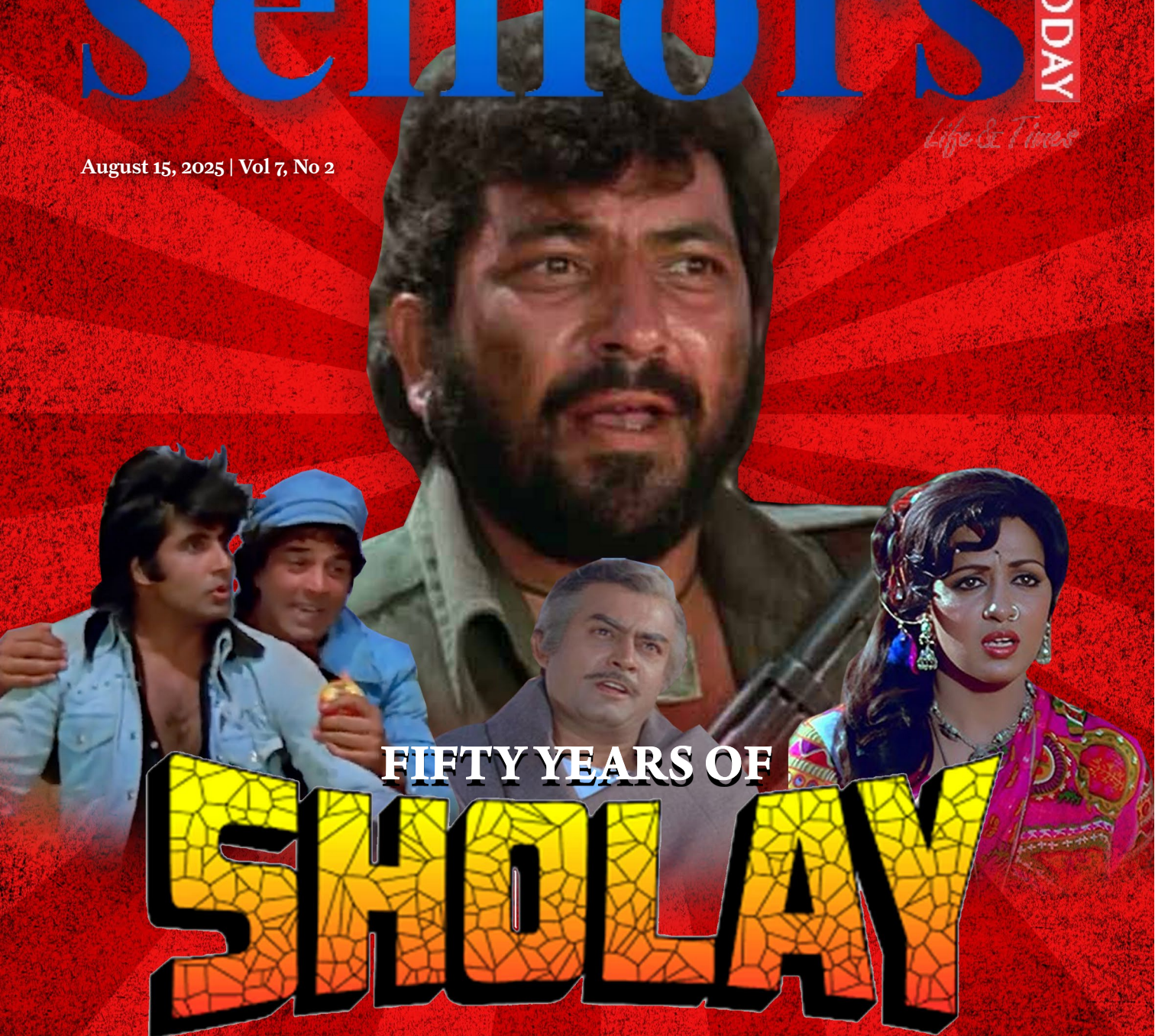


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TODAY

Life & Times

August 15, 2025 | Vol 7, No 2



FIFTY YEARS OF

SHOLAY

Few films have so powerfully mirrored and influenced the evolving landscape of Independent India

Ramesh Sippy: 'The heart of the film is a story'

The Also-Stars ♦ Timeless Music/Dialogues

+

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What Made Sholay a Turning Point in Indian Cinema

For many of us who grew up in the 1970s, a visit to the cinema was a special treat. The smell of samosas and popcorn in the air, the chatter of the crowd, the ticket stubs clutched tightly in our hands – it was all part of the magic. And in August 1975, a film called Sholay arrived and changed the way we looked at Indian cinema forever.

Directed by Ramesh Sippy, Sholay was no ordinary movie. It wasn't just a love story, or an action flick, or a comedy – it was all of these and more, woven together in a way that Indian audiences had never seen before. It was a 'Curry Western', inspired by Hollywood's cowboy films, but adapted with Indian heart, music and emotion.

The Story and the Characters

The plot was simple yet powerful: two small-time criminals, Jai (Amitabh Bachchan) and Veeru (Dharmendra), are hired by a retired police officer, Thakur Baldev Singh (Sanjeev Kumar), to capture the ruthless bandit Gabbar Singh (Amjad Khan). But within this framework, Sholay gave us some unforgettable moments – Veeru and Jai's playful friendship, Basanti's (Hema Malini) chatterbox charm, Radha's (Jaya Bhaduri) quiet sorrow, and Gabbar's chilling cruelty.

For seniors, these characters are like old friends we met in our youth. We still remember Gabbar's menacing voice – "Kitne aadmi the?" – echoing in the theatre, sending shivers down our spines.

Why It Was a Turning Point

Before Sholay, most Hindi films were around two to three hours long and stuck to familiar genres. Sholay dared to be bigger. It ran for more than three hours and combined action, romance, tragedy, comedy and melodrama in a single package.

It also raised the technical bar. The film was shot in 70 mm with stereophonic sound – a novelty at the time – making the rocky landscapes of Ramgarh and the thundering hoofbeats feel larger than life. The action sequences were meticulously choreographed and the dialogues were so sharp that they became part of everyday speech.

The film also showed that audiences were ready for morally complex stories. Jai and Veeru were not saints, yet we rooted for them. Thakur's thirst for justice and Gabbar's remorseless evil gave the story an emotional depth that stayed with us long after the credits rolled.

The Cultural Impact

Songs like Yeh Dosti, Haan Jab Tak Hai Jaan, and Mehbooba Mehbooba became anthems. Lines from the film entered our daily vocabulary, and even today, younger generations know them without having seen the movie.

For many of us, watching Sholay was more than entertainment... it was an event. It brought families, neighbours and even strangers together in theatres. It showed filmmakers that Indian cinema could aim higher in scope, storytelling and presentation.

Now, 50 years later, Sholay still holds a special place in our hearts. It reminds us of an era when going to the movies was a grand outing, when heroes and villains were larger than life, and when a story could make us laugh, cry and cheer – all in one afternoon.

Vickram Seth

Vickram Seth

Publisher and Editor-in-Chief

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Sholay@50

The 1975 mega-hit reflected and influenced the changing landscape of India, writes *Deepa Gahlot*. The depiction of strong female characters challenged the traditional portrayals of women in cinema. And it introduced a villain, the kind of which had never been seen in Indian films

Anyone who has not seen (or at least heard of) Ramesh Sippy's *Sholay* (1975) would have been living under a rock for 50 years-- the film's dialogue (by Salim-Javed) has passed into common usage, and some of the best lines were written for Gabbar Singh, played by Amjad Khan.

When the film released, it got lukewarm to poor reviews, and low opening at the box-office. Soon, word-of-mouth led to ticket sales booming, and the film went on to become a cult classic, the impact of which has not dulled over half a century.

As plot ideas go, it was Japanese master Akira Kurosawa who's *Seven Samurai* (1954) about a village, oppressed by ruthless bandits, that hires samurai to fight them off. The film was remade in Hollywood by John Sturges as *The Magnificent Seven* (1960) set in the Wild West, with gunslingers replacing cowboys. The film became a template for remakes and inspired films all over the world. In India, *Mera Gaon Mera Desh*, and eventually *Sholay*, transcended cultural barriers to tell a story with thrilling action, emotion, music, major stars and the best dialogue ever written. It was not just a



The unforgettable Jai & Veeru combo

hit, it was a phenomenon that influenced Indian cinema for decades.

Petty criminals Jai (Amitabh Bachchan) and Veeru are hired by Thakur Baldev Singh (Sanjeev Kumar) of the fictional Ramgarh (shot in Karnataka), to fight the cruel dacoit Gabbar Singh (Amjad Khan), whose men often raid the village and steal their crops. It is gradually revealed that Gabbar had escaped from prison, massacred the police officer Baldev Singh's entire family—only a daughter-in-law Radha (Jaya Bachchan) who was out of the house was spared—as revenge for arresting him. He later chopped off Thakur's hands with vicious sadism. Jai and Veeru initially take this rural adventure lightly—Veeru flirts with the garrulous taangewali Basanti (Hema Malini). But once they see the brutality that Gabbar is capable of unleashing, they are determined to end his terror.

