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Life & Times



Loss of Paradise

**Vickram Sethi mourns the unending ache of Partition
—an open wound across the heart of a troubled land**



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A Tale of Two Cities

If Charles Dickens were to reimagine *A Tale of Two Cities* set in India, his narrative would likely find itself anchored between the vivid legacies of Bombay (now Mumbai) and Delhi. His quill would draw not just from revolution and redemption, but from history, heritage and human endeavour.

In Bombay, he would be charmed by the Parsees — a community as distinctive and resilient as any Dickensian character. He would dwell at length on the extraordinary contributions of the Tatas — builders not only of commercial empires but of a nation's future. From the Taj Mahal Hotel, the Institute of Science, the Tata Memorial Hospital, and the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, to the founding of Air India, the Tata legacy continues to shape the soul of the metropolis.

Dickens would no doubt find inspiration in the Wadia family — famed shipbuilders who also created the 'Baug's', large residential colonies that gave Bombay's growing population a sense of community and permanence. The Petit family, bearing a name with a French echo, were responsible for the establishment of the Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy School of Art and the JJ Hospital, along with other esteemed institutions.

Dickens would likely admire the Gateway of India, completed in 1924 to commemorate the visit of King George V and Queen Mary — now an enduring symbol of the city's colonial past and cosmopolitan present.

He would surely be impressed by the grandeur of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (formerly Victoria Terminus), designed by

Frederick Stevens in 1887 — a masterpiece of Victorian Gothic Revival architecture.

Turning to Delhi, Dickens would trace the regal imprints left by Shahjahan — the Lal Qila (Red Fort), built as his imperial residence, from where, centuries later, the Prime Minister delivers the Independence Day address each 15th of August. Shahjahan's Jama Masjid, completed in 1656, remains one of the largest and most majestic mosques in India.

Further back in time, the Qutub Minar — erected by Qutb-ud-Din Aibak in 1193 — rises as one of the tallest brick minarets in the world, a structure that continues to defy the passage of time. Nearby stands Humayun's Tomb, commissioned in 1565 by the emperor's wife — an exquisite embodiment of Mughal architecture, surrounded by symmetrical gardens and tranquil water channels.

Dickens would be drawn to the India Gate, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, a solemn war memorial honouring soldiers who fell in the First World War — now a site of both national remembrance and public gathering.

And yet, were he to look for characters in Delhi as vivid as his own creations, Dickens might find the landscape sparse. "The important people live in Delhi," the narrator would muse, "but Dickens wouldn't be able to write too much about them."

Vickram Seth

Vickram Seth

Publisher and Editor-in-Chief

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Editorial & Business Office:

FGP Centre, Commercial Union House,
3rd floor, 9 Wallace Street, Fort,
Mumbai - 400 001.

Email - editorial: editor@seniorstoday.in

Email - advertising: sales@seniorstoday.in

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Beatriz Carpallo Porcar is a Physiotherapist. Teaching and research staff in the Physiotherapy degree programme at San Jorge University. Member of the iPhysio research group, San Jorge University



Rita Galán Díaz is a Physiotherapist. Teaching and research staff in the Bachelor's Degree in Physiotherapy at San Jorge University. Member of the iPhysio research group, San Jorge University

Deepa Gahlot is one of India's seniormost and best-known entertainment journalists. A National Award-winning film critic, she has authored several books on film and theatre



Malti Gaekwad is an artist at heart, graphic designer by profession and a well-known Public Relations practitioner based in Vadodara



Dr Nandini Saini is a practicing homoeopath and aesthetician with experience of over 15 years.



Harsh Goenka is Chairman of RPG Enterprises. Very active on Twitter, he is known for his inspirational, information and often humorous take on life and events. He tweets at @hvgoenka

Nagesh Alai is a management consultant, an independent director on company boards, and cofounder of a B2B enterprise tech startup. He can be reached at nageshalai@gmail.com



Loss of Paradise



Vickram Sethi reflects on the never-ending trauma of the Partition and the unhealed wounds it left on a nation divided

*“Agar firdous bar rū-ye zamīn ast, hamīn ast-o hamīn ast-o hamīn ast-o
If there is a paradise on Earth, it is this, it is this, it is this.”*

These words by 13th century Sufi poet Amir Khusrau were echoed centuries later by Emperor Jehangir as he gazed upon Shalimar Bagh in Kashmir.

When a child is born, a mother often places a black dot on the baby’s cheek or forehead—to ward off the evil eye. Tragically, Kashmir, one of the most breathtakingly beautiful places on this planet, had no such protection. Today, it lies at the heart of a bitter, unresolved

conflict between India and Pakistan. The history of this hostility is well-documented, but perhaps no longer worth recounting. Its consequences, however, still unfold.

For many senior citizens, Partition is not a mere historical event—it is a memory, a scar that has never truly healed. We witnessed the birth of two nations and the heartbreak of one undivided land. Looking back from 2025, it becomes clear



Brothers reuniting after a lifetime of separation due to the Partition of India

Image Courtesy: The Guardian

that the Partition of India was not a clean severing—it was a deep wound and its pain continues to ripple through generations, through families, through minds.

One of the most tragic consequences of Partition was the division of families. Over 15 million people are said to have been displaced. It remains the largest migration in human history. As borders were hastily drawn, entire families fled across them. Nearly two million people lost their lives. Homes that had stood for centuries, communities, traditions, heritage—were all lost. No one could have anticipated the sheer ferocity of the bloodbath that followed.

The British announced their abrupt departure, leaving behind a subcontinent in chaos. Cyril Radcliffe, a man who had never set foot in India, was entrusted with the task of drawing the borders between India and Pakistan. In a matter of weeks, lines were carved through homes, fields and hearts.

In August 1947, after 300 years of rule, the British not only looted India of its wealth, but worse—they sowed the seeds of hatred between Hindus and Muslims. It is well-documented that district magistrates, working with the police, instigated communal riots across the subcontinent. Communities that had co-existed for nearly a millennium turned on each other in a terrifying frenzy. This was the British ‘divide and rule’ policy at its most destructive. The hatred they unleashed will haunt us for generations. They were, truly, an evil force—the children of Lucifer and Medusa.

Every land they ruled suffered inhuman acts of cruelty. If one were to put them on trial for war crimes, the verdict would be death. The next generation must be told

these truths, to recognise how brutal and exploitative their ancestors were. Beneath their veneer of civility lies the blood of innocents—stains that no cleansing can remove.

All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this hand.

