



This American actor began acting as a child, with early roles in the supernatural horror film *The Amityville Horror*, and the drama series *Desperate Housewives*. She has supported LGBT equality rights.

OTT platform owners should exercise restraint and not go overboard in the name of creativity, says Director Ashish Shrivastav

# 'OTT SHOWS HAVE BETTER QUALITY'



On the set of *Shaadi Mubarak* with Manav Gohil and Rajeshwari

## What does Delhi mean to you?

I love Delhi, especially its street food. This city gave me the confidence to work, and because I lived in Delhi, I could adjust to Mumbai easily. Otherwise it would have been difficult for a small-townner like me. All my friends are still in Delhi; when I was here, roaming around DU North Campus was our favourite pastime.



## RAJKUMARI SHARMA TANKHA

**B**ORN and brought up in Prayagraj, Ashish Shrivastav, 40, was drawn towards theatre and films since childhood. At his school, KV Naini, and College at Allahabad University, he was a member of the dramatics society and a part of the management team. "By the time I passed out of college, I realised that my interest lay in acting," he says. "My parents wanted me to join the government sector, but I had no interest in doing so, and thankfully they never pressured," says Shrivastav, Director of the ongoing hit TV show, *Shaadi Mubarak* on Zee TV.

After completing his studies, Shrivastav enrolled for a three-month course at Samanantar Theatre run by Director Anil Ranjan Bhowmik, and moved to Delhi in 2000 to secure a seat at National School of Drama, but as luck would have it, the admissions were already over by then.

"I had two options, either wait for the next academic session or join Adi Natya Drishti theatre group by NSD professor Robin Das. I chose the latter; I didn't want to waste any time," he says. It proved to be a wise decision since Das taught along the lines of NSD. "I remained associated with him for over two years, living within the NSD premises, and learning the nuances of acting and directing," he says.

By 2002 end, Shrivastav moved to Mumbai to enrol for a course in mass communication. "I wanted to become an actor; my idea was to study and also try my luck in acting. But nothing substantial hap-

pened for more than a year. I just got some small roles," he says. "Meanwhile, my dad who had been supporting me financially all this while was getting a little concerned about me, and calling me back. Since I didn't want to go back to Prayagraj, I decided to take up direction," he says.

In 2003, through a friend he got the job of an Assistant Director at Balaji Telefilms, which he held onto for over three years before becoming the show's director.

As of today, he has directed over 20 TV serials, including the hits *Kasam Se* (Zee TV), *Bandini* (NDTV Imagine), *Parichay* (Colors) and *Yeh Rishtie Hain PyaarKe* (Star Plus), among others. He also enacted small roles in some of these, "but acting is no more a burning desire it once was".

He is now working on a couple of web series for OTT platforms. "OTT is here to stay. Youngsters have moved to it for the variety of content available here. Further, production houses spend huge money on shoots, outdoor locations, etc., which increases its quality," he says, adding that all this gives creative satisfaction to actors and directors.

All web platforms are bound to grow since each one has its own niche. "Like Alt Balaji is a soft, semi porn channel targeting UP and Bihar, and it tops in these regions," he says.

Steering clear of the controversies that keep emerging over content on OTT platforms, Shrivastav feels that responsibility lies with the platform owners, and not writers, actors or directors. "It is very easy to make a hate-spewing crime story as compared to a simple story that talks about values," he says.

## VALENTINE'S DAY SPECIAL

# Deals for couples, singles & girl gangs

### EXPRESS FEATURES

NOW that going out and ordering in is almost back to normal (adhering to the Covid protocol, nonetheless) various restaurants and hotels have rolled out special Valentine's Day offers to entice guests.

#### Creamy & Dreamy Affair

**G**o for the dessert variety – heart-shaped *Blueberry Mirror Glaze Cheesecake* and *Red Velvet Mascarpone Pastry*, *Gulab Malai Kheer*, and drink *Love at First Sight* – a combination of White spirit and peach finished with cranberry juice. **AT:** Pirates of Grill, DLF Mall of India; Ambience Mall, Vasant Kunj



#### Strawberry Special

**L**'Opéra has special strawberry tarts and frasier cake, including the flaky *Strawberry Eggless Thin Tart* with strawberry compote layered with fresh strawberries. The French *Strawberry Fraisier* cake has two layers of genoise sponge, diplomat cream, strawberry syrup and strawberries. **AT:** All L'opéra outlets



#### Singles and Girls' Gang

**M**olecule Air Bar has curated a cocktail *Love Potion* at a special price of ₹399 only for all the singles. Warehouse Café is giving a 10 per cent discount to every all girls' and all boys' table, and a gang of over four girls will get a 10 per cent discount at Mama's Buoi. The special dessert *My Little Heart* also has a 10 per cent discount.



