



Anastacia Lyn Newkirk (born one this day in 1968) is an American pop personality who has a typical fondness for butterflies, and wears them in her hair and mentions them in her lyrics.

'Translating is a dual responsibility'

Bhawana Somaaya has been documenting famous lives for decades now, but her newest project has her translating the words of the most important man in the country. The film critic, biographer, author (of 16 books) and journalist's upcoming book is titled *Letters to Mother*, a translation of the Gujarati book *Saakshi Bhaav*, a collection of letters by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The book features letters penned by a young PM to the Mother Goddess, whom he addresses as 'Jagat Mata', and explores his innermost anxieties, thoughts, observations and much more.

of that I have to sync in my voice, a female voice with the PM's voice, a male voice.

The Politics Of It

I am damned if I do this book, I'm damned if I don't! It's releasing today but not many people have read it, but I really don't care about what people think. I have never sought feedback, even from the people I write about. I am not a political journalist, it's not a political interview that I am documenting. I am translating a book. That's it.

The Element Of Suffering

I was very curious to know more about 1986, the politics, his life, about RSS. This was a new world to me, his suffering is constant. His suffering is collective, calm and meditative and used productively and had been put into these passages. It's the same for anybody who over-thinks, he's never at peace.

The State Of Bollywood Today

I have been around the industry for many years. I have never encountered junkies or parties of this kind, maybe I have lived through a different world. I applauded Jaya Bachchan for what she said in Rajya Sabha. Just for a few rotten tomatoes you cannot blame the whole basket. Be it crime or suicide it happens everywhere. It's not just the film fraternity.

On Writing About Great Men

After a certain point when I would stop writing and turn on the TV, I wondered if this is the man I am writing about. Even when I was working on a book on Amitabh Bachchan, meeting him or watching his movies was so distracting for my process. Translating and turn on the TV far more difficult than writing, because when I am writing I am only responsible for myself, but this is a dual responsibility. Through Gujarati is my mother tongue, I had never studied Gujarati. On top



Bhawana Somaaya



(Now red) IPS officer Kiran Bedi visits the art workshop at Tihar Jail in 2001



Narang, at present



Dolly Narang with Kiran Bedi at the 2001 exhibition at Tihar Jail

THE MUSE COMES CALLING IN JAIL

An ongoing show displays 50 artworks created 25 years ago by women inmates at the Tihar Jail

EXPRESS FEATURES

FROM the early '90s till 2001, Delhi-based artist Dolly Narang conducted art workshops for women prisoners at Tihar Jail. Twenty-five years later, India International Centre (IIC) is showcasing these 50-something unique artworks in an exhibition titled, *A Brush with Hope*. In a conversation with *The Morning Standard*, Narang recounts the making of this exhibition.



What made you hold art workshops for women prisoners at the Tihar Jail? I attended a talk by Kiran Bedi in the early '90s. She spoke about the program of prison reforms, and highlighted the aspect of community involvement. I went to her after the talk and discussed my ideas of taking an arts workshop with the inmates. Together, with my friend, artist

Bulbul Sharma, I took the workshops using monprint as a medium. Dr Bedi only had one condition - not to bring anything sharp or inflammable to the workshop.

Why monprint?
This medium is not intimidating and anyone can do it. Unlike drawing, where most of the time, we are expected to render exact features in a portrait per say, this one is very easy to learn.

What were the major challenges you encountered at these workshops? Many of the prisoners were reluctant. Only after they saw others creating the artworks, they became curious. In every following workshop, more and more women joined.

How was the vibe at the jail premises during these workshops?

The workshop used to last for two-and-half hours each and the atmosphere on the premises was joyful. The women prisoners used to make jokes and also encourage each other. I received the feedback that they were less angry and happy to break away from the daily hostility and tension. As many of the women couldn't complete their education, it was exhilarating for me to see them holding tools such as rollers, plexiglass, paints and brushes required to make monprints. They even started to work on their self-made techniques.

What kind of artworks did they create?
It was a mix of everything. While some made abstracts, others followed the landscape style. Many created portraits as well.

Any upcoming plans to carry on this initiative?
Not at the moment.
On view: Till September 20

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EVENT WATCH

Sticking to idealism

EXPRESS FEATURES

KALINGA Literary Festival (KLF), a premier literary festival, recently initiated an online literary webinar series titled, *Bhaav Samvad*. The platform has conducted 51 sessions so far, and has reached over nine lakh views. In one of its sessions, nonagenarian writer Nayantara Sahgal was in conversation with Kedarn Mishra, an eminent art critic and political analyst.

The discussion covered the writer's early days of education and how she got inspired by Gandhiji. She lost her father Ranjit Sitaram Pandit in her teens and her mother Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit was a strong force of support.

