees that more people were interested in having conversations about our political structure, feminism and climate change.**

*—Parvathi Sajiv Kumar*

The generation that is poised to enter the workforce and is reaching a position of authority is trying to change the narrative that has been built all these years. This Generation whom we dub "Generation Z" ( people born in 1997 - 2012) is coming to the forefront to try to make a difference from what society was like earlier. With the dynamics of social roles changing with this fast-paced world, it comes as no surprise how Generation Z has taken it upon themselves to create an impact.

It is interesting to note how this Generation's search for truth has them rejecting major labels, as they try to create a niche for themselves. The rise of social media forums such as Reddit portray the same phenomenon where people create niche environments to hold discussions; and a community builds as a result.

This generation often makes small efforts to create a big impact. The openness around menstrual health has resulted in many women switching to menstrual cups, which are a sustainable and environment friendly alternative to sanitary napkins.

Women have also made the shift from fast fashion – inexpensively mass-produced clothes which often employ child labour in underdeveloped countries – to buying much more eco-friendly clothes. Recycling is the new trend that they are following. In fact, seeing the efforts of this generation, major companies such as Levi's and Nike have taken a strong stance on social issues in their marketing campaigns.

Movies have always been the largest platform to create a social message. *Parasite*, the winner of the Best Picture award at the 92nd Academy Awards, throws light on the impact of environmental changes and how it ties into economic inequality.

Even though climate change wasn't the major focus of the movie, a part of the movie focuses on how the family is trying to wade through the floods that have affected their livelihood. The family is trying to salvage their possessions from gushing waters mixed with sewage. This is shown in contrast to the wealthy family they work for who see the rains as a minor inconvenience to


*Photo by Kaboompics .com from Pexels*

their lavish plans. Parasite aims to influence the minds to take a strong initiative towards salvaging the last shreds of humanity left to save the climate.

An interesting point to note is how apps have also started catering to Gen Z needs. Bitmoji - Snapchat's AR has also stepped up their game to take a stand on climate change. Their new WaterLine lens shows the bleak future that is awaiting us due to rising water levels and global warming. Through these small but effective steps, more and more people are getting involved in the entire fight against climate change.

Another major platform where a dialogue for climate change has been initiated is in the world of TikTok. This video-sharing app which is used to make hilarious videos and sing along to songs is now being used to advocate against climate change.

The app has several posts with the hashtag #GlobalWarming and videos where people cough up garbage, covering themselves in waste plastic, and applying disease-like makeup. All these visuals portray the dark side of climate change.

The iGen is storming each platform one by one. Considering that 81 per cent of the viewership in the US is Gen Z, several initiatives have been taken by YouTubers to inform their young audiences about the perils of climate change.

