

# 21 TALK

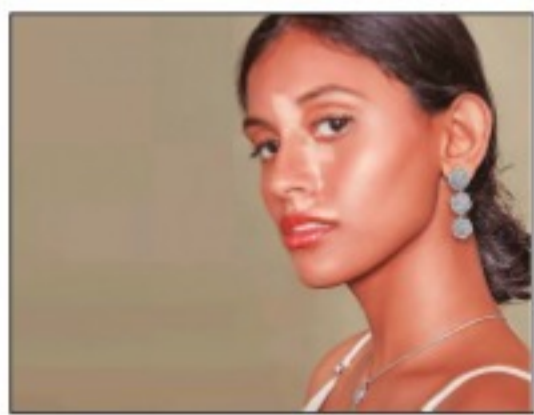
ART, MUSIC, STYLE, FOOD



## A REASON WHY

Suicides by young Americans have risen by nearly a third in the month following the debut of Netflix drama, *13 Reasons Why* in 2017, according to a recent study by National Institutes of Health in the US. The show is the story of a teen who leaves behind 13 tapes describing why she decided to take her own life.

### SNAP SHOTS



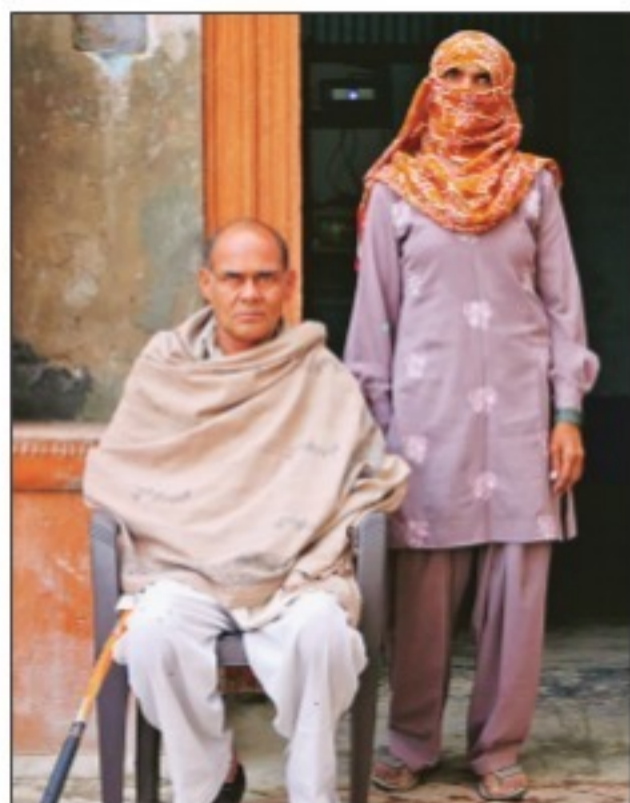
#### A Good Stretch

IN AN era where women are questioning beauty stereotypes and celebrating flaws, comes a silver jewellery collection inspired by stretch marks. Titled 'Flawsome', jewellery brand Shaya's latest presentation aims "to encourage every woman to be proud of her stretch marks like a tigress who has earned her stripes". Highlighting the beauty of imperfections with abstract textures, 3D design and unconventional finishes, the collection is crafted in oxidised silver. Shaya pays an ode to other markers that society's impossible beauty standards may consider flaws like zits, small breasts, double chins among others.



#### One by One

THE THIRD installment of J.K. Rowling's *Fantastic Beasts* series will release in theatres on November 12, 2021, Warner Bros Pictures announced Tuesday. The five-part series is inspired by a textbook by Newt Scamander that Harry Potter carries at Hogwarts. The films follow Newt in early 20th century in New York and London as he navigates the secret community of witches and wizards. While the first film *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* released in 2016, the second — *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald* — hit the screens last year.