The movie's impact on cinema is evident in its innovative filmmaking techniques. *Sholay* was one of the first Indian films to be shot in 70mm and stereophonic sound; the action sequences, choreographed by Veeru Devgan, set a new benchmark for Indian stuntwork—the train sequence is still copied by others.

Sholay successfully fused the conventions of Hollywood's Spaghetti Westerns with traditional Indian themes of friendship, revenge, and justice, creating the Curry Western genre. Director Ramesh Sippy shot it on an epic scale, but even the small characters and moments were well thought out by Salim-Javed. For instance, the coin that Jai tosses is a cheat, with heads on both sides. Veeru's drunken suicide scene atop the water tank was a comedic gem. Characters like the Jailor and Soorma Bhopali were one of a kind.



Sholay reflected and influenced the changing landscape of India. The film's narrative of two small-time criminals fighting a powerful dacoit resonated with the public's desire for justice. Gabbar Singh became the ultimate symbol of evil, and his name is still used to refer to a nasty person. The film's themes of friendship, loyalty, and justice continue to be relevant. The depiction of strong female characters like Basanti and Radha challenged the traditional portrayals of women in cinema.

The film introduced a villain, the kind of which had never been seen in Indian films. Sippy had offered the role of Gabbar to Danny Denzongpa, who turned it down, so a new actor (son of actor Jayant) was signed up and became a star. Till then, dacoits in Hindi films wore dhotis and lived in the Chambal ravines. Gabbar wore army fatigues with a bandolier, his teeth were tobacco stained, his eyes dripped with amusement and evil in equal measure. He spoke with a peculiar lift and had a laugh that could make the blood freeze. He

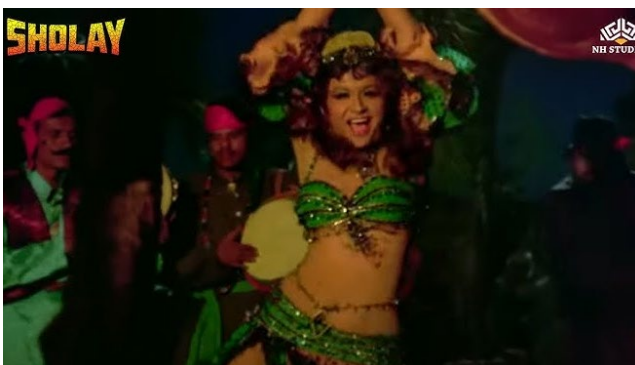


There was no symbol of evil depicted before in Bollywood, worse than Gabbar

was the kind of sadist who would wipe out an entire family, including women and children, would chop off his enemy's hands, shoot down his own men when they failed in their mission and make a woman dance on pieces of glass.

His hideout was the rock-strewn Ramgarh, he was given no back story and there was no explanation for his cruelty. No Indian film villain till then had been so gleefully, unapologetically vile. Amjad Khan's Gabbar was inspired somewhat by Jabbar, played by Vinod Khanna in Raj Khosla's *Mera Gaon Mera Desh* (1971), but so unique was Gabbar that when Amitabh Bachchan tried to get into his shoes in *Ram Gopal Varma Ki Aag* (2007), an ill-advised remake of *Sholay*, he failed to recreate the Gabbar effect.

Ironically, Gabbar Singh became the film's most popular character-- even today, his lines are repeated in a kind of ongoing homage: *Kitne aadmi the; Ab tere kya hoga Kaliya; Arey O Samba; Bahut yaarana lagta hai; Joh dar gaya ... samjho mar gaya* and the one that best defines Gabbar's arrogance *Yahan se pachas pachas kos door gaon mein, jab bachcha raat ko rota hai, to maa kehti hai bete so ja ... so ja nahi to Gabbar Singh aa jayega*. At the time, Amjad Khan as Gabbar, actually modelled for glucose biscuits. Records with *Sholay's* dialogues were released.



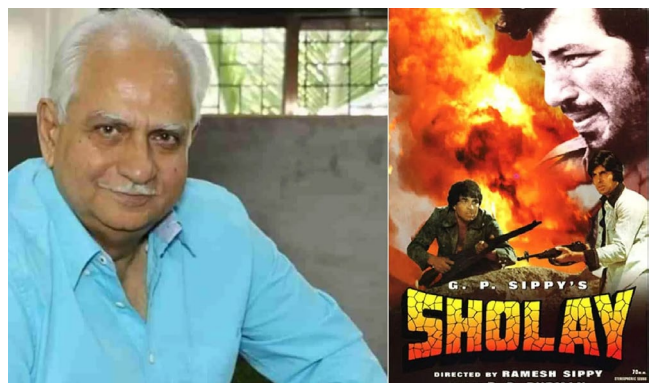
The Mehbooba item dance by Helen was iconic



Basanathi dancing to save Veeru

In keeping with conventions of popular Hindi cinema of the 1970's, Sippy included songs, composed by RD Burman, that included the all-time favourite friendship number *Yeh dosti hum nahin todenge*, the festive song, *Holi ke din dil mil jaate hain*, the romantic *Koi haseena jab rooth jaati hai*, an item dance *Mehbooba Mehbooba* (performed by Helen) and Hema Malini's dance on glass, *Haan jab tak hai jaan main nachungi*. Burman also composed the film's distinctive background score, *Jai's* harmonica and that eerie howling that accompanied Gabbar's scenes.

Sholay was released at the time of the Emergency, and strict censorship, so the ending had to be changed from Thakur killing Gabbar with hob-nailed shoes, to just an attack and arrest. Reportedly, Sippy also considered shooting an alternative ending in which *Jai* survives, but then retained the version in which he dies.





The film broke box-office records across India, and ran for more than five years at Mumbai's Minerva theatre. It was the highest-grossing Indian film ever, at the time, till Hum Aapke Hain Koun overtook it in 1994.

Filmmaker Ramesh Sippy had said in an interview, "Cult movies are not made, they

are happy accidents waiting to happen." A film like Sholay can make a director's career; it can also destroy it. After a film like Sholay, what can be made to match that high?

"Cult movies are not made, they are happy accidents waiting to happen," Sippy said in an interview in 2015 with a leading daily.

Indeed.

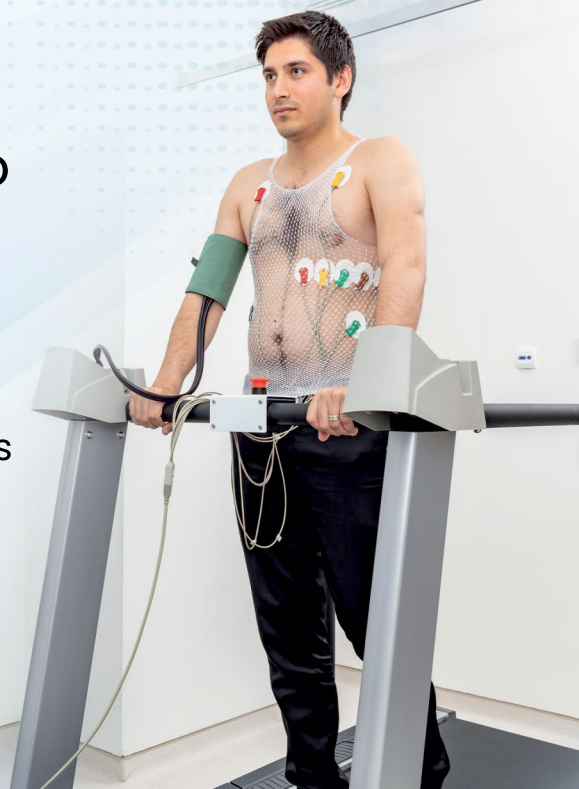


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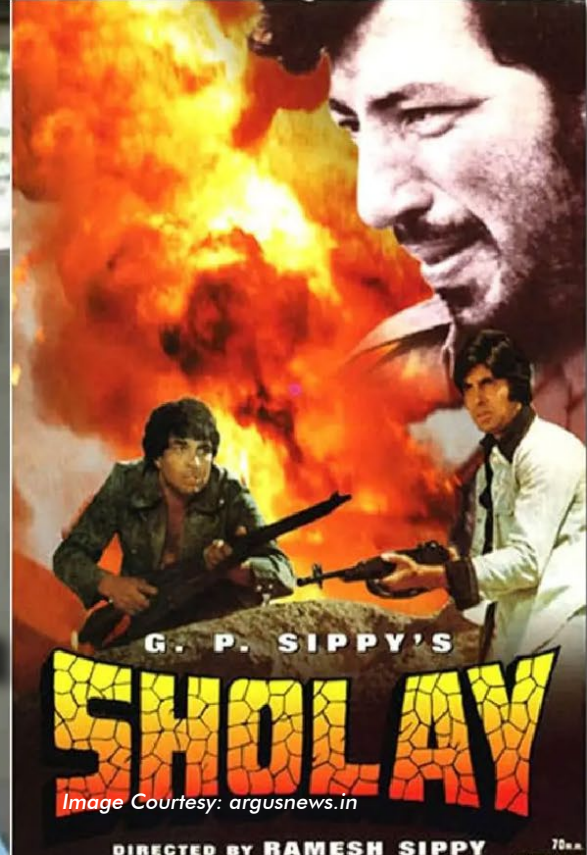
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The Heart Of A Film Is The Story



Film-maker Ramesh Sippy speaks with Ramachandran Srinivasan on 50 years of his epic film

It's a film that exists beyond time and trends, an epic tale of two lovable rogues, a vengeful lawman, and the most terrifying villain Indian cinema had ever seen. On August 15, 1975, at Minerva Cinema in Mumbai, a young filmmaker's vision burst onto the screen, and the nation was never the same. This year, as Ramesh Sippy's magnum opus, *Sholay*, marks its 50th anniversary, the legendary director, who was just 28 when he made the film, looks back at the fire, the fear, and the friendship that forged a masterpiece.

