

NOVEMBER 2020

SUNSETS ARE PROOF THAT ENDINGS  
CAN OFTEN BE BEAUTIFUL TOO

- BY VATSAL PATEL, SEMESTER 5, USLM



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# INDEPENDENCE OF A WOMAN "DEPENDS" ON THE SOCIETY

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- BY - Saransh Mourya, Semester 5, USLM

A woman is independent till the time society allows her to be!

As society has demarcated 'borders' residing in which a woman is unconstrained to live her life in the way she wants to. But beyond that her Independence is subjected to questions!

## **Being a woman:**

You're independent to manage your schedule only if you're planning to be home max by 8 pm because after that independence becomes a social problem as you're being judged by time.

You're independent to wear anything unless it's showing much of your skin because after that the categorization of your character begins.

You're independent to raise your voice against all issues unless you talk about the menstrual cycle, breast cancer, HIV in front of a group consisting of men because that makes you a discourteous and uncivil person and society fears to face your stout-hearted avatar.

You're independent to hang out with your group of friends unless boys outnumber girls because that'll give society a reason to bother.

You're independent to choose what to drink and eat unless you sniff cigarette and gulp alcohol because it might not affect your health much but it will surely give society a signal that you're available for being insulted, judged, abused, used, bruised etc.

So, here you have it! Your independence depends on the society! The society which begins to work even before you step out! So much for equality, freedom and most of all safety, and we are a progressing nation of the 21st century!!!



# ‘MA’AM, DO YOU HAVE OCD?’

- BY RASHMI CHOUHAN, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, USLM

My understanding of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder was limited to the character of Melvin Udall in the 1997 American romantic comedy “As Good As It Gets”. But I gave it a serious thought after one of my students actually pointed it out on me in one of my classes.

I teach television reporting, editing, and production. And clean copy, clean production of news, clean display of graphics, fonts, headlines and content on the television screen is what I always aspire my students to learn. As a viewer, I would always prefer watching BBC over Times Now. A clean, one-line ticker at the bottom of the television screen is more inviting to me as compared to the confusing bombardment of information on the screen, or kickers, slugs, headlines or numbers squeezing every area of the screen possible.

So, it was when I was drawing a comparison between the presentation of news by BBC and Times Now, a student actually pointed it out, “Ma’am, do you have OCD?”

Oh well! I was taken aback. “How can I (I mean, I!) have OCD? No one had ever told me this. I have never felt so. I feel as normal as any other human being feels. And in no case, I am even closer to how Melvin was in the movie,” I thought. I denied the observation hands down.

The moment the student shot the quip, I felt OCD as something “other”, something I wouldn’t want to associate myself with. I certainly do not have OCD. But there was another thing that became a cause of concern immediately. And that was, “So, what if I had OCD? Why did I even feel it as something outlandish and implausible? Why should it become so difficult for me to accept it, even if I ever had it, have it or will have it?”

Aah!

Melvin had a beautiful heart after all. And that’s what matters the most in life.



# FOLLOW YOUR PASSION

- BY SARTHAK SAHNI, SEMESTER 3. USLM



During my childhood, I was always fascinated by movie stars and aspired to be one. However, I went on to pursue Mechanical Engineering at NMIMS, Shirpur, after my schooling. It did not take me long to realise that that was not my cup of tea. I had to do something that I truly loved and that is why I pursued Mass Communication at Karnavati University.

I aspire to do film studies here and I will keep implementing the learnings in my practical life. I, therefore, started my page on Instagram - @sarthak.sahnii to showcase my talent and acting skills.

I started from zero knowledge about characters, scripts and dialogues, but by now I have seen myself in different characters. I feel, we all live in characters. We are not the same everywhere every time. We change and adjust ourselves according to situations, and emotions have a huge role to play in it. Emotions drive our expressions.

thought of acting only as something to read the script and enact. But I never knew the process that goes behind it. I realized that it takes one a lot of time to get into the skin of the character. One has to read through it. READ, UNDERSTAND AND ANALYSE. These are the three important parts of the process of building oneself as a character that one tries to enact. I've been constantly trying to imagine myself in different situations to see how I go about building my character up. It has been hard but I have come across a lot of things and I have learnt a lot. I thought if I write about it, it may help many like me and others who are interested in it.