- Macbeth (William Shakespeare)

The Partition was not an event with an end. It continues to shape lives—past, present and future. The hurried nature of the division meant that no adequate systems were in place to manage the transition. This wilful negligence resulted in widespread violence. Understanding the history of Partition is crucial if we are to understand its lasting imprint on the psyche of both nations. The British policy of division sowed a legacy of mistrust, hatred, and deep-seated resentment. Instead of healing, the wound has only deepened.

India and Pakistan have since fought four wars—in 1947, 1965, 1971 and 1999—as well as numerous skirmishes. Each conflict claimed countless lives. The bitterness has only intensified.



For many of us seniors, the pain is personal. We remember Partition not just through history books, but through the stories of our parents—of family members killed, of survivors who lived through one hardship after another. For many, Partition wasn't the dawn of freedom... it was a night

where the stars vanished and the morning never came.

Families that once celebrated Diwali, Holi, Eid and Baisakhi together turned into enemies overnight. And yet, there were those who risked their lives to protect neighbours from the madness and mayhem of the streets.



Trains, once symbols of modern India, became vehicles of horror. There are haunting photographs—people seated on rooftops, hanging from doors. One train arrived in Delhi, and someone asked: how many survivors? How many corpses? These were trains that never arrived.

Partition is not just an old wound—it is a lesson. A reminder of what happens when hatred triumphs, when fear divides, when politics forgets its humanity. For seniors, it is essential to share these stories—not just with sorrow, but with wisdom. The young must know that we were not always divided, that our festivals were once celebrated under a shared sky. The pain of lost homes is deeply human.

For today's generation, Partition is a chapter in a history textbook. For senior citizens, it was—and is—life. The hatred born out of Partition is among the most poisonous legacies of the last century.

India is a democracy. We have an elected government that is answerable to its people. Pakistan, by contrast, is run by army generals—men who reside in 10

acre mansions with armed security and overflowing bank accounts, often abroad. Their children live lives of luxury in safe countries, while their own citizens suffer. Pakistan is a failed state—bankrupt, ill-governed and struggling. Many of its people are largely uneducated and desperate to escape. What remains is the poor and the army. And for these generals, war is a necessity—for their relevance, for their survival. The affluent are educated abroad, they throw lavish parties, and even as they rue the state of their nation, they go on with their lives.

There are moments in a nation's journey when history demands not only reflection, but action. Today is one such moment. After Pulwama, we responded with Balakot. And now, once again, we face a grave provocation.

In the serene valley of Pahalgam, a group of tourists was murdered. Not because they did anything, but simply because of who they were.



Let there be no doubt—these attackers were extremists, brainwashed with hatred and lies. A narrative has been built—portraying Indians as occupiers in Kashmir, a land that has been home to them for over a thousand years. And yet, despite the barbarity of these acts, the world remains largely silent with just the token expression of outrage.

When such acts occur in Europe, the



global anger is immediate. But when Indians are murdered in their own homeland, the world hesitates. It forgets to speak.

As history threatens to repeat itself, the question remains: will the world once again respond with empty speeches and “both sides” rhetoric, or will it finally acknowledge the truth?

Today, India speaks in one voice. This is not the time for blame games or finger-pointing over intelligence failures. The focus must now be on justice—ensuring that those responsible are held accountable.

For the sake of our forefathers and those who built the nation, for the generation of today and the future, let us stand up, speak out and ensure that such atrocities are never again tolerated. Not now. Not ever.

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A Cry from the Soil of Punjab

Amrita Pritam's poignant poem 'Aj Aakhaan Waris Shah Nu' is a cry from the soul, written in the aftermath of the Partition. It calls upon the 18th century Punjabi poet Waris Shah, famed for his tragic romance Heer Ranjha, to rise from his grave and witness the far greater tragedy that has befallen Punjab

अज आखां वारसि शाह नू कतिं कब्रं वचिं बोल
ते अज कतिब-ए-इश्क दा कोई अगला वरका फोल
इक रोई सी धी पंजाब दी तू लखि-लखि मारे वेन
अज लाखां धीयां रोंदियां तेनु वारसि शाह नू केहन
उठ दरदमंदान देया दरदया उठ तक अपना पंजाब
अज बीले लाशां वचियां ते लहू दी भारी चनब
कसि ने पैजां पनयां वचि दत्तिती जहर राला
ते ओन्हां पनयां धरत नू दत्तिता पानी ला
एस जरखेज जमीन दे लूं लूं फुत्तया जहर गीथ
गथि चारहयां लालयां फुत्त फुत्त चाररया क्यूहर
वेहो वलिसी दा फेर वैन वैन वाग्गी जा
ओन्हे हर इक वैनस दी वंझली दत्तिती नाग बाना
पहला डांग मदारयां मंत्र गए ग्वाच

दूजे दंड दी लग गई जने खाने नू लाग
नागन कई लोक मुंह बीएस फरि डांग ही डांग
पालो पाली पंजाब दे नीले पे गए अंग
गलयां टूटे गीत फरि त्राक्कलयां टूटे तंद
टर्नजानो टूटियां सहैलयां चरखरे चूकर
बंद साने सैज दे बैरियां लधन दत्तियां रोबारह
साने दलयां पीघ अज पपिलान दत्ति तोर
जथि वाजदी सी फुक पयार दी ओह वंजली गै गवाच
रांझे दे सब वीर अज भुल गए हमे दी जाच
धरती ते लहू वस्या कबरान पय्यां चोन
प्रीत दयां शहजादयां अज वचि मजारन रोन
अज सभे कैदो बन गए हुसेन इश्क दे चोर
अज कथि लयाये लाभ के वारसि शाह एक होर
अज आखां वारसि शाह नू कतिन कबरान वचिोन बोल
ते अज कतिब ए इश्क दा कोई अगला वरका फूल

*Today, I call out to Waris Shah —
Speak from your grave,
And turn the next page
In the book of love.*

*Once, a daughter of Punjab wept,
And you wrote countless dirges —*

But today, millions of daughters weep,
Calling out your name, Waris Shah.

Rise, O poet of pain,
Look at your beloved Punjab —
Today, fields are strewn with corpses,
And rivers run thick with blood.

Someone has poisoned the five rivers,
Their waters carry venom now —
This fertile land's every grain,
Sprouts with poison and death.



The cotton blooms red with blood,
The wind screams in anguish.
The flute once played of Heer's love,
Now hisses like a snake in mourning.
The pirs and fakirs have vanished,
Their shrines lie in silence.
The baton of the saints is gone —
Now only whips remain.

Snakes crawl from every corner,
Pale with poison, lost in rage.