It's a movie so ingrained in the Indian consciousness that its dialogues are part of our everyday language and its characters feel like family. Yet, to hear Sippy tell it, the journey of bringing this Western-meets-Indian-ethos epic to life was a monumental gamble.

"The first thing I told my crew was,

"There will be no compromises. Let's give it our best," Sippy recalls, his voice carrying the same conviction that must have guided him all those years ago. The problem of banditry was a very real issue in Chambal and Northern India, and while films like *Ganga Jumna*, *Mother India*, and *Mujhe Jeene Do* had explored the subject, Sippy and his team had a different vision.

"Our treatment was different," he explains. "The heroes were different—two lovable rogues. The screenplay, dialogues, casting, characterisation—everything jelled well." This alchemy, he believes, was born from a perfect storm of talent. "I might have been the captain of the ship, but the ship doesn't sail without the sails and the sailors!" he says, crediting the brilliant team that stood behind him: writers Salim-Javed, a stellar cast including Sanjeev Kumar, Dharmendra, Amitabh Bachchan, and a then-unknown Amjad Khan, and some of the finest technicians in the industry.

Behind the youthful exuberance and

creative passion of a young Sippy was the unwavering support of his father, producer G.P. Sippy. The filmmaker reveals a crucial moment that could have changed the course of cinematic history. Sippy had a script for another film, *Majboor*, ready to go, and was tempted to make it while Salim-Javed developed *Sholay* from a four-line idea. But his father intervened.

“He said, ‘Aap issi pe (kaam) kijiye’ (You work on this only),” Sippy shares. “This was the one time he interfered, and maybe it was the right interference because if we would have started making that film, we would not have been able to develop *Sholay* as we did.” G.P. Sippy’s intuition was a vital anchor. Despite the astronomical budget that swelled from ₹1 crore to ₹3 crores—an unheard-of amount at the time—Sippy says he never felt the pressure. “I was so involved in the film... I insisted on what I wanted and I kept waiting for the perfect light and shot.”



Ramesh & GP Sippy

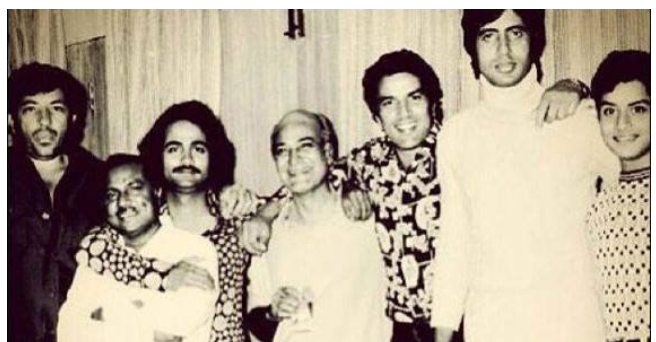
This pursuit of perfection extended to his actors. He remembers a powerful moment with Hema Malini during the famous “jab tak hai jaan” dance sequence. “She had to dance barefoot, and the ground was burning. What she did was brilliant. She put the toe down on the heat and still

managed to perform so beautifully.”

The cast of *Sholay* is the stuff of legend, but Sippy reveals the casting process was a series of fortuitous events and brilliant negotiations. Hema Malini, who had just starred in his hit film *Seeta Aur Geeta*, was initially skeptical about playing the bubbly Basanti. “She told me, ‘After *Seeta Aur Geeta*, you are offering me this role?’ I told her that though the role is short, it would be a good one and she agreed. When the role was narrated to her in detail, with final dialogues, she put in a lot of effort to do justice to the role.”

For the role of Veeru, Sippy had to use a bit of clever persuasion with Dharmendra, who was more interested in playing Thakur or Gabbar. Dharmendra was not happy, stating, “This is the story of Thakur and he is fighting against Gabbar. What will we do?” Sippy quipped, “Fine. Either do Thakur or Gabbar’s role but then you won’t get Hema Malini.” The choice was obvious.

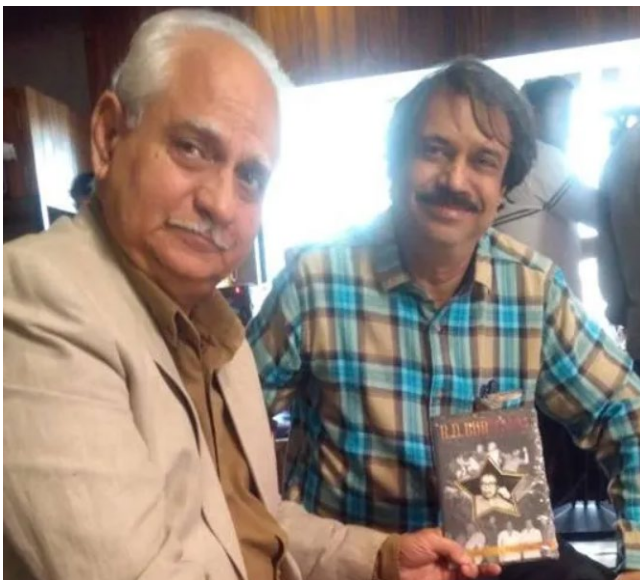
Amitabh Bachchan, still in a lean phase, was an easy choice for Sippy, who had noticed his grace in *Bombay to Goa* and his quiet intensity in *Anand*. Sippy says Bachchan was a “thinking actor,” someone who could combine instinct with intellect. “He’s unbelievably professional, probably the most disciplined actor we have,” Sippy says, recalling how Bachchan would arrive on set on time, prepared, and ready for “one more take” until he gave his best.





But the most pivotal casting decision of all was finding the right villain. Danny Dengzopa was the original choice for Gabbar, but his dates were locked for another film. It was Salim Khan who suggested the name Amjad Khan. Sippy remembered him from a play and was intrigued. “He seemed to be a different face, ek bhaari bharkam chehra aur ajeeb sa ek look hai (a heavy face with a strange look), so we thought he would fit into what we want to create,” Sippy shares. A cinematic icon was born.

One of the most powerful sequences in the film is the flashback showing Thakur’s family massacre. It’s a brutal and visceral scene that explains his quest for revenge. When asked how he planned that pivotal moment, Sippy says simply, “I cannot really put it in words what goes into such a



Ramesh Sippy holding a book on RD Burman, seen in pic with a journalist

scene. It just happens!”

The same can be said for the film’s music, a score by the legendary R.D. Burman that remains as fresh today as it was 50 years ago. Sippy and Pancham had a magical partnership, from *Seeta Aur Geeta* to *Saagar*. “He always looked to do something new and that’s why we jelled well,” Sippy says. “Our relationship wasn’t just professional. We were friends who had some wonderful times together.”

The film was a massive technical undertaking, introducing audiences to the 70mm screen and featuring high-octane action sequences. Sippy acknowledges the immense challenge of the project, from managing a large cast to coordinating intricate stunts. “I am glad that our efforts did not go in vain,” he says. “People liked our film, appreciated it, and even 50 years later, they still talk about it. It feels great to be associated with such a remarkable project.”

Sippy recently witnessed the enduring power of his film firsthand at a screening during the IIFA awards. The audience, a mix of old fans and a new generation, cheered for every scene as if they were watching it for the first time. “Its proof enough that people loved the film, and loved it for everything that was in it,” he says. “From the story, dialogues, emotions, action, adventure, performances, everything.”

Today, as new filmmakers attempt remakes of classics, Sippy is pragmatic. “Everybody has a right to make a film according to his vision,” he says. When asked about Ram Gopal Verma’s remake of *Sholay*, he offers a simple, “No comments!” But he believes that if the artistic and aesthetic senses are maintained, remakes can work.