#### For Couples

**T**his restaurant has curated a Valentine's Day special five-course menu for stags and couples. One can enjoy the Valentine Special Cocktail/Mocktail Menu and a three-course set meal per couple for ₹2021. **AT:** Farzi Café, Cyber Hub, Gurugram; CP



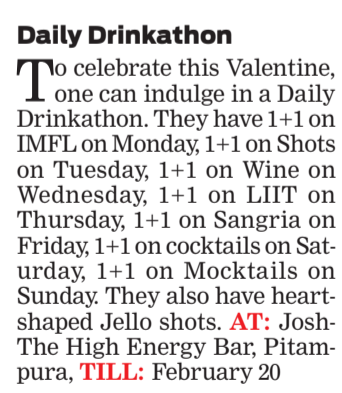
#### Love Bites

**T**he ongoing TET festival here stands out for its decoration and a curated food and drinks menu, especially the special Love Bytes menu on February 14. **AT:** Viet.Nom, DLF CyberHub, DLF Phase 2, Sector 24, Gurugram



#### Daily Drinkathon

**T**o celebrate this Valentine, one can indulge in a Daily Drinkathon. They have 1+1 on IMFL on Monday, 1+1 on Shots on Tuesday, 1+1 on Wine on Wednesday, 1+1 on LIIT on Thursday, 1+1 on Sangria on Friday, 1+1 on cocktails on Saturday, 1+1 on Mocktails on Sunday. They also have heart-shaped Jello shots. **AT:** Josh-The High Energy Bar, Pitampura, **TILL:** February 20



#### Musical Performance

**D**eene Khan, who belongs to a family of mastersingers, will be performing live. Khan sings the songs of Sufi poets like Mira Bai, Kabir, Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, Bulleh Shah and Baba Ghulam Farid with élan. **AT:** Nukkad Café & Bar, SDA Market



#### V-Day at Home

**F**or those, who love to celebrate the day in the comfort of their homes, Kampai is doing Special Valentine Packages. Founder Avantika Bahl says, "Our team can do the perfect restaurant-like experience at your place. We will personally curate each menu based on client preferences, including table settings, cutlery and crockery for a complete dining experience."

Salsa Kitchen also has a similar at-home experience. "We have a seven-course meal for couples. Private chef services for Valentine's are starting from ₹10,000," adds Chef Sagar Bajaj.

## FOOD REVIEW

# SINGAPORE SIZZLE FOR DELHI'S BELLY

SHANTANU DAVID

**W**HILE Asian food in general and Chinese food in particular may rank high on Delhi's palate, Singaporean is one cuisine that has not enjoyed much of a presence. Here to take care of that is Mai Bao, from the chefs of fine dine Asian restaurant Kampai.

The menu is a medley of Malay, Cantonese, and South East Asian influences, in a modern presentation, and the only way to do justice to it is to meander our way through the many courses.

For instance, there are the baos. Not content to have just one variety, Mai Bao has several, ranging from open faced Chicken, Mushroom, Duck, and Pork Baos to the original stuffed steam dumplings. We particularly enjoyed the *Chicken Xiao Long Baos*, comprising amply proportioned dumplings settled in a puddle of simmering broth, allowing us to sip, slurp, and bite.

Then there's the *Chicken Satay* and the *Dim Sum*, to wit, the *Chicken with Rendang Curry* and the Prawn and Blue Pea ones. The Satay, accompanied by its tangy chunky peanut sauce is put away by us before you could say the dish's name, while the Dim Sum is a welcome change from the usual dull dumpling.

Another stand out (and restaurant recommended) is the *Ayam Goreng*, a crispy fried chicken that would make the KFC colonel's mouth water. Incidentally, there's also a wide range of meats and treats ranging from tofu to crab and pork to duck.