Punjab's sky has turned dark —
Its limbs bruised, its heart crushed.

Songs have broken in the streets,
The spinning wheels lie still.
Girls who once sang to the moon,
Now cry silently in ruined homes.

Our wedding beds have been looted,
Our swings torn from the pipal trees.
The flute that once sang of love —
Its melody has disappeared.
Ranjha's brothers — all have forgotten
The ways of love and grace.
Blood flows in every field,
And graves bloom across the land.

The princesses of love now weep
Inside their tombs, unheard.
All have become thieves of beauty,
Every lover a killer of love.

Where now can we find,
Another Waris Shah?

Today, I call out to Waris Shah —
Speak from your grave,
And turn the next page
In the book of love.

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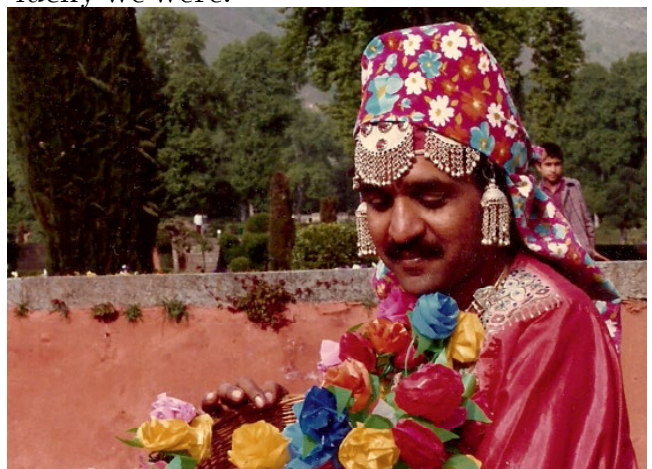
Walks Down Memory's Lane

Photographs by Sati Sahni

The cherry and apple blossoms, the tulip garden, saffron and mustard fields are all ingrained in my mind, heart and soul, reminisces *Malti Gaekwad*

Hailing from Kashmir, my whole childhood was spent in the beautiful valley of Srinagar. Going to the Convent School by crossing the Jhelum river every day in a Shikara, with hills and lush fields all around, the magnificent Dal Lake (just walking distance away) and the Nageen Lake laced with luxurious houseboats, flanked by the Hari Parvat on one side and the Zabarwan range on the other, climbing up the hill of Shankaracharya temple on

Sundays and visiting the flower laden Mughal Gardens for regular picnics was the way of life. Maybe as kids we took all this for granted and didn't realise how lucky we were.



A tourist having fun Mughal Gardens 1981

My grandparents migrated from Rawalpindi to Kashmir at the time of India's partition and rebuilt their lives almost from scratch. By the time my parents got married my grandparents lived in a big house with a beautiful garden in front of the house with a rose garden and vegetable garden all our own.... right in the newer part of Srinagar, known as Hotel Road - because the famous and only hotel of those days the Nedou's was also on the same road.

So my brothers and I grew up amongst fragrant flowers, cool fresh air bringing whiffs of the roses, honeysuckle, magnolia, blossoms of fruit bearing trees as well as the poplars, chinars, weeping willows, pines and other trees, eating fresh home grown vegetables and exotic local fruits like cherries, strawberries, plums, peaches, apples, mulberries and what not....



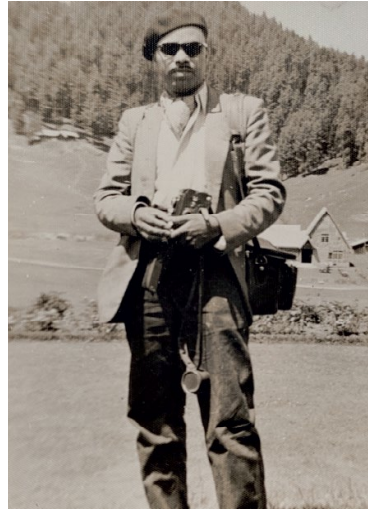
Me - little kashmiri girl

No wonder friends and relatives envied us. Kashmir in the summers was a happening place. My father, a journalist, kept extremely busy professionally and socially. Our family members from the plains

visited us every summer for about 1 to 2 months. Our house was like a perpetual guest house from spring to summer to autumn, with at least two rooms reserved for the house guests.

None remained vacant in those months, with one family coming in as soon as another left. While my mother and grandmother with support staff made

bed-tea, breakfast, lunch, tea, snacks and dinner for all.



My father at the Gulmarg Golf Club. Early 1950s

I too went back home from college every vacation and even after I got married I visited my parents and home in Kashmir regularly with my children till the outburst of militancy in the

late 80s. Kashmir was not only Heaven on Earth it was also a haven for the Hindi film industry. The 60s and 70s were a boom time for tourist and film shooting. It will be an endless list if I started naming the films that were shot in Kashmir from Kashmir Ki Kali to Jab Jab Phool Khile.

It was said that at one of the leading hotels which was at a scenic location, one suite was perpetually reserved for the Kapoors, as at least one of the three brothers Raj, Shammi or Shashi were constantly here for some shoot with their teams. How many shootings we have seen... .. and believe me there was no security or accompanying the



With Shashikala at our home

stars. They were called "Heroes" back then, until Rajesh Khanna (Kakaji) came into the scene followed by Big B. I have memories of having



Raj Kapoorji and Nargis ji during a stage show in Srinagar 1950s

personally met Dilip Kumar (Yusuf Sahab), Shammi Kapoor and Rajesh Khanna at private gatherings. Shashikala had even visited our house!

I recall attending a stage show

to raise funds for the jawans where Raj Kapoor and Nargisji performed live. Also a special screening of Satyam Shivam Sundaram at Baramulla Army base where the charismatic and handsome Shashi Kapoor was present himself. Not only for work or shootings, famous celebrities often came just to relax in the beautiful surroundings of Kashmir. Pahalgam, Gulmarg, Sonmarg, Achhabal, Yusmarg and The Dal Lake of course always provided the serenity and refreshing atmosphere one needed to get away from the humdrum of cities like Bombay.

I remember meeting Lata Didi in 1977 when she came on a private visit for relaxation and photography. She even obliged my father to click some exclusive pictures of her which she later autographed for him.



Autographed photo of Lata didi 1977

Now I have been living away from J&K for almost 50 years, but my heart still lives there and yearns to visit all those places which enriched my childhood.