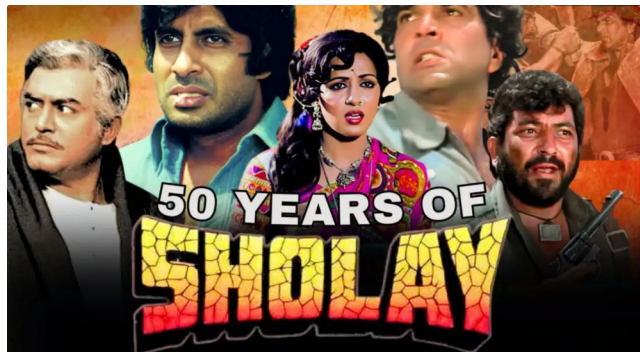


Image Courtesy: timesnownews.com

Ramesh Sippy's journey began with a passion for storytelling shaped by cinematic greats like K. Asif, Mehboob Khan, and Guru Dutt, and inspired by the grand scale of David Lean's Hollywood epics. His first film, *Andaz*, was considered ahead of its time, followed by the comedy *Seeta Aur Geeta* and then the epic that

would change everything. From a family drama to a dacoit film, Sippy was a master of genre, always looking for new challenges.

Now a producer himself, he hopes to inspire a new generation of storytellers. The lesson he learned from his own masterpiece remains the same: "If we forget we are telling a story, we're going to fail miserably... The heart of a film is the story."

And what a story it was. Fifty years ago, a young filmmaker dared to dream big, and in doing so, he gave India its greatest cinematic legacy—a film that continues to live, breathe, and resound in the hearts of millions





The Also-Stars

There may have been supporting roles, but the ever-so-memorable characters have gone down in movie lore, writes *Nanda Singh*

An important factor in making Sholay such a memorable film, that is remembered 50 years after its release, is that apart from the lead characters of Jai, Veeru, Thakur Baldev Singh, Basanti, Radha and Gabbar Singh, there were actors in supporting roles, who have gone down in movie lore.



Asrani played the hilarious “Angrezon ke zamaane ka jailor” with a Hitler moustache and staccato speech. His dialogue in which he orders half his men right, half left and the remaining after him, still cracks up audiences. Jai and Veeru easily escape from the prison run by this clown.



Jagdeep played the paan-chewing timber trader, Soorma Bhopali, with a pronounced Bhopal accent and a bragging manner. When he is boasting to a group of hangers-on about thrashing Jai and Veeru, they

sneak up behind him and egg him on with “phir kya hua”. When he finally sees them, he stutters to a halt and accuses his audience of forcing him to lie!



Mac Mohan played one of Gabbar Singh’s men, to whom he prefixes questions with “Arre o Samba”. The answer to the reward money on Gabbar’s head is “Poorey pachas hazaar,”



Viju Khote plays another Gabbar man, who is asked “Ab tera kya hoga Kaalia?” after the other two terrified men are forced to play Russian roulette and die. Gabbar laughs, “Bach haya saala” when Kaalia gets an empty revolver chamber and thinks he is spared. He is then shot for cowardice, because the three disgraced Gabbar by

being defeated by just two men (Jai and Veeru).



Leela Chitnis was Basanti’s aunt. Mausi, who has the comic scene with Jai, who pretends to extol the virtues of Veeru, while actually pulling him down.



AK Hangal was the blind Imam Saheb, who does not realise that his son is lying dead, and utters the unforgettable line, “Itna sannata kyon hai bhai?” to villagers who have been stunned into silence by the brutality of the murder. His emotional speech after the tragedy wrenches the whole village.



Sachin Pilgaonkar was the Imam’s son Ahmad, in a small but catalytic role. His murder and mutilation by Gabbar Singh,

who sends his body tied to a horse, finally spurs the villagers of Ramgarh towards supporting the fight against the sadistic bandit.



Keshto Mukherjee played the role he was stereotyped in –the drunken prisoner, who shares a cell with Jai and Veeru in the jail run by the comical Jailor (Asrani). His character provides comic relief and is part of the initial introduction to Jai and Veeru’s backstory.



Satyen Kappu, the ever dependent supporting actor, was Ramlal, the loyal helper of Thakur Baldev Singh, silently carrying out the orders of his master, who has no arms.



Iftikhar played Radha’s father, a minor but significant role in the film; after Jai’s death, he encourages Thakur to finally confront Gabbar and end the cycle of violence.



Five Songs, Fifty Years, Endless Legacy

In terms of longevity, the music of Sholay still shines, writes *Narendra Kusnur*

Whenever any friends get together, it's common for them to pose like Dharmendra and Amitabh Bachchan in *Sholay*, and sing, "Arrey, meri jeet, teri jeet, teri haar, meri haar, sun ae mere yaar; Tera gham, mera gham, meri jaan, teri jaan, aisa apna pyaar; Jaan pe bhi khelenge, tere liye le lenge, sabse dushmani".

That image of Veeru on a motorcycle and Jai on the sidecar is still etched in one's memory. Even 50 years later, 'Yeh Dosti' remains one of the quintessential friendship songs. And it's not the only one in Ramesh Sippy's blockbuster that keeps coming back to mark specific situations. On Holi, one hears the group number 'Holi Ke Din' played everywhere. When a man wants to reconcile with an angry partner, he often sings, "Koi haseena jab rooth jaati hai toh, aur bhi haseen ho jaati hai".

Cynics may have their own complaints.

Some felt that in what was essentially an action and revenge drama, with some comic scenes creating a balance, the music didn't have much of a role in the overall scenario. Others thought both music director R D Burman and lyricist Anand Bakshi had done more memorable work in the past. The truth, of course, is that in terms of longevity, the music of *Sholay* still shines. It's not only the tunes or words of the five songs, but how they have been included in the film's narrative and portrayed on screen. Even the background score, including the title theme, the regular wailing sounds, and the scene where Jai (Amitabh) plays the mouth organ as Radha



(Jaya Bhaduri) looks on, continue to have an impact today. The use of stereophonic sound added to the effect.

The singers were chosen appropriately by Burman, with Kishore Kumar singing for Veeru (Dharmendra), Manna Dey for Jai and Lata Mangeshkar for the tangewaali Basanti (Hema Malini). In the lone cabaret number 'Mehbooba Mehbooba', Burman sang for Jalal Agha as Helen danced on. That song was a huge hit, and is a regular at clubs even today, though it was actually rehashed from Greek singer Demis Roussos's 1974 number 'Say You Love Me'.

Interestingly, Burman decided to sing 'Mehbooba Mehbooba' himself after other playback singers could not quite capture what he wanted. To achieve the raw tone and raspy effect, he drank hot tea and avoided clearing his throat before recording. The famous beer-bottle rhythm was born in his living room while experimenting with sound. The number bursts into the film as the dacoits led by Gabbar Singh (Amjad Khan) drink and celebrate in their hideout. Helen plays a travelling dancer who holds the entire gang spellbound.

Most of the songs were recorded at Rajkamal Studios in Mumbai, with arrangements being supervised by Manohari Singh and Basudeb Chakraborty. A 70-member orchestra was used and some of Burman's regular team members like Kersi Lord on keyboard and synthesiser, Manohari on saxophone, Bhupinder Singh on guitar, Bhanu Gupta on harmonica and Maruti Rao Keer on tabla and percussion played a prominent role. The music was sold to Polydor India, which was emerging as a rival to HMV, at an advance of Rs 5 lakh, a massive

amount those days. It was necessary to sell 100,000 units to break even, and the label sold five times that number, even releasing a dialogue LP later.



Each song has an interesting story behind it. 'Yeh Dosti' has become a cultural reference for friendship, quoted in films, speeches and even political campaigns. Filming the song was no ordinary feat. Director Sippy wanted it to look effortless and free-spirited, and yet be perfectly in sync with the rhythm. The motorcycle and sidecar were tricky to handle on the rocky terrain and the camerawork had to keep both Amitabh and Dharmendra in the frame without losing the sense of movement. Shooting stretched over nearly three weeks in the blazing sun. Manna Dey later remarked that Kishore's singing brought a cheeky energy that matched Dharmendra perfectly, while his own more measured tone suited Amitabh's thoughtful Jai. A highlight was the use of harmonica. The song has two versions, with the sad one coming at the film's end.



‘Koi Haseena’, filmed on Dharmendra and Hema Malini, begins after Veeru plays a prank on Basanti at a temple. She is annoyed and he tries every trick to win her back. The setting is the countryside. Kishore sings with a teasing lilt to match Dharmendra’s antics. He recorded the song in a single session, deliberately singing with a casual air to capture the feel of a man making up lines on the spot. With Dharmendra and Hema involved in a real-life romance, the sequence looked all the more authentic.



‘Holi Ke Din’ was sung by Kishore and Lata, along with a chorus representing the huge celebratory crowd. It’s a joyful sequence as the entire village comes alive with colour. Veeru and Jai are joined by Basanti, with Radha looking on from the sidelines, Bakshi’s lyrics capture the festival’s playfulness while Burman blends folk beats with modern instrumentation. It is a moment of pure celebration, the last before the shadow of Gabbar darkens the village. Shooting the song was a challenge, as coloured powder and water played havoc with cameras and costumes. The song was



shot in unbearable heat too. But the end result was something outstanding, and for many junior artistes, it was a first-time experience.