Every character in a situation can portray himself or herself in different ways. Someone can cold-heartedly kill a person with a smile on his face and cry a river at the very next moment. While someone can kill with shivering hands and behave as if nothing happened in the following moment. You never really know how a character reacts in a certain situation, so I think there stays no room for judgment and assumptions. I feel one can show his or her most natural self if they are aware of the bank of emotions they have. What do you do when you've been given a character that you cannot process? You research. You read and revisit the script and picture a person with his way of reacting to things. The more you visit the character, the more you grow into it. And that helps in finding your way of expressing yourself with the help of a character. You build into it establishing yourself. That is the beauty of characters and acting. You find yourself fighting while creating yourself.

I am very grateful for what I have learnt in this span of time and I hope to see myself working and earn from the same because this is something that I love to do. Everyone should try and explore themselves in things that fascinate them. You never know, you can start with engineering and end up having a liking for acting.



# A DRAMA THAT WAS – INDIAN MATCHMAKING

- BY SRUSHTI MANIAR, SEMESTER 3, USLM

(Views expressed are personal and not of the college or the university)

## PRELUDE

Indian dating shows are a fad. Or, at least, the spotlight on “Indian Matchmaking” — a desi twist of “What The Love! With Karan Johar” — suggests so.

The series “Indian Matchmaking” on Netflix was released in July this year with much pomp and show, drama and dreams, and widespread responses and reasons. The show was an ostentatious lookout for a perfect life partner by a bunch of seemingly rich Indians and NRIs. And its host Sima Taparia, aka, Sima Aunty, was the personification of a matrimony website.

For long, several aspects of the institution of marriage in India have been based on skewed and hollowed perceptions. “Indian Matchmaking” is a diabolical glorification of those perceptions — the perception that somebody has to compromise and adjust when it comes to marriage. And, inevitably, that’s a woman!

This eight-episode-long series is at times funny and sometimes realistic. One can cringe-watch it! Smriti Mundhra was the creator of the docu-series. And her directorial debut was “A Suitable Girl” in 2017. Well, the name — A Suitable Girl — itself reeks of the stereotypical mindset many Indians carry when it comes to finding a girl. “Indian Matchmaking” laid bare that.

## TALL, \_\_ & \_\_

The show started with a candid conversation between the host-matchmaker Sima Taparia and Preeti Jakhete, mother of a prospective groom Akshay Jakhete. Akshay, a 25-year-old Boston-returned, was one of the singles looking for a suitable bride. The yardstick of the perfect bride, set by his mother, was scaled in inches. 5.3”. “Iskey niche toh dekh hi nahi rahi hai,” Preeti said.

She felt that the girl has to be flexible, “elastic” enough to be moulded into a perfect stereotypical bahu. And that’s what helped Sima Aunty make a preference list for her clients — an archaic way of doing things.

Later, too, in the show, the spotlight was back on Akshay and his controlling mother Preeti. When Sima Aunty asked Akshay about his preferences, he said, “My mom is literally what I want to be looking at in a wife.” This actually made the viewers cringe, watching a young man say something like this. He was a mumma’s boy who couldn’t even eat a cake without her permission.

Preeti believed that the girl ought to adjust rather than the boy, and these were values they have been following. The show seemed to glorify those “values” when it actually could have been a platform to show different perspectives to make things better for our society. Preeti also pressurized Akshay to marry fast so that her elder son could move on with his family and plan a baby. She did not care if Akshay would be happy with the girl he marries. She wanted to get done with the marriage because according to society, it was very late. Preeti wanted everything to happen according to time and society. So apparently, her only concerns in life were the opinions of society and their beliefs.



Often, Indian parents fail to realize how wrong they are when they pressurize their children.