Me with PM Nehru inaguration of nehru park 1960

Being an artist myself inspired by nature as I saw it in my childhood I have been capturing the flora fauna and the magnificent sceneries in my artworks - the cherry and apple blossoms the tulip garden, saffron and mustard fields, all are ingrained in my mind, heart and soul.

Since the onset of militancy or the time my family was forced out from Kashmir I have visited the valley



twice, once in 2012 and again in 2023. The second visit was after the abrogation of article 370. The whole Valley was brimming with tourists and it looked like business was back, people felt safe and comfortable moving around even though there was CRPF deployed everywhere....

But the sun has set once again!

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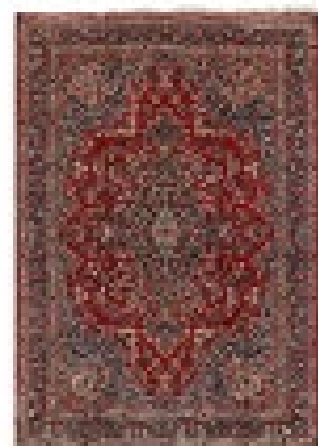


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Bhel Puri to Black Dal - A Tale of Two Cities and Their Businessmen

Harsh Goenka highlights with panache and humour, the glaring differences between the businessmen of Delhi and Mumbai

The Indian businessman isn't just a creature of commerce — he's a fascinating, evolving species. He adapts, hustles, reinvents, and competes. But if you had to divide them into two broad tribes, you'd discover a delicious desi dichotomy: the Delhi businessman and the Mumbai businessman. Like butter chicken and bhel puri — both proudly Indian, yet galaxies apart in taste, texture, style, and aftertaste.

Let's begin with the Delhi businessman. He doesn't walk into a room — he arrives, with the flair of a Bollywood hero, minus the background dancers (although you wouldn't put it past him to arrange some). Phone in one hand, entitlement in the other. His shirt is tight enough to cut circulation, his perfume arrives ten

seconds before he does, and his aviators never leave his face — even indoors, at night, during a power cut. His voice has two settings: loud and louder. His walk says, "I just bought a Hussain," his talk says, "I'm acquiring a unicorn," and his smirk says, "Do you know who my father is?" — Which, by the way, isn't a question, it's a declaration, a flex, and a mild threat rolled into one. He'll drive a Bentley to negotiate a 0.02% stake with the intensity of a Wall Street shark on Red Bull. His start-up hasn't launched a product yet,



but he's already closed Series A, B, and a 'strategic' round with an uncle from Dubai.

Networking is his native language.

Ministers, bureaucrats, celebrities, cricket selectors — he either knows them, is related to them, or has them on speed dial. He is the Maharaja of Lutyens, the Nawab of Noida, the Governor of Gurgaon. His business card is glossier than his pitch deck, heavier than your iPhone, and lists more titles than a Netflix homepage: Chairman, Director, Visionary, Polo Enthusiast, Philanthropist. He eats only classics — kebabs, butter naan, black dal, and an unsolicited opinion on the Indian economy. His drink? A Patiala peg of single malt. "Neat, like my business," he says, adjusting his Rolex twice — just to make sure you notice.

Now swing west to the Mumbai businessman. He's at his table in his office at Nariman Point, hunched over a laptop with Excel open, calculator app in split-screen mode, CNBC screaming Nifty resistance levels louder than an uncle at an AGM. No drama, no brands, no entourage. His office has a leaking AC, the ghost of a dot-matrix printer, and a sacred temple corner. He lives in a compact 3BHK in Breach Candy with six people, two cats, and one Godrej cupboard older than his grandparents. His car? A black Mercedes, parked in a building where the lift needs "a little push."

He doesn't talk much, but drop the word "market," and he'll light up faster than a Diwali cracker. His most romantic phrase? "Bazaar su lage che?" and he doesn't ask it casually — it's a spiritual question, a state of the soul. He relishes devouring company balance sheets with the same passion as he has for his 'undhiyu'. His idea of small talk is discussing EBITDA margins and

promoter pledges. He's never missed a Rakesh Jhunjhunwala or Warren Buffett interview, ever. His expansion plans are always preceded with conference calls with his 3 CAs, an astrologer, and his legal firm Vakil, Mulla and Katgara.



Health is a religion. He takes protein powder more seriously than profits, swaps stock tips during burpees at the gym, and relies on Miss Divekar — his trainer-dietitian-therapist — to suggest yoga poses for stress caused by Fed rate hikes. He won't buy a new suit until the hole is visible to all, times holidays for the best hotel deals, and guards his Rs 42,000 Herman Miller chair like it's family silver. And the Parsis in Mumbai? They're the secret sauce in Mumbai's business biryani-quietly dominating industries while claiming they're "just managing a small enterprise." Dressed in white cotton suits and socks with sandals, sipping raspberry soda, they are the most lovable grumbling people you will ever meet.

Bollywood? Of course. But with conditions. They don't meet actors — they invest in production houses, secretly hoping that gets them to meet a Kapoor or Khan. And if they do meet a star, they'll pretend to be unimpressed. He doesn't drink like the Delhiwalla. No Patiala pegs, thank you. Just coconut water or black coffee, and that too from his personal Nespresso machine, served strong, bitter, and brutally honest — like his appraisal

feedback. Fluent in Gujarati, English, and some Marathi but never, ever Hindi- not even in dreams.

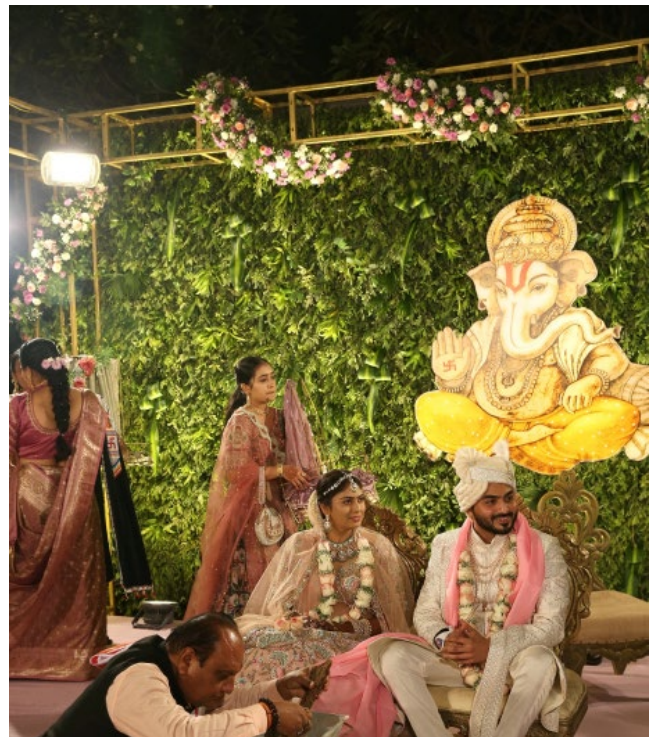
And while Delhi shows off, Mumbai believes it's better — and makes sure you know it. The Mumbai businessman has a clear superiority complex over his Delhi counterpart. He won't say it outright, but his eyes say it all: "They may have flash, but we have class. And yes, we have the money too."