From the storyline’s perspective, ‘Jab Tak Hai Jaan’ comes at a crucial point, when Gabbar Singh forces Basanti to dance on broken glass as Veeru is held captive, his hands tied to pillars. Lata captures the heroine’s mood as she sings, “Pyaar kabhi bhi marta nahin, maut se bhi yeh darta nahin, lut jaayenge mit jaayenge mar jaayenge hum, zinda rahegi hamaari dastan”. Hema later recalled that the sugar-glass used on the set could still cut if stepped on awkwardly. She performed multiple takes while maintaining the intensity of the scene.

Another highlight is the main theme, used in the opening credits and filmed in outdoor locales. With acoustic guitar, horns, strings and whistles, it is reminiscent of Ennio Morricone’s sound in Hollywood curry westerns. Yet, it has a certain Indianness, especially in the use of percussion, that makes it sound very Indian.

That was the speciality of Burman, who composed tunes one could relate to, aided by Bakshi’s lyrics which went with the situations. Together they created songs that have remained relevant even after five decades. The magic lingers.

The songs of Sholay:





**Aree-O-Sambha,
Kitne admi the**

Dialogues That Defined a Classic

There's cinema, and then there's *Sholay*. The film's dialogues continue to be quoted in living rooms, street corners, and political rallies. Seniors Today presents a collection of the mega-film in 10 lines

In August 1975, *Sholay* galloped into theatres on a tonga driven by Basanti and a motorcycle sidecar shared by Jai and Veeru. What followed was more than just a blockbuster—it was a cultural phenomenon. Every frame of Ramesh Sippy's epic became iconic, but its dialogues carved the deepest mark. Delivered with perfect timing, bite, and emotional punch, these lines transcended their scenes. They slipped into everyday language, political speeches, and playground banter. Fifty years later, we still remember them—not just for what was said, but for how they were said.

1. “Kitne aadmi the?”

Spoken by: Gabbar Singh (Amjad Khan)
Scene: Interrogating his men after they fail.

Backstory: The dramatic pauses—including counting “aadmi”—were emphasised in rehearsals to amplify menace and have since become legendary.

2. “Jo darr gaya, samjho marr gaya.”

Spoken by: Gabbar Singh (Amjad Khan)
Scene: A chilling warning about fear equalling death.

Backstory: Became a popular motivational quote in sports, films, and everyday banter—a rare heroic line from a villain's mouth.

3. “Arre o Samba! Kitna inaan rakha hai sarkar hum par?” — “Poore pachaas hazaar!”

Spoken by: Gabbar Singh to Samba (Mac Mohan)

Scene: Gabbar's demand and Samba's reply.

Backstory: Mac Mohan's simple but memorable “pachaas hazaar” turned the actor into a cult figure despite limited screen time.

4. **“Tera kya hoga, Kaalia?”**

Spoken by: Gabbar Singh (Amjad Khan)

Scene: Moments before Kaalia’s execution.

Backstory: The line’s fatalistic tone popularised it as a humorous remark in dire situations.



5. **“Tumhara naam kya hai, Basanti?”**

Spoken by: Jai (Amitabh Bachchan)

Scene: Jai interrupts Basanti’s rapid chatter in the tonga to ask her name.

Backstory: Often misattributed to Veeru, but it’s Amitabh’s quick-witted delivery that made it one of the film’s most quoted lines

6. **“Basanti, in kutto ke samne mat naachna.”**

Spoken by: Veeru (Dharmendra)

Scene: Veeru, tied up by dacoits, warns Basanti not to dance for them.

Backstory: A heartfelt moment that becomes tragically ironic when she is forced to dance on broken glass later



7. **“Chal Dhanno... aaj teri Basanti ki izzat ka sawaal hai.”**

Spoken by: Basanti (Hema Malini)

Scene: Basanti rallies Dhanno (her horse) in a highly dramatic moment.

Backstory: A symbol of her courage and strength, turning the tables on a threatening situation

8. **“Itna sannata kyun hai bhai?”**

Spoken by: Rahim Chacha (A.K. Hangal)

Scene: After the massacre in Ramgarh, he surveys the silent devastation.

Backstory: A.K. Hangal’s emotional delivery of this one line remains unforgettable. It was widely recounted, especially after his passing, highlighting its profound impact

9. **“Yahan se pachas pachas kos door gaon mein...”**

Spoken by: Gabbar Singh (Amjad Khan)

Scene: Gabbar recounts how even mothers frighten their children with his name.

Backstory: Became an urban legend of sorts, popular in anecdotes and mimicry

10. **“Mujhe toh sab police waalon ki suratein ek jaisi lagti hain.”**

Spoken by: Jai (Amitabh Bachchan)

Scene: Expressing disdain toward corrupt policemen.

Backstory: Offers a cynical, biting critique veiled in witty delivery

In the end, Sholay’s legacy isn’t just in its sprawling action sequences or unforgettable characters—it’s in these words that refuse to fade. Half a century on, they still spark laughter, nostalgia, and goosebumps, proving that when a line is truly great, it never dies.

Embers Effervesce, Sholay Shimmers

The effervescing embers of the shimmering Sholay continue to play out the Ramgarh drama in our collective consciousness 50 years after its creation, writes Nagesh Alai

In a few days from today, India will celebrate its 79th Independence Day unshackling the British raj and its Bollywood besotted silver generation will rejoice its 50th anniversary of engaging entrapment with the Gabbar Singh raj. Most of that generation, and so will the alpha, beta, next-gen what have you will not miss the allusion to the cult classic, Sholay, released on 15th August 1975, that had a spluttering start but had a glorious finish of 5 years, establishing a never before box office record, with all its 70 mm magnificence and stereophonic sound, a novelty in those days.

The fact that a fully restored and uncut

original version of the film was recently premiered in the open-air setting of Piazza Maggiore in Bologna, Italy, to commemorate its golden anniversary, and received a thumping ovation from its enchanted local audience speaks volumes about the enduring panache and pizzazz of Sholay. A truly momentous occasion for Indian cinema, not that it was something totally new, our films having gained popularity abroad over the years of its independence with its cinematic flair and storytelling. I, for one, am eagerly waiting to see this restored uncut version in our theatres here and soak in the death of Gabbar on screen, while cherishing the legacy of his persona who escaped death in the original version.

A contemporary of mine recently recounted to me about his singing the well-remembered Sholay number ‘yeh dosti hum nahin todenge, todenge dum, magar tera saath na chodenge’ at a social soiree.

This brought back a flush of memories from my hoary past with the film releasing when I was barely 17. Truth be told, in spite of belonging to a family of movie buffs with weekly visits to cinemas, getting tickets were not easy, unless you were willing to shell out multiples of the price in the black market, which we were fundamentally averse to and was considered a sin by our family in an era of conservatism and righteousness. Finally, my family and I had managed to catch the film in its 8th month of the release, only to be late and miss the opening scene of the train ride where two of the protagonists in the film, Jai and Veeru, respectively portrayed by Amitabh Bacchan and Dharmendra, common criminals being transported, fighting off the dacoits and defending the train. It was a necessary part of the film's script and continuum and I had to pay a revisit to the cinemas some months later for getting the connect and importance of the opening train fights scenes and enjoy the film as much the second time.



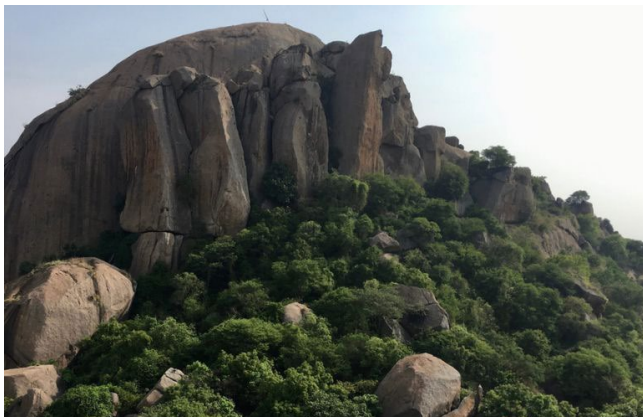
One of the gripping scenes in the film is the brutal slaying of the entire family of jailor Thakur (played by Sanjeev Kumar by Gabbar Singh (played by Amjad Khan, his debut film). The scene was stark, the sun was up, the setting isolate and one could have an immersive feel of the visceral cruelty and menace of the main antagonist in Gabbar in the gunning down of an entire

family in an act of unapologetic revenge, as he had threatened when he was captured by Thakur. He was terror personified, so to say, and made for a gripping menace and presence in the much-adulated film. No wonder, one of the enduring dialogues in the film is 'pachas pachas kos doore jab bacha rota hain toh maa kehati hai so jaa, nahin toh Gabbar aa jayega'.