As this generation consumes more and more content, streaming services are also trying to get on the bandwagon of ecologically aware content. The Netflix original documentary "Our Planet" won at the Emmys in 2019. It tries to show the earth for its beauty, reminding the audiences that the reward for saving the planet is the planet itself.
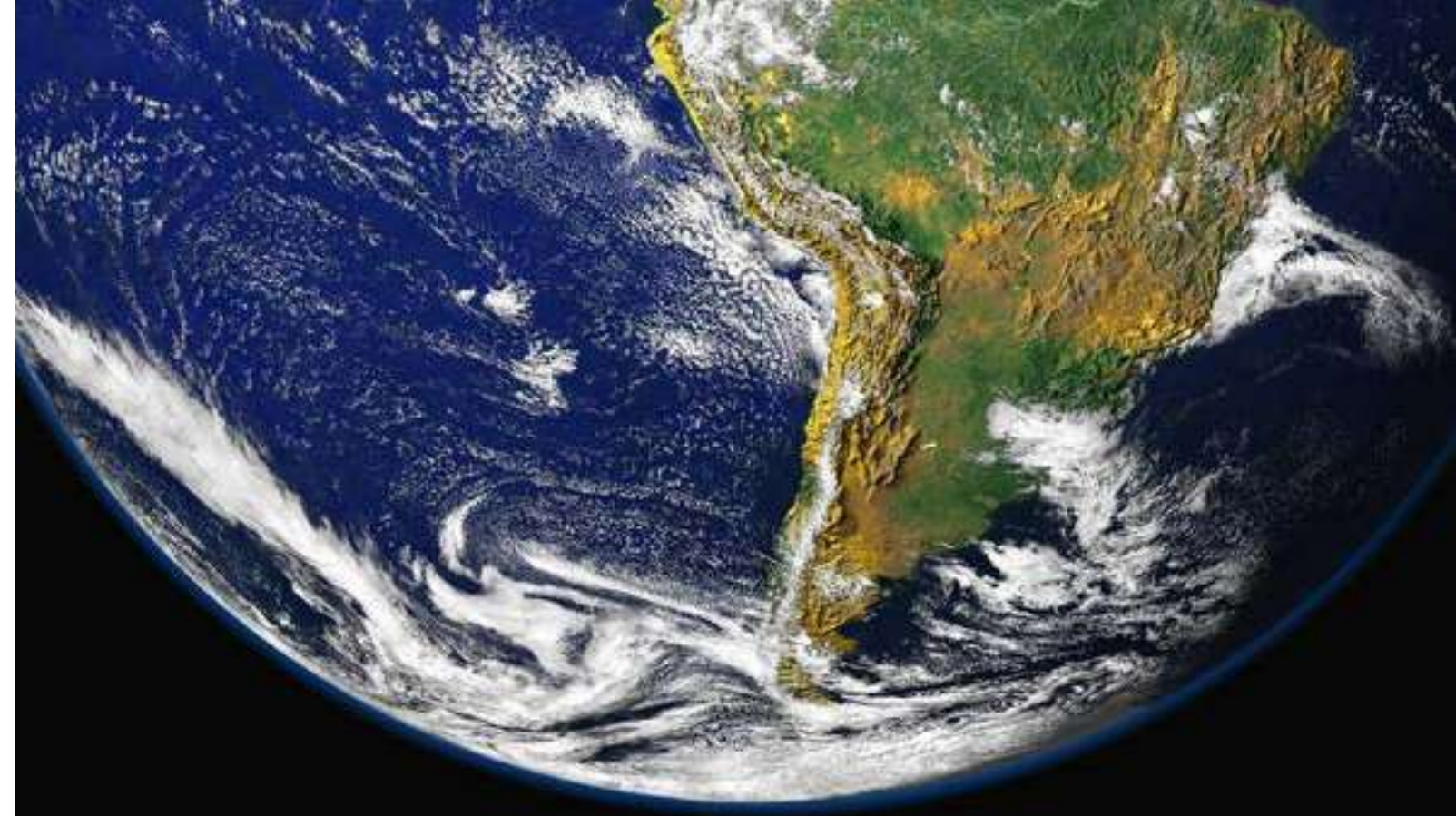
Climate change is a real threat that Gen Z is not in denial of, and so it comes as no surprise that they are ready to bring about a sustainable change.

There are countless Gen-Zers taking the initiative ahead. Greta Thunberg created a storm when she advocated for climate change.

Like Greta, many are coming up with innovative ideas and their innate nature to want to create a better place pushes them to strive for it. The people are mobilising to create change. A change that will sustain us and a change meant to divert the narrative for future generations.

As important issues take a front seat, swiping right on a person with views that align with yours seems like a new way to mobilise and ensure that the change you want to see becomes a reality.

# KNOCK, KNOCK! WHO'S THERE?

Should we leave comedy to the comedians?

- Pratikshya Mishra

What do Bhuvan Bam, Taapsee Pannu, Richa Chadha, Vishal Dadlani, and Shashi Tharoor all have in common? The answer is simple, there is no obvious similarity. Yet, this was the seemingly random combination of people comedian Sapan Verma chose for Amazon Prime's One Mic Stand. The combination, in itself, is genius. The line-up is filled with some of the best comics in the stand-up scene, and combines them with Bollywood stars, a popular YouTuber, and India's charming dictionary. The reason for Verma's choice becomes increasingly clear- there's something for everyone.

The format is surprisingly simple – the set is opened by one of the big comic names, followed by the show's host Verma, and then the wild-card guests. The comedians mentor the celebrities, and then they enter the stage for their 'one night of comedy', or rather an attempt at comedy. This begs the question- should comedy be left to the comics?

When Bhuvan Bam, one of India's fastest growing YouTubers, enters the stage, the audience erupts into cheer which is no surprise. Bam rose in fame almost magically; and is probably the one closest to the genre of comedy among the guests. His set exudes the same charm his fans love, which is probably why he uses the same tactics on stage, and it works. He somehow manages to keep the audience hooked, even though he follows comedian Zakir Khan. It still doesn't answer the main question because we can't completely separate Bam from the genre. The sets that follow elicited a range of reactions from cringe to raucous laughter.