Reading habits? Delhi reads term sheets, Instagram captions, and the gossip column to check if they're in it. Mumbai reads P&L statements, R.K. Laxman cartoons, and the Economic Times, folded just right.



Weddings? Oh, the contrast. A Delhi wedding is a full-blown Bollywood production — elephants, drones, choreograph, dances, celebrities, and at least one cabinet minister doing the Bhangra in Louis Vuitton shoes. A Mumbai wedding is an evening at Willingdon Club, a restrained buffet of South Indian, and Gujarati, fare by Tapan bhai, and the odd Bollywood star, who steps in for a second, unnoticed, wearing sunglasses to avoid being noticed – which, of course makes them more noticed.

WhatsApp statuses? Delhi: "Feeling blessed to have closed a multi-million-dollar deal. Jai Mata Di!" Mumbai: "Available after 4pm for essential calls



only." (Followed by a Ratan Tata quote, obviously.)

Where Delhi charms, Mumbai calculates. Where Delhi says, "I know people," Mumbai says, "I know numbers." Delhi builds hype, Mumbai builds with purpose. Delhi lives in the now, Mumbai plans for the long haul. Delhi plays bold, Mumbai plays safe. Delhi dazzles, Mumbai delivers. Delhi is the firework, Mumbai is the flame.

So, who wins? Here's the twist: both succeed. Because for all the bling, bravado, and business-class bravura, the Delhi businessman dreams big — flair, guts, swagger, and a Rolodex that could run a nation. And for all his spreadsheets, simplicity, and salt-in-the-hair, the Mumbai businessman delivers — disciplined, risk-averse, rooted, and financially bulletproof.

And me? I'm from Kolkata. I'll be sipping my cha, quoting Tagore, solving a crossword, and wondering why no one talks about the Bengali businessman anymore. Maybe because we're too busy writing articles like this.



Grit of the deClasse

The real heroes and inspirers are the millions of the marginalised and impoverished, who by sheer grit and dint of hard work, live their lives with dignity and courage, writes *Nagesh Alai*

I, like many others in my network of friends and relatives, hail from a typical bourgeois class, attitudinally and behaviourally sandwiched between the impecunious and the opulent, never satisfied with the status quo and ever hankering to climb the social status. Each of these socio-economic classes have their storm of struggles and cyclone of challenges and cope with them as well as they can, all with an eye on improving their lot and getting ahead. My life has been no different. My journey from childhood to boyhood to manhood to now has been, at best, one of modest success, nothing to crow about really, but dotted with enough failures to rue to this day, despite

all the comforting and enabling support system that nurtured and mentored me. Confessionally, I am not sure whether it was my sufferance or struggles or serendipity that got me where I am today.

Through this long journey and its culmination of sorts in a way, I have never ceased to be amazed at the equanimity and poise, without any hint of fatalism, of the myriad marginalised service providers who make our lives better in many ways. They struggle to eke out a modicum of living day in and day out, many of whom have been nothing less than a quiet inspiration to me and at the same time making me question my own so-called struggles.

I am a regular visitor to the South Indian Bhajana Samaj temple in Matunga East, a central suburb in Mumbai. Right outside the temple sits a middle-aged lady called Shanti, of roughened countenance, making a living out of looking after devotees' footwear. While the temple provides for a footwear stand, she still manages to earn some pittance and piety. Invariably

and customarily, I give her some money on every visit, though I do not leave my footwear under her watch. I cannot help but think I am demeaning her in expecting her to keep a watch over my footwear. A few days back, she had not yet turned up at the usual time. When I was trudging back home, she was hurriedly walking towards the temple. I do not know why, but she was profusely apologetic and said “aaj mala khup ushir jhala” and started explaining herself when none of it was necessary. Perhaps, the deep-rooted inherence of class and caste consciousness surfaces in any given interaction with anyone. I started talking to her out of a general curiosity. She was proudly saying that she is the third generation from her family who has been at the same temple doing the same job. Her grandmother used to sit at the same place for years guarding footwear, followed by her ‘maushi’ and now she has taken over. She comes all the way from the distant suburb of Badlapur, and she spends 5 hours everyday commuting. When I asked her why she endures such hardship everyday when the temple has its



own footwear stand inside and how can she earn any income at all, she sheepishly admitted that she has no alternative and that some people do leave the footwear with her and she gets to earn some money. She also unabashedly confessed that there are some generous people who give her money gratis and that helps her add to her kitchen kitty and put food on the table.

Karan, nudging 40, was born blind in one eye and turned blind in the other eye too few years into his childhood. He hails from a marginalised farmer family based out of Vangani, a rural village, which is about 85 kms away from Mumbai. Not to be disheartened by nature’s randomness, Karan’s father had put him through some basic schooling besides making him help the family in farming. The small land holding hardly provided enough food for the family. Before long, Karan went to Mumbai to learn the basics of life at a school specialising in coaching and mentoring the visually challenged. Over time, he trained to be a professional masseur and started doing the regular rounds of Shivaji Park, a famed place for sports and walks, close to the beach. Suffice it to say, he is an expert in relieving the aching feet of sportsmen, perambulators, and everyone else. His able hands and nimble fingers could palpitate muscles and prod the nerve points precisely to alleviate pain and provide relief. Soon, he had developed a set of loyal customers who would have their feet and some their hands too, massaged regularly. Some even called him home at regular intervals. He keeps abreast of the happenings in politics and business and can have a strong point of view when you engage him in conversations, which I do quite frequently. He is married, has an understanding and supportive wife and a school going son, whose wellbeing, as of his aged parents, are his prime purpose in life. He struggles and works hard for about eight to ten hours a day, commutes in crowded trains for about 5 hours to cover nearly 175 kms every day and earns an average of Rs. 1,500 a day. I have never seen him dejected or disappointed at what life has rolled out

for him, but his hard work and sanguine nature keeps him getting up every day early morning and working relentlessly, to take care of and provide for his family. His dream is to educate his son to the highest levels and see him flourish to make a generational leap.