Preeti was shown as an all-controlling, domineering person, with her daughter-in-law barely having a say over anything. She was perennially worried about Akshay's marriage and what would she say at her kitty party. She blackmailed him with her blood pressure problems. At one point, she also said that now her "bahu" will cook for Akshay's tiffin and take care of him. I felt it to be something wrong because she already assumed that her daughter-in-law will have no life of her own, let alone her career.

Later, they visited a girl. The moment Akshay found out that the girl wanted to work and be independent, he threw a fit. He expected the girl to take up exactly the same household responsibilities as her mother did and keep aside her personal goals for his house and children — an aspiration reiterated throughout the series.

The desperate hunt ended in an engagement done in a huff, only to be broken later.

### **SINGLES, READY TO MINGLE**

Next on Sima Aunty's list were Aparna Shewakramani, Pradhyuman Malloo, and Nadia Jagessar.

Aparna — picky, particular, yet relatable — was an attorney based in Houston. However, Sima Aunty immediately portrayed her as a VERY stubborn and challenging client. She also thought that Aparna, 34, was a bit late for marriage. Aparna's mother put pressure on her to be the best kid and made her appear good in society.

Thirty-year-old Pradhyuman, a model and a jewellery designer, was the next entrant in the show. He was shown cooking and serving food for his family and Sima, which threw a surprise for Sima Aunty and viewers alike. Will a woman in a typical Indian family ever get acknowledged for cooking and serving? Well, no. When it came to his preferences, the host advised him on meeting girls in person so that he could get a clear idea of their physical appearance!

Nadia, 32, was an event planner working in New Jersey. When this happy-go-lucky woman mentioned that she was a Guyanese, Sima Aunty saw a massive problem. The latter mentioned Guyanese as if it's some kind of disease.

An episode, which revolved around these three characters, started with Nadia getting judged on her first date, just because she ordered Mimosa, a cocktail, and meat — a preference that doesn't augur well with some cross-section of Indian men.

Aparna, meanwhile, was on her first date. But eventually decided to marry someone with whom she can build a strong financial future too. I, as a viewer, found nothing wrong with it. However, Aparna's mother asked her to keep aside her expectations and marry at the earliest. Pradhyuman, too, felt the same pressure from his sister — a pressure representing the one from the society as a whole. Such a situation continues to happen today in every quarter of social order.

A silver lining, however, was an old couple. The woman said one should be focused on her/his career and not waste time thinking about society — something praise-worthy and different in the docu-series. Throughout the show, many older couples spoke about their marriages, which appealed to me.

### **THE PATTERN**

A pattern could be noticed in the show where women were treated differently when they rejected a proposal. Aparna was called stubborn, negative, arrogant, and PICKY when she rejected three guys, while no criticism and judgment came for Pradhyuman, who rejected 150 girls. In one case, he rejected the girl purely based on her look. Aparna got rejected by one Shekar Jayaraman, and Sima Aunty, yet, decided to follow her gender-bias pattern of not holding men responsible for anything.

The inequity continued in the case of upset Nadia, too, when Vinay stood her up. The host said nothing to the man and only expected Nadia to understand.

### **THE FAULT IN OUR STARS**

The next “star” of the season was astrologer Pandit Dilip Bhatt. He spoke to Aparna and gave his advice on marriage. The fact, however, was that Sima Aunty involved the astrologer to influence Aparna to marry the man the host suggested. She also involved a life coach for Pradhyuman to do the same. According to her, three things lead to a good marriage – compromise, adjustment, horoscope – not feelings, not compatibility, not happiness, and definitely not the choice of the person.

### **BREAKING THE STEREOTYPE**

Ankita Banal, a businesswoman in her mid-20s, gave much relief from the melodrama romanticized in the show. She was very realistic, with a non-stereotypical approach towards life highlighting why it’s important for a woman to be financially independent. But Sima Aunty tried to brainwash her, too, and called her friends to explain to her the idea of adjustment. At one instance, she kept Ankita in the dark about her match and his past. Ankita, however, stood her ground, not giving in to society’s judgments and toxic culture.