Taapsee Pannu, one of the night's filmstars, grabs the spotlight like its second nature. It's obvious that comedy isn't her forte but she keeps you hooked and most of her jokes land.

The composer, Vishal Dadlani relies on predictable jokes, and if the audience reaction is any hint, he sometimes swings and misses. He attempts to talk about mental health peppered in with jokes. Does he succeed with the social commentary? Maybe. Does he succeed with the comedy? Sometimes, but we can't blame him. As tempt-

ing as it is to analyze each set and each person that stepped on that stage, (I understand I'm not qualified to do that, but when has that ever stopped anybody?) the point is this – these guys managed to do what they were supposed to – make people laugh.

Critic or not, many people seem to agree that politician Shashi Tharoor's set was the highlight. The snippet from his set was also the one that kept the buzz going for the show. Social media exploded with people either gushing over Tharoor and

bubbling with anticipation, or waiting for him to fail.The man has become almost synonymous with complicated words, but surprisingly his set was extremely relatable. It was refreshing to watch the man try to dabble in millennial lingo.

Rashi Bhattacharyya, 20, says, "He tried to make fun of himself and tried so hard to use millennial lingo, which was endearing. He had to follow Kunal Kamra's act, the guy who is famous for his satire, and he still did a great job. He started his set by joking about

giving the audience a dictionary which I loved." Even though comedians don't evidently tryevidently try to cater to millennials, they inevitably do. Millennials, and specifically the GenZ, are the new audience. Comedy and satire have become tools for change because that is what the new generation responds to. That would also explain why popular OTT platforms like Amazon Prime, Netflix, and Hotstar included all have comedy specials, from Zakir Khan to Vir Das. In this time and age, everyone is a com-

ic. In One Mic Stand, Verma brilliantly paired Tharoor with Kunal Kamra, a comedian that is known for his political satire.

One might argue that we can't leave comedy to the comedians anymore because it's a tool now. People use comedy to make sure the new generation is listening. However, that doesn't mean that comedians throw in their towel. Even as you read this, you must imagine the look on Upmanyu's face (a very popular meme, in fact) when he said, "mai kya karu fir? job chhod du?"

Even though everybody can attempt comedy (or satire), the world rarely churns out Biswa-s and Kanan-s by the dozen. It's one thing to be funny once in a while but it's another to make a career out of it. Everyone is a comic but we must leave comedy to the comedians. Every One Mic Stand or Comicstaan isn't a success. One Mic Stand succeeds mostly because of novelty. The sheer fact that the stars aren't comedians became a selling point for the show. These shows act as great 'comic relief' from the plethora of content out there but it's still the big names that sell.

People need to see comedians like Kaneez or Sebastian in the trailer to tune in to these shows. That's true for every industry because every new comedian had a big name before him, every new singer opens for a bigger name, and every new star works with a legend.

Comedy isn't easy but it's worth a shot, just ask Tharoor. Oh, and remember to take a dictionary.

"The Brits were lit AF when they saw India. They thought our resources were snacc. So they built this empire that left us shook but we resisted the empire, Gandhiji and all that, because YOLO."

Shashi Tharoor

*Screengrab from YouTube*

# Memes throughout History: Where Did It Begin?

*Disclaimer: This article will contain unnecessary memes to convey the importance of memes in a serious article in order to increase relatability.*

— ***Arpan Cheema***



According to reports the average attention span of the thriving or rather the 'trending' millennials is a whopping twelve seconds and its successive generation, 'GenZ' has got it worse, they not only have a shorter attention span of a disappointing eight seconds, they also juggle more screens. In such an environment where information about everything is in abundance, it is very difficult to catch the attention of millennials, but the ever-evolving internet has found a way, memes!

In today's social media raj, it is impossible for someone to not have been an audience of memes. The meme culture has evolved and now its everywhere, in hard-copy books, in classrooms, in everyday lingo and even in corporate presentations.

Memes are a very efficient conversation starter, when in doubt about what to say, just send a meme, it makes one look less rude, still interested in the conversation, and also can act as an escape to the dying route the conversation between two individuals was taking.

For the millennials who spent their childhood in front of computer screens, and find it hard to express exactly what they want to say, memes are the perfect mediums, they are short, snappy, often sarcastic and so very relatable, in a world which is obsessed with individuality.