Lata, a village farmer from distant Saphale, a town in Palghar taluka, spends a total of six hours every day commuting to Dadar to sell vegetables produced in her farm. When asked why she cannot sell locally at her place, she, matter of fact, explains that there are too many agriculturists in her town, each vying with the other to sell their precious, but perishable vegetable produce in the local markets leading to poor prices and wastage. She does not mind the arduous travel of six hours everyday to get better prices and yet make enough money to feed her family and sustain. She makes a net of about Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 30,000 every month. There are others like her who undergo the same travails regularly to eke out a respectable living.

Closer home, our household help, Anjali who lives in a nearby cluster of slums runs her family all by herself, with her husband having deserted her and not providing any financial support. Besides her three children, she generously adopted and looks after the daughter of her sister, whom she lost in a fire accident. She pays a princely sum of Rs. 12,000 per month for a small 'kholi' in the cluster of slums



and is vulnerable to soaring rents and frequent eviction due to the frenzied slum development that is taking place all over Mumbai, a result of the cut-throat and scheming politician-builder-gang lord nexus. She works at two to three different households, cleaning and cooking, all days in a year, except for two paid holidays every month, to bring succour to her children and dependents. All for earning a princely sum of about Rs. 25,000 in a month, that barely suffices.



Contrastingly, I have regularly noticed some constables freeloading off local streetside cafés and eateries, demanding their morning nashta and tea and not paying for it. When I asked the owners of these joints about this mal behaviour, they said that they are targeted and threatened by these constables, when asked to pay. It is nothing but extractive, emanating from a misplaced sense of power and entitlement in anyone, big or small, who is in some position of power. The rot in the system is deep rooted indeed. And the people who try to lead an honest life invariably pay a price, unfortunately.

Many magnify their struggles and hyperbolise their achievements, especially those who come from privileged backgrounds. But the real heroes and inspirers are the millions of the marginalised and impoverished, who by sheer grit and dint of hard work, live their lives with dignity and courage. They have enriched my life in unimaginable ways, quite indisputably.



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The Changing Anatomy of Sleep as We Age

Why wake up tired? *Dr Nandini Saini* helps us understand sleep changes with age

Sleep is supposed to be restorative, a time when the body repairs itself and the mind refreshes. Yet, for many seniors, mornings often begin with a lingering sense of exhaustion despite a full night in bed. Recent studies have brought attention to this puzzling phenomenon, raising questions and concerns among the senior community. Why does this happen, and more importantly, what can be done to wake up feeling truly rested?

Let's explore the changing sleep patterns that come with aging, uncover the hidden culprits behind morning fatigue, and offer practical solutions to improve sleep quality and overall well-being.

The Changing Nature of Sleep

Sleep patterns naturally evolve as we age. During youth and adulthood, sleep tends to be more structured — we experience longer periods of deep, restorative sleep (known as slow-wave sleep) and fewer awakenings during the night. However, by the time we reach our senior years, several physiological changes occur:

Reduced Deep Sleep: Seniors spend less time in the deep stages of sleep and more time in lighter stages. This makes sleep less restorative.

Frequent Awakenings: Older adults often wake up multiple times during the night due to a variety of reasons including discomfort, medical conditions, or simply a heightened sensitivity to noise.

Shifted Sleep Schedule: Many seniors experience an advanced sleep phase,

meaning they feel sleepy earlier in the evening and wake up earlier in the morning.

Decreased Production of Melatonin: The body's production of melatonin, the hormone responsible for regulating sleep-wake cycles, decreases with age, making it harder to fall and stay asleep.

These changes are considered part of the normal aging process. However, they don't mean that seniors need less sleep. Most older adults still require about 7–8 hours of good-quality sleep per night. When sleep becomes fragmented or shallow, it leads to that frustrating feeling of waking up tired.



Common Causes of Morning Fatigue

Understanding why seniors often wake up feeling unrefreshed involves looking at a combination of physical, psychological, and lifestyle factors:

1. Sleep Disorders

Conditions such as sleep apnea (where breathing repeatedly stops and starts during sleep), restless legs syndrome, and insomnia are more common among seniors. Sleep apnea, in particular, can severely disrupt sleep without the person even being fully aware of it, leading to daytime fatigue.

2. Medical Conditions

Chronic illnesses such as arthritis, heart disease, diabetes, and gastrointestinal issues can cause discomfort and pain that interrupt sleep. Additionally, neurological

conditions like Parkinson's disease or Alzheimer's disease can directly impact sleep architecture.

3. Medication Side Effects

Many seniors are on multiple medications (a situation known as polypharmacy). Some medications, including those for high blood pressure, depression, and allergies, can interfere with sleep patterns or cause drowsiness during the day.

4. Mental Health Challenges

Depression and anxiety can significantly impact sleep. Feelings of loneliness, grief, or financial stress — all more common in older age — can lead to trouble falling asleep or staying asleep.

5. Lifestyle Factors

A sedentary lifestyle, irregular sleep schedules, excessive daytime napping, or lack of exposure to natural sunlight can disrupt the body's internal clock (circadian rhythm) and contribute to poor sleep quality.

6. Poor Sleep Environment

An uncomfortable mattress, too much noise or light, or a room that is too hot or cold can prevent restful sleep. As people age, they often become more sensitive to environmental factors that younger people might easily ignore.



How Seniors Can Improve Sleep Quality

While some changes in sleep are inevitable with age, there are many ways seniors can

improve their sleep and feel more refreshed each morning:

1. Establish a Consistent Sleep Routine

Going to bed and waking up at the same time every day helps reinforce the body's natural sleep-wake cycle. This regularity trains the body to expect sleep at a certain time, making it easier to fall asleep and wake up naturally.

2. Create a Sleep-Friendly Environment

Ensure the bedroom is quiet, dark, and at a comfortable temperature. Investing in a good-quality mattress and pillows can also make a significant difference.

3. Limit Naps

While a short 20-30 minute nap can be refreshing, long or irregular napping during the day can negatively affect nighttime sleep.

4. Stay Physically Active

Regular physical activity can promote better sleep. Activities like walking, stretching, yoga, or light gardening not only tire the body but also enhance overall mood and health. However, avoid vigorous exercise close to bedtime.

5. Manage Medical Issues

Addressing chronic pain, treating underlying medical conditions, and discussing any troublesome medication side effects with a healthcare provider can greatly improve sleep quality.