Talking about how the transition in politics has inspired her writings, she said, "My novel characters continue to reflect the contemporary times. As writers, it's incumbent upon us to reflect the social reality. I wrote against the policies of Indira Gandhi and criticised the Emergency, and as a result I was denied a posting to Italy as an ambassador. The freedom struggle fused with Gandhian ideas of non-violence struggle continues to provide oxygen and I don't fear to criticise any government for their policies and ideologies."

HAIRMARI SHARMA TANHA

EVENT organisers are in high spirits after the Unlock 4.0 guidelines on September 1 permitted this industry to reopen for business from September 21 with a ceiling of 100 persons.

This development occurred after a meeting between the Government Interaction Committee of the apex industry body Event and Entertainment Management Association (EEMA) with the Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai. EEMA had submitted a list of SOPs (standard operating procedures) events to instil confidence in the authorities that attempts would be made to keep everyone safe while holding events.

The SOPs were prepared for each industry vertical after taking into account the government guidelines by an EEMA task force, and doing this gave the government enough confidence about letting the industry go back to work. "We had organised an open webinar. Over 1,000+ industry partners and stakeholders attended it and agreed to follow the EEMA guidelines," says EEMA General Secretary Siddhartha Chaturvedi.

The SOPs include enhanced protocols related to sanitisation, cleaning, hygiene, attendee management, venue requirements among others. "The USP of this document is its exhaustive detailing of transparency which covers the entire life cycle of an event right from its inception to execution and post. We have covered it all under WHO norms. The detailing goes from how the *mehendi wali* needs to operate at a wedding, managing a queue at a temple festival to a road show vehicle going to a gram panchayat, sanitising the mic and green rooms at corporate events, dining in a *langar* to dining in a cluster seating to a safe movement in a music festival. We have tried to cover it all," says Chaturvedi, adding, "Since we already carry out comprehensive risk assessment, safety checks and logistical planning for every event, including a Covid-19 mitigation plan was not a huge deal. It informs that the events industry with over 10 million work force, was seeing a steady growth till the lockdown brought it to a standstill. Now the mood is upbeat, barring one disclaimer - the cap of 100 persons.



Events industry gets back to BUSINESS

"I feel the cap on 100 attendees should be removed. Depending on the size of the venue, more attendees should be allowed," says Vikas Gutgutia, Founder & Managing Director, Ferns and Petals. Chaturvedi agrees that 100 is a restrictive number. "The number of people should depend on the size of the venue. Only then, we can hope to revive the industry. We are in talks with the government on this issue," he says, adding, "Covid is not going away anytime soon, so we must conduct ourselves responsibly. Entertainment adds to the happiness index of the country, and I think things will move up post-Diwali when people will start going out."

Detailed SOPs

The SOPs range from how the *mehendi wali* needs to operate at a wedding, managing a queue at a temple festival to sanitising the mic and green rooms, dining in a *langar* or cluster seating.

Vikas Gutgutia, Siddhartha Chaturvedi, Arkur Kalra

CLASIC FOOTWEAR

Iconic homegrown footwear brand, Alberto Torres, brings in the newly launched format yet comfortable oxfords collection: "Timeless Classic" for their patrons. A perfect blend of style and comfort, the designs are lighter yet bring the timeless appeal to your formal collection. Available in Black, Tan and Florence shades, these exquisite pairs with trousers or chinos for a sharp tailored look.

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Laxmi Bomb gets a Diwali premiere on Disney+ Hotstar

EXPRESS FEATURES

AKSHAY Kumar-starrer *Laxmi Bomb* will premiere on Disney+ Hotstar on Diwali (November 9). Directed by Raghava Lawrence, the film is a remake of the 2011 Tamil horror-comedy *Muzi 2: Kanchna*. The original story follows the ghost of a transgender woman who possesses a faint-hearted man to take revenge on her murderers. The Hindi remake also stars Kiara Advani, Tusshar Kapoor, Sharad Kelkar and others.

It was earlier speculated that the makers were pulling the film off OTT to wait for theatres to reopen. However, the rumours were officially put to rest on Wednesday with Akshay announcing the film's release date as November 9. This is the actor's first direct-to-digital release.

"This Diwali, 'Laxmi Bomb' will arrive in your homes with a 'bomb'," Kumar tweeted, sharing a new teaser for the film.

Laxmi Bomb will stream on Disney+ Hotstar VIP on November 9 from 9pm onwards. The platform is also set to release *Bhuj: The Pride of India* and *The Big Bull*.

INDIAN EXPRESS

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Designer

Fashion for a New World

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KAVEREE BAMZAI
Author and Journalist

EDISON THOMAS
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