There used to be a theatre called Shree Cinema, near the famed Hinduja Hospital, in Matunga/Mahim area in Mumbai. It used to show English films and even youngsters could steal in to see A rated films. The family killing scene was redolent of the frame-to-frame scene in the classic 1968 Hollywood film, 'Once Upon a Time in the West' starring Henry Fonda and Charles Bronson, which I had seen a few years before the release of Sholay and could connect the dots. No what matter Ramesh Sippy, director and Salim Javed, writers, may exhort to the contrary, it was unvarnished plagiarism. The story line too had drawn significant inspiration from the Yul Bryner starring 'The Magnificent Seven' which itself was inspired by the Akira Kurosawa 1954 classic 'Seven Samurai', the common thread being warriors/convicts coming to the rescue of villagers from the pillaging dacoits and villains. There have been allusions to being inspired by Charlie Chaplin film as well in the portrayal of Asrani with his 'Hitler' moustache and a martinet of a jailor, brilliantly performed by him. He was hilarious to say the least, one of the high points of the film. But then, originality is a vague and suspect concept most times and comparisons could be odious and unfair.

The defining differentiator of any film is the exciting storytelling and weaving it around the Indian ethos and Sholay did an

excellent job of it. You have to give it to the makers, the script writers, dialogue writers, the actors, singers and everyone involved to piece together an engaging three hours film, quite a long one to hold the audience attention end to end and to have half a century of accolades and adulation. The film was a melange of violence, menace, bonhomie, tragedy, comedy, emotions, dances, songs, sacrifices, purpose, colours, melodrama all pieced together to present a master piece of a movie.



Few may know that Ramgarh was a life-like set created in an area called Ramanagara in Karnataka to bring alive the setting of a village of scared villagers, the large haveli of Thakur, the ravines and the rocks as a hideout for Gabbar

Singh and his henchmen to operate out of, the sceneries and roads for the bak-bak Basanti (well-acted by Hema Malini), a tangewali who enamours Veeru, to ride her tanga and to dacoits riding horses for attacking the villagers and extorting grains. Who can forget the 15 minutes antics and laments of the tipsy Veeru proclaiming his love for Basanti from the high-water tank tower famously saying 'gavwalo, tumko meri aakhri salaam' whilst threatening to commit suicide and cursing the Maasi (played by Leela Mishra) for not agreeing to his marriage proposal to Basanti. And the hilarious repartee of Jai to a desperate Basanti saying 'kuch nahin hoga, jab daaru utregi, yeh bhi utar aayega'. Not to mention Jai meeting the Maasi with a proposal for his friend, Veeru and infectiously and indirectly talking about all the bad habits of his friend. Or the menacing Gabbar's 'kitne aadmi the', 'ab tera kya hoga, Kaaliya', 'jo darr gaya, samjo mar gaya' culminating in the cold bolded shooting of Kaaliya and two other henchmen for not being able to stand up to Jai and Veeru. Clear messaging that, of a dreaded dacoit. Who will not remember the violent scene where Gabbar



mouths ‘yeh haath mujhe de de, Thakur’ before mercilessly cutting off both the arms of Thakur. Or the poignancy of the moment when Veeru discovers that Jai’s coin that he had tossed to see who will make the first foray into Gabbar’s hideout, amid all the shooting, had identical images on both sides and that he had sacrificed his life willingly for the cause of bringing down the dacoit and saving his friend and villagers. The laconic Samba’s ‘poore pacchas hazar’ response to Gabbar’s ‘arre ho Samba, kitna inam rakhe hain sarkar hum par’, is indelibly etched and given an indelible prominence to Mac Mohan. You could not help laughing when the talkative Basanti says in another scene, ‘tumne yeh nahin poocha humara naam kaya hain’ in the tanga and Jai says ‘tumhara naam kya hain, Basanti’. There are similar snippets from the film which make for a high recall and a collage of fond memories about the film. Every actor, major and minor, brought

about a sense of involvement and passion to their roles to bring alive a pastiche of performance par excellence. Jaya Bhaduri, Satyen Kappu, Keshto Mukherjee, Jagdeep, Asrani, A K Hangal, Sachin, Helen, Jalal Aga, Iftikhar and various others, however small their roles, excelled and brought about a gravitas to their characters. Amjad Khan as Gabbar Singh was central to the story, the reason for the primary association with Sholay while all others like Dharmendra, Amitabh Bacchan, Sanjeev Kumar and Hema Malini were dramatic personae to bring him to books. All other interludes were comic diversions to alleviate the seriousness of the movie. The dialogues were scintillating and made for life lessons in its own inimitable way.

The effervescing embers of the shimmering Sholay continue to play out the Ramgarh drama in our collective consciousness 50 years after its creation. There can be no better encomiums for a classic!



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Why Kindness and Empathy Matter More as We Grow Older

As one grows older, it's not the big achievements or possessions that linger- it's the quiet moments of connection, the gentle gestures of empathy, and the warmth of kindness, writes *Harsh Goenka*

We live in an age that worships speed, disruption, and the latest gadget. Everything seems to be about “what’s next?” rather than “what truly matters?” But as we grow older, perhaps wiser, we begin to realise: it’s not the big achievements or possessions that linger- it’s the quiet moments of connection, the gentle gestures of empathy, and the warmth of kindness.

Somewhere in the race of life, we all forget to humanise. We start treating

people like transactions, not emotions. But let me be clear: in the second half of life, kindness and empathy are not soft virtues, they are our sharpest strengths.

There was a time when being ‘tough’ was seen as admirable — the no-nonsense parent, the stern boss, the emotionally distant elder. But what we now understand is this: true strength lies in softness. You don’t lose respect by being kind. You earn love.

We’ve all met those elderly people who radiate peace. They may not speak much, but their presence calms a room. It’s not what they say, but how they say it. A gentle smile. A nod of understanding. A quiet “I’m here.” That, I believe, is the real maturity of ageing- a move away from wanting to be the loudest voice, to being the warmest one.



What Empathy Really Means

According to psychologists, empathy has three forms:

- Cognitive empathy: Understanding what someone else is going through.
- Emotional empathy: Feeling their emotions as your own.
- Compassionate empathy: Taking action to ease their burden.

In our later years, we have the time, wisdom, and maturity to master all three. Whether it's reaching out to an old friend who's lonely, listening to our children without judgment, or simply showing patience to caregivers.

These aren't textbook virtues. They're lived experiences. When you've gone through losses, transitions, regrets, triumphs, you begin to relate to others more deeply. You understand what it's like to lose a loved one, to face health challenges, to watch dreams evolve or fade. And because you've walked those paths, you can gently walk beside others now.

What's the ROI of Kindness?

Even in the business world, they ask: "But what's the return on empathy?" And the answer is simple: relationships. The currency of our later years is not money. It's people. It's goodwill. It's being remembered for the right reasons.

Ask yourself, will people remember how

punctual you were? Or will they remember how you made them feel? Will your grandchildren cherish your investments, or your stories and your hugs?

When we are young, we chase resumes.

When we are older, we write eulogies. And the most beautiful eulogies are never about someone's designations or awards- they're about who they were, how they loved, how they made others feel safe.

Empathy shows up when you:

- Call an old friend without a reason.
- Forgive a long-held grudge.
- Compliment someone younger.
- Let go of control and offer trust.

These moments of grace are not dramatic. But they change lives, subtly and permanently.



Supporting the Next Generation

As seniors, we play an enormous role in supporting the emotional wellbeing of younger generations. Our children and grandchildren face a far more stressful world than we did. Listening to them, without rushing to offer advice. Encouraging them, without judgement. Sharing stories, without preaching. These are our superpowers now.

You'd be surprised how much impact a few well-chosen words can have. A grandson unsure about his career. A

granddaughter navigating heartbreak. They don't always need our opinions, they need our presence. They need to feel we are their safe place.

A handwritten note to a grandchild. A call to someone who's lost a loved one. Cancelling a gathering because someone isn't well. These may seem small. But these are the acts that stitch a life well lived.

Being older allows us to shift from doing to being, from action to presence. We become the family's emotional anchor. The ones who remember birthdays. Who remember who likes which dish? Who keep the family stories alive? And in doing so, we shape values that outlive us.

The Empathy Shift

The pandemic was a brutal reminder of how fragile life is. But also how powerful a simple message "Are you okay?" can be. We were all forced to stop. To reflect. To reach out. And in that collective pause, something softened in all of us. We waved to neighbours. We checked in on distant relatives. We rediscovered the small rituals that keep people close.

In our homes, in our families, in our communities, we need empathy by design. Not just random acts of kindness, but a lifestyle of kindness. Let it reflect in how we welcome the younger ones at home. How we show grace to those different from us. How we treat domestic help, hospital staff, neighbours, pets.

Empathy, then, becomes a habit. Not a



heroic gesture, but a daily practice. And like any habit, it gets stronger the more we live it.

Laugh A Little, Love A Lot

Even now, I believe humour is one of the most underrated gifts. A little joke, a shared laugh, a playful nudge- humour with kindness is like masala chai: tasty, wonderfully warm, and deeply comforting. Growing older shouldn't mean growing grumpy. It should mean growing light. Laughing at ourselves. Being playful with grandkids. Smiling at strangers. These are the joys we finally have time for. And when you combine laughter with empathy, you create a magical mix that heals, bonds, and lingers.