It was also refreshing to watch 30-year-old Vyasara Ganeshan, an Indian-American teacher and college counselor in Texas. In the first instance, when he was looking for a match in Manisha Dass, he did not force her to move in with him leaving everything aside. This is certainly commendable and stands in sharp contrast to situations in India, where women are expected to leave their parents, cities, even jobs to settle into their partner’s life. In his interaction with the next person Rashi Gupta, 28, he took no qualms to open up about his family issues before the marriage. In fact with this sheer openness, they developed an understanding for each other, complemented each other and gave a fresh perspective to being equal in a relationship.

### **DIVORCED & SINGLE**

In the episodes that followed, the viewers also got to know about the host’s new client Rupam Kaur, a divorced single mother, in Denver. Rupam belonged to an extremely orthodox Punjabi family, who didn’t appreciate foreign cultures. Belonging to Sikh community, which believes that marriage has a sacred purpose, Rupam felt like a failure after getting divorced. Even her father made her feel that same way, which was heartbreaking. The docu-series seemed to be a reinforcement of such guilty feelings in divorced women rather than being critical of twisted world view regarding such women. This may have a negative impact on the viewers who have been in the same situation.

### **THE END**

In the final episodes, we met the final client Richa from Delhi. There again, Richa was relegated to the cocooned parameters of an ideal bride – tall, slim, educated, from a good family. The host said that with those qualities, she had better chances of finding a guy. Sima Aunty absurdly rated her 95/100.

She remained incorrigible throughout the show – stereotyping, and glorifying the harmful, toxic aspects of the society.





# ARTWORK

- BY VEDIKA SETHI, SEMESTER 5, USLM



# MASTERCLASS BY US BASED AUTHOR AND EDITOR, MS. RITTA BASU

- BY DHVANI SHETH AND SNIGDHA TIWARI, SEMESTER 3, USLM

On October 19, 2020, the students of USLM had the honour of inviting and attending a session by Ms. Ritta Martin Basu. She is one of the most sought-after writers and editors based in USA. She gave her own insightful take on how literature and language, can bring abundance in one's life, not in cash necessarily, but in the form of new capabilities-capability to empathize, to solve problems, to think critically and eventually rightly, of not just the world around you but of yourself as well and to quote Ms Ritta, "to be your worst critic and the best cheerleader".