6. Watch Caffeine and Alcohol Intake

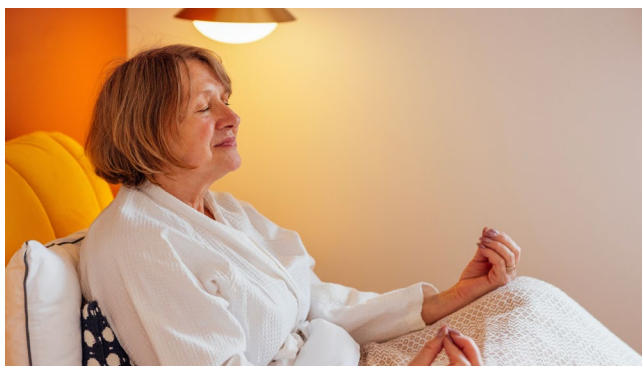
Both caffeine and alcohol can interfere with sleep. Limiting their intake, especially in the late afternoon and evening, can help ensure better sleep.

7. Seek Natural Light

Exposure to natural sunlight during the day, particularly in the morning, helps maintain a healthy circadian rhythm, promoting alertness during the day and sleepiness at night.

8. Practice Relaxation Techniques

Engaging in calming activities before bedtime — such as reading, listening to soothing music, meditation, or deep-breathing exercises — can prepare the body for sleep.



When to Seek Professional Help

If despite good sleep habits, a senior continues to wake up feeling exhausted or experiences other sleep problems like loud snoring, gasping during sleep, or frequent nightmares, it's important to consult a doctor or a sleep specialist.

Sometimes, a simple sleep study can reveal treatable conditions like sleep apnea. Addressing these underlying issues can vastly improve sleep quality and, consequently, daily energy levels.

Better Sleep for a Better Life

Waking up tired can significantly impact a senior's quality of life, affecting physical health, mood, and even cognitive function. While aging brings about inevitable changes in sleep patterns, understanding these changes and taking proactive steps can help seniors achieve more restful nights and energetic mornings.

A good night's sleep is not a luxury — it's a vital foundation for a healthy, happy, and fulfilling life at any age. With awareness, appropriate action, and a little patience, seniors can reclaim the restorative power of sleep and greet each new day with renewed vigour.



How Long Can You Stand On One Leg?

This simple test is the single clearest indicator of physical ageing, write *Beatriz Porcar and Rita Díaz*

Balance is so fundamental that we often take it for granted, but its importance goes far beyond just keeping us upright. In fact, recent studies have shown that the ability to stand on one leg may be one of the best physical indicators of overall health and longevity. What's more, it's a test we can all do at home.

One widely reported study, published in 2022 in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* found that the inability to hold this position for at least 10 seconds was associated with a two-fold increased risk of death in people aged 50 and over. After assessing 1,702 individuals aged 51-75, the study's authors found that those who failed

the test had a significantly higher mortality rate over the 7-year follow-up period.

A more recent Mayo Clinic study of 40 healthy adults over the age of 50 confirmed these findings. According to their conclusions, published in October 2024 in the journal *PLOS One*, the ability to balance on one leg (especially the non-dominant leg) not only declines significantly with age, but is the best indicator of neuromuscular ageing.

To date, other parameters such as gait, grip strength or leg strength have been used to measure ageing. However, it is now certain that balance is the factor most affected by age, with significant changes in each decade of life.

How we stay upright

In order to keep our balance while standing

on one foot, the brain needs to receive information about the body's orientation and position in space. We also have to generate the right muscle contractions in order to maintain posture, and coordinate our muscles to prevent us from falling over. All of this requires a healthy nervous system that can react quickly to small changes.

Balance depends on multiple systems. While vision provides information about position and environment, the inner ear detects changes in head position and supplements visual signals. The proprioceptive system, which tells us where our limbs are, gives information about joint position, weight distribution on the sole of the foot, and muscle tone.

All of these systems send information about the position of our body to the brain, which in turn triggers an automatic response to correct imbalances.

Other studies have highlighted the importance of muscle strength, especially in older people. Decreased muscle strength and coordination can lead to an increased risk of falls and injuries as we get older.

All of these systems deteriorate as we age, affecting our ability to maintain balance. Conditions such as obesity, heart disease, hypertension and type 2 diabetes can also compromise our balance.



How to exercise your balance

Fortunately, balance is something you can improve your with practice, through exercises as simple as standing on one leg, walking in a straight line, or walking or standing on unstable surfaces. It is also essential to maintain adequate muscle strength. Yoga and tai chi, for instance, are both excellent ways to improve stability and coordination.

Maintaining physical fitness is a case of “use it or lose it”. Lack of exercise and various bodily stimuli can lead to a decrease in muscle strength, flexibility and balance. Maintaining an exercise routine is crucial to preserving these abilities and preventing physical deterioration.

The ability to balance on one leg is a proven, valuable indicator of health and longevity. Incorporating balance exercises into your daily routine can help you to improve stability, reduce the risk of falls and, more generally, age healthily.



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The Timeless Power of Deewar @ 50

Some films reflect their time. A rare few define it. Released in 1975, just before the Emergency, Deewar was more than a film—it was a mirror held up to a churning, changing India. Deepa Gahlot revisits the thunderclap of a generation

It does not happen too often that a mainstream film captures the zeitgeist of the times, as Deewar (1975) did in the Seventies. Mostly this social and political awareness is read in a film after its release. However, when the writers are the sharply observant Salim-Javed, and the director is Yash Chopra, it is possible to believe that the structure of the film and the development of the characters was well thought out.

It is possible that today's generation has not seen the film, but at least three of its lines have passed into everyday use – Mere Paas Ma Hai, Aaj Khush To Bahut Honge Tum and Main Aaj Bhi Phenke Hue Paise Nahin Uthata.

Deewar, starring Amitabh Bachchan, Shashi Kapoor, Parveen Babi, Nirupa Roy and Neetu Singh, captured India at the cusp of change. The decline of the trade union movement, rampant corruption, the rise of the criminal underworld and the gangster coming out of the darkness into the open plying his trade with defiance. Political unrest in the air, the dark clouds of the Emergency were hovering, the mood of the people had shifted from hopeful to cynical. It was time for the grey-shaded anti-hero to arrive, and who better to personify him than the intense Amitabh Bachchan. When the dock worker turned

smuggler Vijay (Bachchan) taunts his police officer brother Ravi (Kapoor) that he has everything—bangla, gaadi, paisa, it is only the mandatory emotional content of the times that made Ravi retort *Mere paas ma hai*, and have the audience go gaga. Today, the mother has been almost wiped out of mainstream cinema.