Legacy Is Not a Will — it's a Feeling

Empathy outlasts bank balances. Kindness outshines property papers. Legacy is not in the things you leave behind, it is in the feeling you leave behind in people's hearts.

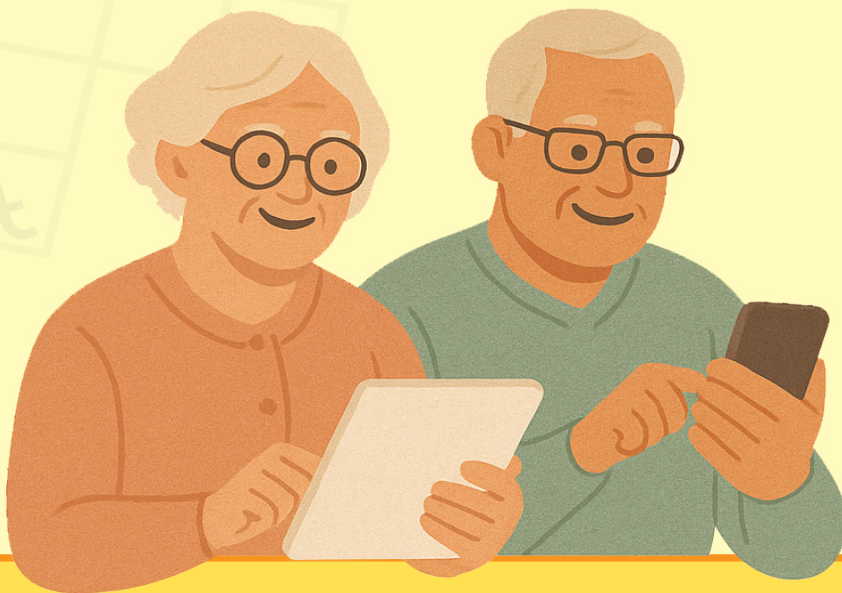
A kind word remembered. A silly song sung together. A shoulder offered during a tough moment. These are the real markers of a life well lived. So yes, let the world chase progress. But as elders, let us demonstrate the merits of love, kindness, and empathy.

And if, long after we are gone, someone smiles quietly and says, "He was so kind... he was always thoughtful"—then we will have truly lived well. And isn't that the ultimate return on life?

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WHERE HAS SLEEP GONE?

We know sleep as an old friend—always there, always certain—until one day she grows distant, writes Vickram Sethi

There is a haunting beauty in the line, “*Maut ka jab ek din moyateen hai, fir mujhe neend kyon nahi aati?*” If death is inevitable, then what keeps us awake all night?

It raises a profound question about the nature of human anxiety. If death is inevitable, and its moment already determined, then what keeps us awake all night? What is it that unsettles the mind when the body yearns for rest? The answer lies not in death, but in life’s uncertainties—the what-ifs, regrets, unfinished conversations, and silent hopes. We lose sleep not because we doubt death’s certainty, but because we feel the weight of living.

Each night the world grows quieter. The bustle fades, lights dim, and our bodies whisper, “It’s time to rest.” Sleep is not just absence of wakefulness—it’s a gentle friend, wrapping us in comfort and carrying us elsewhere.

In youth, sleep arrived uninvited. As children, our heads touched the pillow and dreams claimed us. We woke fresh, refilled from head to toe. But as years pass, sleep grows shy—sometimes knocking softly, other times slipping away when we turn restlessly.

Once, sleep was salvation—a balm for tired limbs, an escape from troubled thoughts. If we couldn’t sleep, we knew something was wrong. We would listen to our bodies. We surrendered to sleep as naturally as breathing, as reliably as sunrise.

Now, sleep feels like a goal we chase, a luxury we schedule, a test we fail. We lie

exhausted yet awake, bodies still but minds ablaze—scrolling, reminiscing, planning, regretting. Bedrooms, once sanctuaries, hum with smartphones and flickering screens. Nights, once for winding down, now burst with stimulation—one more show, one last message, another peek at someone else’s life.



Today, sleep must be curated: herbal teas, melatonin, blackout curtains, custom pillows. We track REM cycles and wake to statistics on our rest. Sleep has shifted from surrender to strategy—an elaborate production replacing something once simple.

Why has something so primal turned elusive? Because our minds are overstimulated and under rested. We don’t wind down; we crash. Even then, we hover between wakefulness and true rest, waking tired, tense, foggy.

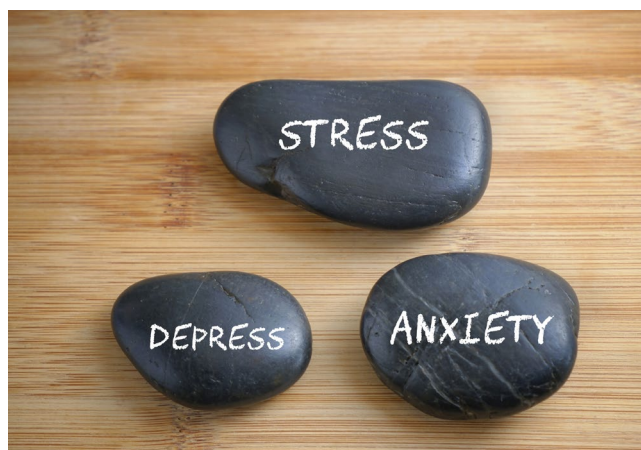
Rest is now tied to productivity: “Did I sleep enough to perform tomorrow?” We no longer sleep to restore—we sleep to compete. Sleep has become preparation for output, not a reward for survival.

Worse, the imbalance runs both ways—too little sleep for some, too much for others. In India, long work hours,

traffic stress and digital overuse make oversleeping seem like well-being. But chronic oversleeping—more than nine or ten hours—links to heart disease, depression, obesity, diabetes, even memory issues. The over-snoozers aren’t spared either.

Oversleeping strains the heart—already vulnerable in a country where cardiovascular disease is a leading killer. Mental health suffers too: depression and fatigue feed each other. It can disrupt hunger and metabolism hormones, leading to weight gain. Combined with sedentary lifestyles and carb-heavy diets, it increases diabetes risk, especially for seniors.

Physically, long hours in bed—often on unsupportive mattresses—can cause back and neck pain. Doctors frequently trace chronic stiffness to poor sleep posture.



Why this imbalance? For some, it’s a habit: irregular schedules, binge-watching and digital addiction. For others, it’s deeper—depression, side effects of medication, undiagnosed disorders like sleep apnoea. Modern life’s constant noise—notifications, deadlines, social media—pulls us from the quiet we crave.

Culturally, rest is undervalued, often equated with laziness. Students, workers, even retirees feel pressure to always “do.” We’ve forgotten that doing nothing—

resting, napping—is not a weakness, but a necessity.

And yet, hope remains. Sometimes sleep returns unbidden—a rainy afternoon, a power outage, a holiday with no agenda. In these rare moments, we remember falling asleep without effort. No gadgets, trackers, or supplements—just body and mind yielding to stillness.

Sleep hasn't forgotten us—we've forgotten how to welcome it. We ignore yawns, replace sunsets with screens, and trade slow evenings for fast content. We forget that rest is the soil from which life grows.

Where has sleep gone?

It hides behind noise, to-do lists, glowing screens, fear of missing out. We didn't lose sleep in a night—we lost it bit by bit through anxious thoughts, restless minds, and stiff bodies.

We can find it again—not by forcing, but by allowing. Trusting our bodies.

Respecting the night. Accepting that rest is the foundation of work.

Dim the lights. Silence the phone. Breathe deeply. Remember what our ancestors knew: sleep is sacred. It begins not with effort, but surrender. Encourage it with a soft lamp, calming music, warm milk, or a few pages of a beloved book. Let your mind slow, thoughts drifting like falling leaves.

Many seniors carry heavy memories into their nights. Welcome sleep helps set them gently aside until morning. It reminds us that no matter our age, the mind can still wander like a child in dreamlands.

*Come, gentle friend, and take my hand,
Lead me to that quiet land,
Where worries fade, and hearts are light,
And morning waits beyond the night.
We've walked through decades, you and I,
Through youthful dawns and sunsets shy,
Stay near me now, for I have earned,
The peace for which my heart has yearned.*



15 Simple Habits to Stop Life's Triggers from Rattling You

Sometimes it takes just one careless word, a blaring horn or a sudden memory to unsettle us. But with a few gentle habits from Team Seniors Today, we can keep our hearts steady and our minds at peace

Life has a way of testing us when we least expect it. A sharp word from a family member or a friend or even the domestic help, a traffic jam and some unskilled driver cutting you on a sweltering day, disturbing news you've heard or read, or a sudden reminder of a past hurt can spark emotions that linger far longer than we'd like. These triggers can drain our energy, cloud our judgement, and sometimes make us act in ways we regret.

The good news is that while we cannot stop life from throwing challenges our way, we can choose how to respond. Here are fifteen practical ways to keep calm, regain perspective, and rise above life's triggers.

Pause before reacting. When you feel your temper rising or anxiety building, take one slow deep breath. This tiny gap between stimulus and response gives you a chance to decide how you want to act, rather than being driven purely by emotion.