All that being said, our main course was also the main event



From top: Hainanese Chicken Rice, Detox Cups, Yam Puff Bao, Mai Marshmallows, and Nasi Goreng

for us. Considered a, if not the, national dish of Malaysia, *Nasi Lemak* is a flirtation of rice, coconut milk, tender marinated chicken and spices, cooked in pandan leaves. Needless to say, we fell in love.

**Price for Two:** ₹1,500 (excluding taxes)  
**At:** DLF Avenue Saket

# 'The paintings lead the way'

### EXPRESS FEATURES

**D**IVYA Singh's debut exhibition *Notes for Tomorrow* tries to understand the nature of time. She juxtaposes this understanding with constant variables such as light and the slow moving planets in her oil-on-canvas paintings. In an interview with *The Morning Standard*, she talks about traces, residues and loss, "which inadvertently tied up with both memory and melancholia; the two central themes in my work". Excerpts:

#### How did you arrive at this theme?

From 2016-18, I pursued my Master's degree, being consumed almost entirely by my focus on trying to understand the nature of time. I realised the visceral, stark, actuality, of the phenomenon of death after I had witnessed it first hand – within my house. This experience vastly altered my notion of existence and time and it played a vital role in what became the centre of my concerns and my practice as a visual artist over a period of the two years that I spent in the university. All that I learnt within the space of this time period spent in the university, evolved within my practice, and led me to focus and develop the series of paintings exhibited here.

#### Did the pandemic affect your art making process?

Quite frankly, it only reinforced my way of life, solidified my resolve to work in the manner in which I do currently, (in isolation) and gave me the space and time that I had wished for. It made me bloom.

#### Could you elaborate your view of the microcosm?

The minute structural similarities between our lived realities and the nature of the universe as both separate and intertwined dimensions have



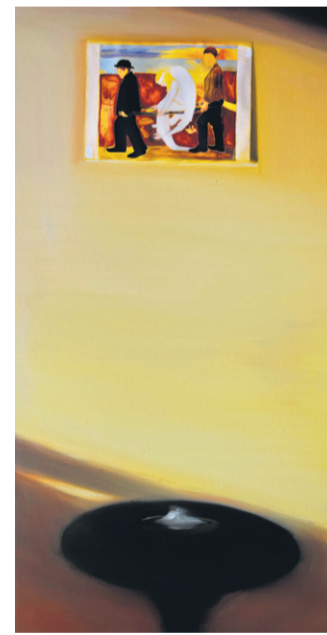
*Nox Umbra-Night Shadows* by Divya Singh's, oil on canvas

been an endless source of inspiration to me. This understanding of our collective reality as a microcosm, has lent a lot to the basic fibre of the paracosm that I constructed and inhabited for most of my life. I understand it as a special zone which morphs, and is endlessly birthing. Nothing about it is defined, it is quite alive and it is lush within its own silence.

#### Future plans

Since my work has a lot to do with literature and cinema, the possibilities and directions are endless. However, theoretically, I am doing my best to cultivate a certain decolonial consciousness in order to shed the post-colonial baggage within my work and in my existence. It is a rather lengthy process and requires much thought and effort. There is ambivalence, a certain fire to create everything all at once, and yet there are always more books than one can read within a lifetime. More directions than one can choose from. At the moment, I am at one of many thresholds. The paintings usually lead the way, I sometimes only follow.

**TILL:** February 20  
**AT:** Shrine Empire, D-395 Defence Colony



*Signs*, oil on canvas



Divya Singh

## B'TOWN NEWS

# Gowariker remembers working with Rajiv Kapoor



### EXPRESS FEATURES

**B**OLLYWOOD actor-producer Rajiv Kapoor passed away due to a cardiac arrest on Tuesday. He was 58.

Before his demise, Rajiv had shot for Ashutosh Gowariker's upcoming production, *Toolsidas Junior*.

Rajiv had quit acting in 1990 to focus on producing and directing. However, he accepted a role after Ashutosh cast him. "I was a great fan of Rajiv Kapoor, from his *Ram Teri Ganga Mailli* days," Ashutosh shared in a note.

"It was a superb debut performance. It was really lovely

to work with Rajiv, again. On sets, he was an absolute professional. And played the part with so much fun, dignity and ease. His performance in the movie is going to surprise everyone. Sadly, he won't be there to enjoy the accolades he was surely going to receive.