In fact, it is seen rude in today's social media culture, if a friend tags another friend in a funny meme and the person doesn't respond to that meme with a plethora of laughing emojis.

Don't know what to say to your girlfriend? Just send in a cute meme of a fluffy animal, and it can be any animal, the internet has it all, its favourite is, of course, the fluffy -furry cat, but there are options for a dog person too! The last-minute panic of sending in an assignment at midnight sharp can be aptly conveyed by a 'shooketh' meme.

Having established the popularity of memes, where did they exactly come from? And before going to the history, is it possible to give a definition of memes, in a world moving away from boundaries and definitions?



> MEMES ARE THE ONLY TRULY GOOD THING IN THE WORLD RIGHT NOW , THERE IS SO MUCH NEGATIVITY OUT THERE; THEY GIVE YOU UNCONDITIONAL LOVE.
>
> IN THE ORDER OF UNCONDITIONAL LOVE: 1. MEMES 2. PANDA
>
> – Mansukhman Jhulka, Batch 20

Who would have thought that the word meme is short for mimeme which has its origin from Ancient Greece ! Pronounced mīmēma, it stands for 'imitated thing'. This term was first coined in the modern times by British evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins in *The Selfish Gene* in the year 1976 as a concept for discussion of evolutionary principles in explaining the spread of ideas and cultural phenomena.

Examples of memes given in the book included melodies, catch-phrases, fashion, and the technology of building arches, a far cry away from the meaning of memes today. As the Internet advanced and became more accessible to people, memes continued to grow. Dawkins' concept has now turned into the hilarity that we know as Internet culture. It's hard to pinpoint the very first Internet meme, but one of the earliest was the 3D Dancing Baby.The Internet, by sheer virtue of its instant communication, is how we now spread modern memes to each other's inboxes. A link to a You-Tube video of Rick Astley, a file attachment with a Stars Wars Kid movie, an email signature with a Chuck Norris quote—these are a few examples of modern meme symbols and culture spreading through online media. Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, of course, continue to lead the pack for instantly viral memes.

Memes are essentially an idea or joke expressed through content on the Internet. Memes can be a photo, video, person, fictional character, song, event, gif, Tweet—the possibilities are endless. A meme simply a memorable piece of content that gets spread widely because of its relatability and humour.

The memes swamped the internet in the 2000s but have been in existence since the 1990s. A lot of memes still go back to the '90s building a sense of nostalgia amongst the millennials who grew up in this period.

Snapshots from the films which most of the millennials have seen growing up are used as the backdrop of memes, they gain popularity as they are more relatable and recognisable , people can relate and understand the memes and hence they share it. Also, things such as the floppy disks, the Walkman, the Mario Brothers video games which were common amongst the '90s kids are made and circulated to create a nostalgia and a sense of belonging for the millennials who find themselves in a much faster and complicated world.

Today, memes have become the millennials' way of hiding true and terrifying insecurities about how little control they have over their lives. The world of memes is so vast that there are various sub-categories.

The category of 'dark memes' is becoming viral. The news and headlines today are mostly negative and bring in a feeling of sadness and fear of the dark pit of immorality  and danger the world is heading towards. Millennials have come up with dark, although sometimes inappropriate humour to cope up with the sad events around the world .

The corona virus memes and the World War three memes being the latest and the most viral products of this concept.



## Memes and Marketing

According to Mrs Usha Khajuria, 36, who works at Zee News, Pune, as the Regional Marketing Head, " Amidst the corporate marketing lingo, which makes most of the audience go to sleep, a meme popping up on the projector makes everyone in the conference alert, and it lightens the mood along with making the concept easier to consume. A lot can be said and explained in just a meme."

Creation and sharing of memes on various social media platforms heavily influence the Internet culture. In a time, everyone wants to remain relevant and fame is temporary, memes become a major tool for audience traction.  We want to laugh. We want to feel included in an Internet-wide inside joke. In a highly capitalized society, the users don't want annoying promotions or company-made content to interrupt a good time. This is why marketers have gotten in on the fun and share meme-themed content to their social media profiles. This is particularly important if the target audience of the product or service is Millennials—the people who made the meme what it is today.



I HAVE A YOUNGER BROTHER WHO HAS GROWN UP WITH HIS PHONE, HIS PHONE MODELS ALSO GROW AS HE GROWS OLDER, HE DOESN'T KNOW THE LIFE OF BURNING CDs AND DOWNLOADING MUSIC ILLEGALLY FROM THE NET INSTEAD OF USING ITUNES; SUCH MEMES MAKE MY DAY!