Identify your patterns. Notice when and where you tend to get triggered. Is it during family gatherings? In heavy traffic? With certain people? Once you know your patterns, you can prepare for them.

Limit exposure to known stressors. If a particular news channel, WhatsApp group, or social media feed consistently riles you up, take a step back. Curate what

you consume. Protecting your peace is not avoidance, it is wisdom.



Ground yourself physically. Something as simple as feeling your feet on the ground, stretching, or holding a warm cup of chai can help you stay rooted in the present moment.

Use cooling breathing techniques. Slow, steady breathing calms the nervous system. Try inhaling to a count of four, holding for two, and exhaling to a count of six. Even a few rounds can help.

Question the story in your head. Often, our reaction is to the story we tell ourselves about what just happened, not the event itself. Before reacting, ask yourself if it is actually true, or if you are assuming.

Practise empathy. Remind yourself that others are also carrying burdens you cannot see. This shift in perspective can help reduce the sting of their words or actions.

Declutter your space. A messy room or desk can amplify feelings of chaos. Tidying up, even briefly, can clear mental cobwebs.



Find a healthy outlet. Channel your emotions into something productive.

It could be writing, cooking, sketching, gardening, or even doing a vigorous household chore.

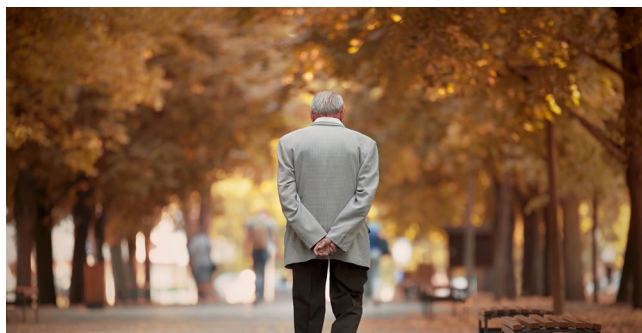
Stay hydrated and nourished. Hunger and dehydration can make you irritable and less patient. Keeping yourself well-fed and hydrated is basic, but it matters more than we realise.

Use music as medicine. A calming raga, your favourite old Hindi film song, or even instrumental flute music can soften sharp emotions.

Avoid overcommitting. When your schedule is crammed, even minor inconveniences feel like major crises. Learn to say “no” or “not right now” without guilt.

Speak to a trusted person. Sometimes, just talking about what’s bothering you can take away its power. Choose someone who listens without immediately offering judgement or solutions.

Spend time in nature. Even a short walk in the park, tending to balcony plants, or sitting in the early morning sun can quieten the mind.



End your day by listing three things you are grateful for, no matter how small. This simple act shifts focus from what is wrong to what is right.

You are not alone in feeling triggered; it is part of being human. The aim is not to eliminate triggers completely, but to reduce their grip on your life. With consistent practice, these small habits can help you face life’s challenges with steadiness and grace.



The Best Foods for your 'Little Fella'

Boosting sexual performance for ageing men can be achieved naturally, writes *Udai Mathur*

As the years go by, most men notice that their bodies change – a little less stamina, a little more caution when climbing the stairs, and perhaps a bit of extra thought before indulging in rich food. But one area that often gets overlooked in health conversations is male sexual vitality. For many, it's not about chasing youthful exploits, but about enjoying intimacy, confidence, and good health for as long as possible.

And here's the good news: what you eat can make a difference. Nature has provided a bounty of foods that can support circulation, hormone balance, and energy levels – all of which can help your 'little

fella' perform at his best. No magic pills, no risky shortcuts – just wholesome nutrition, tailored for men in their later years.

Why Food Matters for Men's Sexual Health

The penis is not an isolated organ – it's part of a complex system involving the heart, blood vessels, hormones, and the nervous system. Erections depend on healthy blood flow, responsive nerves and adequate testosterone.

Ageing can affect all these areas. Arteries may narrow, hormone levels can dip, and nerve sensitivity might decrease. A poor diet speeds up these changes, while the right foods can slow them down or even reverse some effects.

Think of it this way: if your heart is healthy, your 'little fella' will likely be healthy too.

The Star Foods for Supporting Performance

Let's explore some of the best foods – easily available in India – that can help keep things in good working order.

Watermelon – Nature's Little Blue Pill



Watermelon is rich in an amino acid called citrulline, which helps relax blood vessels and improve circulation – similar to how certain medicines for erectile dysfunction work. It's refreshing, hydrating, and perfect for Indian summers.

Tip for seniors: Have fresh watermelon as a mid-morning snack. It's light on the stomach and won't spike your blood sugar as much as refined sweets.

Nuts and Seeds – The Tiny Powerhouses



Almonds, walnuts, pumpkin seeds, and sunflower seeds are loaded with zinc, arginine, and healthy fats – all essential for

testosterone production and healthy blood flow. Zinc, in particular, supports sperm health and hormone balance.

Tip: Soak almonds overnight for better digestion. Add a small handful of mixed seeds to your breakfast porridge or curd.

Leafy Greens – Spinach, Methi and Amaranth



Leafy greens are rich in nitrates, which the body converts to nitric oxide – a compound that helps widen blood vessels and improve circulation. Spinach also contains magnesium, which can improve testosterone levels.

Tip: Have lightly cooked spinach or methi in dal or as part of a chapati filling. Overcooking can destroy some nutrients, so keep it gentle.

Pomegranates – The Ruby Red Boost



Pomegranates are full of antioxidants that protect blood vessels and improve

circulation. Some studies suggest that regular pomegranate juice can enhance erectile function over time.

Tip: Eat the fresh seeds rather than packaged juice, which often has added sugar.

Garlic – The Heart’s (and the Fella’s) Friend



Garlic improves blood flow and lowers blood pressure. For centuries, it has been used in traditional medicine to enhance vitality.

Tip: Crush a clove and leave it for a few minutes before cooking – this releases more beneficial compounds. You can also add finely chopped raw garlic to salads or chutneys if your stomach can handle it.

Dark Chocolate – A Tasty Treat with Benefits



Dark chocolate (70% cocoa or more) contains flavonoids that help improve

circulation. It’s also a mood booster, which can help set the right atmosphere for intimacy.

Tip: Have a small piece after dinner. Avoid milk chocolate, which has too much sugar and less cocoa.

Chilli Peppers – A Spicy Circulation Booster



Capsaicin, the compound that gives chillies their heat, can improve blood flow and stimulate nerve endings. It also triggers the release of endorphins – the feel-good hormones.

Tip: Use moderately – too much spice can upset the stomach, especially in older age.

Bananas – The Potassium Champions



Potassium helps regulate blood pressure and supports heart health, which in turn supports erectile function. Bananas are also rich in vitamin B6, which helps in the production of sex hormones.

Tip: If you have diabetes, monitor portion size, but one banana a day is usually fine.

Oily Fish – Salmon, Mackerel, and Sardines



Rich in Omega-3 fatty acids, oily fish improve blood vessel flexibility and reduce inflammation. This helps maintain smooth blood flow – essential for erections.

Tip: For vegetarians, flaxseeds, chia seeds, and walnuts provide plant-based omega-3s.

Dates – Sweet Energy for Special Moments



Dates are high in natural sugars for quick energy, as well as minerals like magnesium and potassium. In many cultures, dates are seen as a natural aphrodisiac.

Tip: Have 2–3 dates with a few almonds as an evening snack – it’s energising without being too heavy.

Foods to Limit for Better Performance

While adding good foods is important, avoiding certain foods can be just as crucial:

- Too much sugar – damages blood vessels and nerves.
- Excess salt – raises blood pressure, reducing circulation.
- Trans fats – found in processed snacks and fried fast food, which harm heart health.
- Too much alcohol – can dull nerve sensitivity and reduce testosterone.



Lifestyle Partners to Good Food

Food works best when paired with healthy habits:

- Stay active – walking, yoga, or light strength training improves blood flow and hormone balance.
- Maintain a healthy waistline – belly fat can lower testosterone.
- Manage stress – chronic stress releases cortisol, which can affect sexual function.
- Get good sleep – testosterone levels peak during deep sleep.

When to Seek Medical Advice

If dietary changes and lifestyle improvements don’t help after a few months, it’s worth speaking to a doctor. Persistent erectile problems can be an early sign of heart disease, diabetes, or hormonal issues.

Remember, there is no shame in asking for help. In fact, addressing it early can improve both your health and quality of life.



Good food can support the body, but a relaxed mind and loving relationship nourish the soul.

Nature offers a delicious way to care for your 'little fella'. By eating foods that support circulation, hormone balance, and heart health, you're not just boosting performance – you're investing in overall well-being. And that, perhaps, is the most attractive quality of all.

A Gentle Word on Expectations

Even with the best diet and habits, ageing naturally changes sexual function. Erections may not be as strong or as frequent as in youth, and recovery time may be longer. But intimacy is about more than performance – it's also about emotional connection, affection, and mutual enjoyment.



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