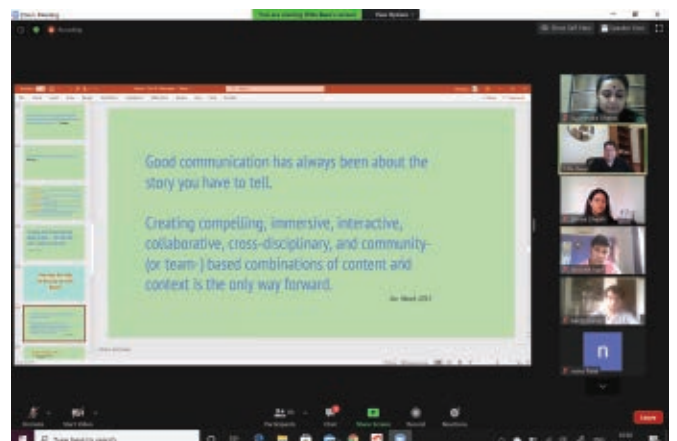
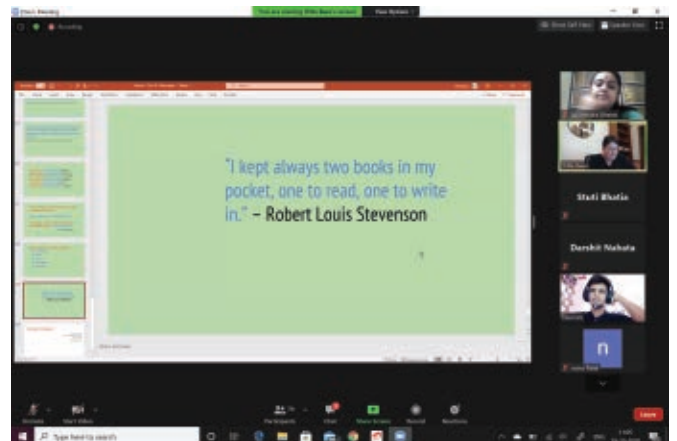
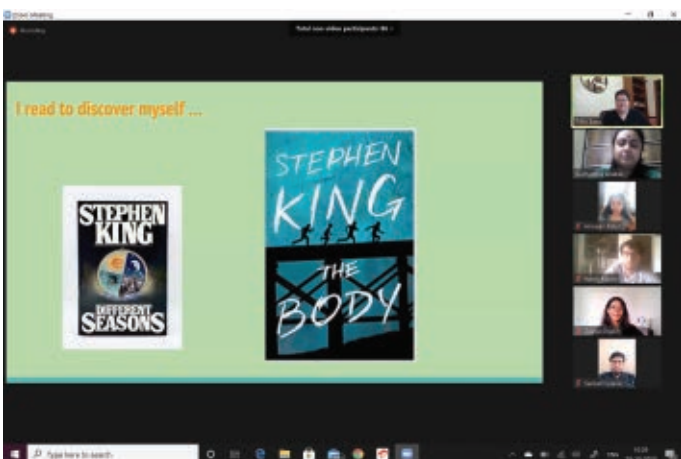
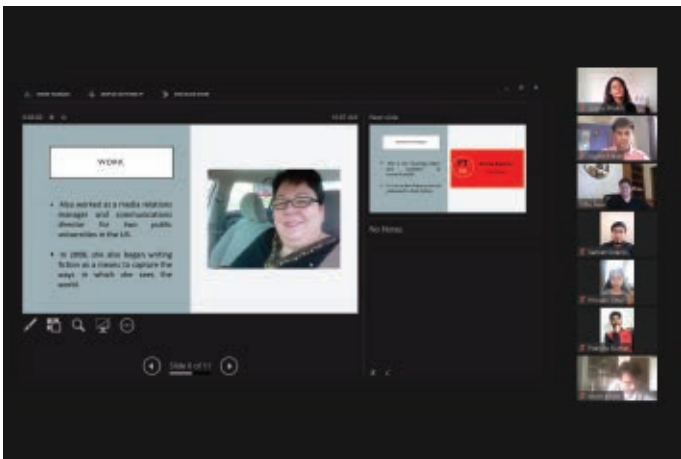
If it is all about telling our stories, why do we need to read others' stories? It is because, as Ms. Ritta asserted, it provides an opportunity to connect, to be able to build a relation with a distant writer through some scribbled words by entering their world while still being present in yours, to be able to relate with someone you have never met, so deeply, are the gifts of every art form. This is what helps us discover more, about the world and ourselves, simultaneously by answering questions we did not even know we wanted answers to. Making a difference, strikingly or subliminally.

Another pensive point raised by her during the session was her addressal to how literature can bring one close to oneself, or help, in Ritta's words, "finding one's voice." Is it imperative for one to find their own voice? No, it may not be, rather, she stressed, that there are a few lucky ones who never experience the need to tell a story, find a voice and save themselves from the ensuing pain. What is worse is having accumulated all your thoughts but not having found your own voice to express it.

During the question hour, Ms Ritta Martin very modestly answered one of the most pertinent and pressing question of our generation, "How are we supposed to navigate our ships of thoughts, interests and needs in these times, which seem to be filled with 'options' to the brim?" She answered, "Find what resonates within you in the purest form, what you imagine doing in not the next five years, but when you grow old enough to hark back on where you started it all. This is what finding your story means. And this is when literature comes in handy."

Far be it from us, or Ms Ritta Martin, to suggest all of you dip your toes into the vast sea of literature from this instant, but since we exist on a big rotating ball of yet another chance, we might as well give this 'matter of chance' a chance, to help us become more familiar with ourselves. Believe it or not, we need this today more than any other species on Earth.





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