- Shraddhaa Beena, Batch 21

# A NEW-AGE STORYTELLER

— *Gunjan Hariramani*

*Nishank Verma*

"*Hello Ma'am. I am calling from XYZ Bank. You have won a free trip to Goa as part of our card scheme. I will need your card details in order to be able to give you your reward.*"

Sounds familiar? We all have gotten a "spam" call at some point in time in our lives. It, however, wasn't always evident that these calls were after all, scams. At some point, there were people who did fall for these scams and ended up losing large amounts of money from their accounts. The reason I am talking about this is because there's not much that the public knew about these scams, until, Netflix came out with its new show, *Jamtara*.

A Netflix Original, the series revolves around the phishing scams in Jamtara district of Jharkhand. A blend of fact and fiction, the show gives us a peek into the operations of these scams. Personally, more than the fictional aspect of the show which depicts the interpersonal relationships of the characters, I'm looking for a more detailed narrative of the scam itself. If I could only ask the creators about the choices

they made for the show to satisfy my curiosity.

On a warm sunday afternoon in the gardens of NFAI, Pune, I meet Nishank Verma, the person who conceived Jamtara. A storyteller, writer and actor, he not just answers my queries about the show, but also shares his views on the content we're seeing today. He even gives some valuable insights into the art of storytelling and acting, both close to his heart.

Calm and poised, with a friendly demeanor, he begins by telling me where the idea of Jamtara came from. A 2015 Indian Express report talked about the numerous phishing scams across the country that could be traced back to Jamtara. The uneducated young boys who carried out a sophisticated scam like phishing were earning upto a lakh per day, which changed the entire face of Jamtara – it went from being a traditional Indian village to a modern, technologically equipped district. With it, also emerged the construction mafia, which was enabling the development of infrastructure there.

Nishank, along with a few friends had received calls that didn't seem genuine, and so were saved from the duping. However, to him it was a story to tell not only for its relevance, but also because, "This could be our big Indian Story, our own Narcos."

The era of web series and OTT platforms was only emerging in India, but was definitely going to boom, and so he thought of it as an eight-ten part series with each episode revealing more and more details as the show would progress. The idea which was conceived in 2016 and could have been one of the first big stories alongside Sacred Games and Inside Edge still continues to have relevance in 2020. When I express my disappointment as a viewer and ask him about the choices he made for the show, he reveals that the control of the story was taken away from him, and hence he couldn't see the show through the production phase.

He personally would have produced the story differently by unfolding elaborate details of the scam itself, while weaving a fictional narrative around it. Sipping on our coffees, we then move on to talking about the content scene in India today. Nishank recollects that back when he graduated in college, the focus was more on unrealistic stories which didn't interest him as much. "My world exploded when I went to film school. I now had access to Indian as well as world cinema." He got a head start into developing a taste for good work. After TVF (YouTube Channel) came in the early 2010s with sketches, it paved a way for creators to develop online comedy content which the people were beginning to enjoy. However, that in itself meant that even writers coming with original stories were and still is being nudged by the producers to involve comedy even when it doesn't fit the plot.

Furthermore, when writers pitch stories, the producers still ask about the number of sex scenes that would be included in the episodes, as it gives them big numbers. "It's a race where people are trying to sell something that is big. It's not about the writers, but the producers who aren't trusting real stories." The upside, he adds, is that the stories we see today are original, realistic and true to their essence and the viewers are rejecting content that doesn't seem organic. One of the greatest things in today's times, he feels, is that all kinds of content are accessible to all kinds of people, and that feels democratic.

The competition amongst shows is not just limited to the Ekta Kapoor brand of shows, but goes beyond borders. That in itself makes writers like Nishank more hopeful about their stories being heard, as for him, the inspiration comes from the everyday realities of the people he meets. "The personal is the most creative," he quotes Martin Scorcese, like Bong Joon Ho did in his Oscars speech, and says that it is something that he truly relates to.Finally, I ask him how aspiring storytellers and writers like us can find our way out in the industry and grow in our fields. "Read, watch more and more content, and travel the length and breadth of the country to find your people and your stories," he tells me. He also tells me the importance of being open to more ideas to help us create better content.

"We all should be vulnerable to learning new things, because you never know, it could be your next big story," he says sagely, taking his final sip of coffee with a smile on his face.

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