The film opens with police inspector Ravi Verma (Shashi Kapoor) receiving an award for going beyond the call of duty in upholding the law. He thanks his mother, Sumitra Devi (Nirupa Roy), who is in the audience, with tearful eyes. He asks her to come up and receive the medal with him, because she is the power behind his achievement.

The film then goes into a flashback of Ravi's childhood. Master Raju played the young Ravi, and Master Alankar his brother Vijay. The boys' father, Anand Verma (Satyen Kappu) is a principled and respected trade union leader, who has been leading a strike of miners, demanding better conditions from the owner, Badri Prasad (Kamal Kapoor). The evil boss kidnaps Anand's family and forces him to sign a contract against the interests of the striking labourers. When they hear of this treachery, the workers beat up Anand, leaving him for dead. Some of them catch hold of Vijay and tattoo his left arm with the words *Mera baap chor hai*. This humiliation leaves a deep scar on Vijay's mind, and dictates the course of his doomed life.



Sumitra brings Vijay and Ravi to Mumbai and does menial labour at a construction site to raise her sons. They grow up in poverty, and an angry Vijay even refuses to enter a temple, saying that he will chart his own destiny. Vijay starts out as a shoeshine boy and later works at the docks (that famous badge number 786 made its appearance here), sacrificing his own education to provide for his brother. Even as a child, he holds on to his self-respect; when a customer (who will later change his life) tosses a coin at him, he snarls that he is not a beggar, he does not pick up coins thrown on the street.

The unemployed Ravi, who is romancing Veera (Neetu Singh), the daughter of DCP Narang (Manmohan Krishna), is sent for police training, and becomes a cop.

Vijay refuses to pay the weekly hafta demanded by the henchmen of the shipyard boss Samant (Madan Puri) and beats them up. There is a fantastic (and much imitated) scene in which Vijay enters the warehouse where the goons are and locks the door. He then thrashes them and opens the door when they are all beaten, then staggers up to a tap and puts his head under it.



Vijay's derringdo brings him the notice of Samant's rival Daavar (Iftikhar), who hires Vijay to prevent Samant's men from

stealing his smuggled gold consignment. Vijay succeeds in the job, and is given a large sum of money (the Main Aaj Bhi Phenke Hue Paise Nahin Uthata line comes here) and moves his family to a luxurious mansion. It is this part of the plot that made viewers notice the inspiration from Haji Mastan's life-- the underworld don, who started his criminal career as a dock worker. Back then, gold smuggling was a big crime, which seems almost innocuous now that the underworld deals with drugs, weapons, humans and terrorism.

DCP Narang gives Ravi the task of nabbing the criminals and smugglers of Mumbai, that include his brother. Ravi is shocked that Vijay, the son of honest parents, has turned to crime. He confronts Vijay and orders him to surrender to the police. Vijay refuses, reminding his brother of all the suffering and injustice their family went through. Ravi decides to leave Vijay's grand house and live in police quarters. Much to Vijay's anguish, their mother decides to go with Ravi. The people who tormented us were nothing to us, she says as he pleads with her to stay, "but how could my own son write on my forehead that he is a thief. Vijay had purchased, at an inflated price, the building where his mother had worked as a labourer, he tears up the papers in a rage.

Ravi starts a sustained campaign to end crime and arrests many members of the gang. An increasingly alienated Vijay, gets into a relationship with Anita (Parveen Babi), a call girl he meets at a bar. Till then, movie heroines were supposed to be virtuous, and to have a scene of the protagonist in bed with a sex worker, did cause some mild shock. She understands him, and with her, he gets a few moments of peace in his otherwise precarious life.



When Vijay is unable to see his ailing mother in hospital, he goes to the temple for the first time, and has that "Aaj khush to bahut honge tum" confrontation with the deity.

The film did not shy away from melodrama when it was needed—the scene in which Anand's corpse is found in a train—Ravi realises the unknown man was his father, he goes home and prevents his mother from applying red bindi on her forehead. Till she did not know his fate, she lived like a married woman even in his absence. The finality of his death and her widowhood shatters Sumitra, still, she turns away from Vijay as he reaches out to console her.

When Vijay learns from Anita that she is pregnant, he wants to marry her then surrender, so that nobody can tell his child that their father was a thief. He calls his mother to come and bless him in the temple. Before they can leave for the ceremony, Samant and his men kill Anita and in retaliation, Vijay slaughters the whole gang. He also writes his own death sentence, since there is no way back for him.

Ravi leaves home in pursuit, with his mother sending him off with the words: "May your hand not tremble while shooting." In a way, she condemns Vijay

to death. It is no spoiler that Ravi shoots Vijay, who reaches the temple somehow, and dies in his mother's lap. In spite of his choosing crime and erecting a wall between himself and his family, Vijay turned out to be the sympathetic character in comparison to the inflexibly dutiful Ravi. The scene of his death was a lump-in-the-throat moment—a man, who never got an easy break in life, still protected and cared for his family and died heart-broken and alone. “I am tired,” he says as his life ebbs out, “I never slept a night after being separated from you. Now put me to sleep like you did when I was a boy.”

Bachchan worked on *Sholay* and *Deewar* at the same time, though *Deewar* was made faster and he played the strong, silent type in both. The spur-of-the-moment decision to knot Bachchan's shirt, because the costume provided was ill-fitting, started a trend.



Rajesh Khanna was the first choice for Vijay, Navin Nischol for Ravi and Vyjayanthimala for the mother who was immortalised by Nirupa Roy. A mother who rejected her wayward son was very much like the classic *Mother India*. Nischol who wanted to play only lead parts refused a parallel role (he was the hero of *Parwana* in which Bachchan was the negative second lead), which Shashi Kapoor took up and resurrected his career, while Nischol's went downhill.



The film also had a bold female lead for the time, Parveen Babi, who smoked, drank and worked as a hooker, without explanation or apology; in contrast, Neetu Singh was the typical bubbly young woman opposite Shashi Kapoor, uncle of her to be husband Rishi Kapoor.



It did not escape notice that *Deewar* was an updated, urban version of *Ganga Jumna*—the dacoit replaced by a gangster, the dutiful cop brother remaining the same. In every age, good battles evil and always wins. A few years after *Deewar*, the certainty that good would always win, at least in the movies, was also shaken.

seniors
Life After 60

A vintage silver microphone is positioned in the center, set against a circular backdrop of glowing yellow lights. The entire scene is framed by a red curtain background with decorative starburst and sparkles.

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