#### ANUSHREE MAJUMDAR

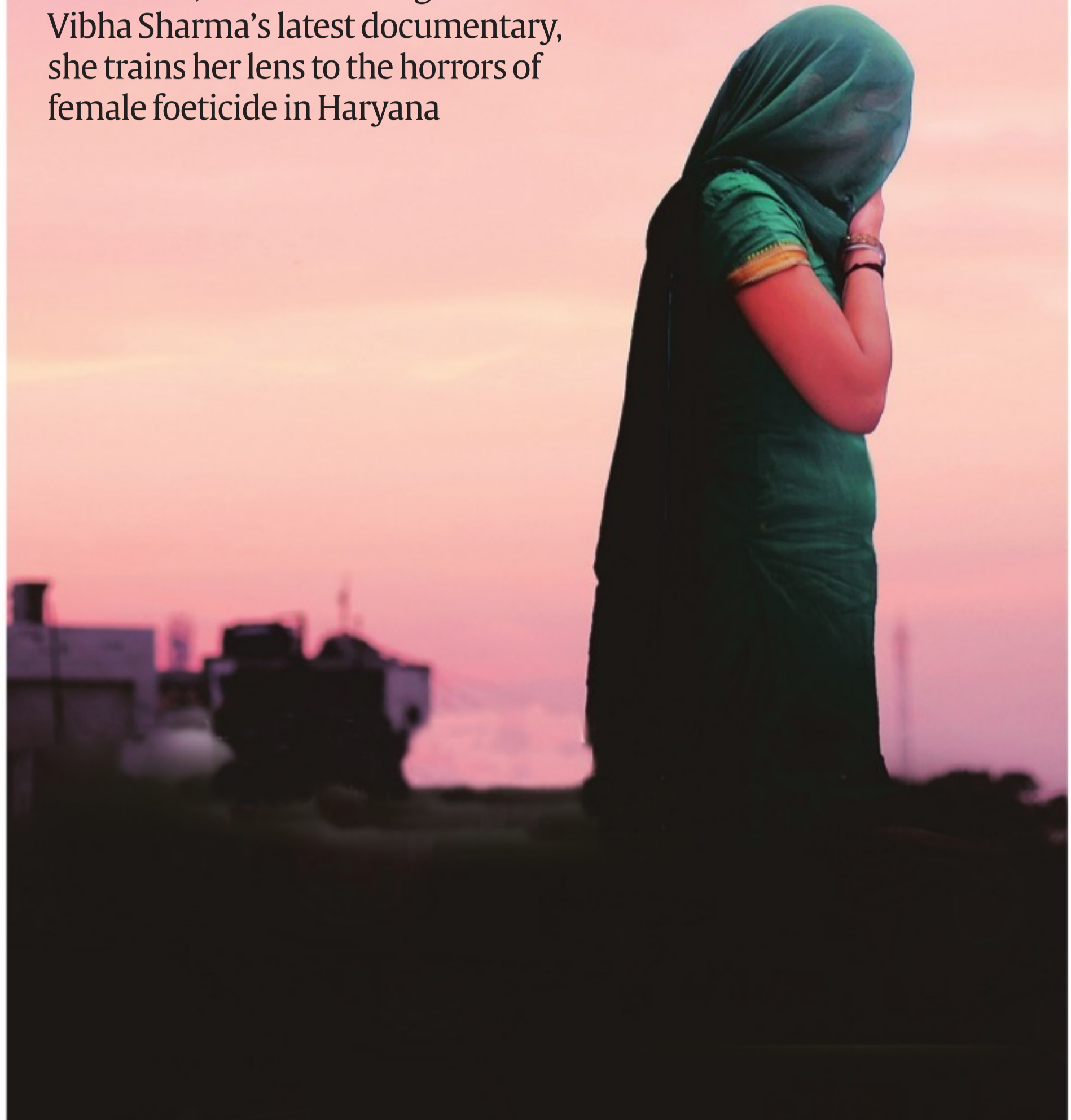
VIBHA BAKSHI'S latest documentary, *Son Rise*, opens in Khanda Kheri, Haryana, a village not far from the national capital. It is winter and the air is hazy, men in shawls herd sheep next to a highway, a group of men play cards in a street corner. It is not hard to imagine what life here is like when the chill passes — village after village full of mustard fields under bright blue skies, children playing in the open, women shyly turning their faces away from a stranger's gaze — it is almost idyllic, making one wonder if it is indeed possible to turn back to a time when a man's reach did not quite exceed his grasp. But something is rotten in the state of Haryana.

Her camera panning over the sights and sounds of a rural landscape, Bakshi and her team waste no time in identifying the missing piece of the puzzle — family after family in villages across the state boast of sons, and not daughters. "I didn't quite set out to make a film on female foeticide in Haryana, but once we reached there, there was no way we could have ignored what was right in front of us," says Bakshi. In 2016, the 48-year-old filmmaker was travelling through the northern states, screening her National Award-winning documentary, *Daughters of Mother India*, that explored the impact the brutal December 2012 gangrape of a Delhi student had on the citizens, the police and the judiciary. "At one of these screenings, a woman came over to me and told me that I should meet a farmer who had married a gangrape survivor and was fighting for justice. There was no name of the person or the village, but I knew I had to track him down," says Bakshi. She sought the help of local police, and found that indeed, many knew of this man, who lived in Jind, one of the oldest districts in the state. "Most people referred to him in a way that indicated that they thought he'd done something strange. But to me, Jitender Chhatar is a hero," she says.

It would have been easy to simply focus on his struggles to bring his wife's rapists to justice, says Bakshi. "But crimes don't take place in isolation, especially heinous ones such as gangrape, where one's personhood is completely ignored," she says. So, she took a step back to look at the entire picture. *Son Rise* examines the cause and effect of Haryana's skewed gender ratio; it traces the consequences of hushed up abortions, the nearly complete absence of

# No Country for Women

In *Son Rise*, award-winning filmmaker Vibha Sharma's latest documentary, she trains her lens to the horrors of female foeticide in Haryana



(Clockwise from left) Vibha Sharma; stills from her film *Son Rise*



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VIBHA SHARMA  
FILMMAKER

women in the state's villages, the bride buying/bride kidnapping traffic that follows, and the numerous crimes against women that have become so commonplace that its victims are reduced to a mere statistic. Bakshi discovers that all is not lost — there are still a few good men who want to fight for women's rights, and perhaps, for the first time in their lives, are beginning to understand that they will have to combat other men at every step of the way.

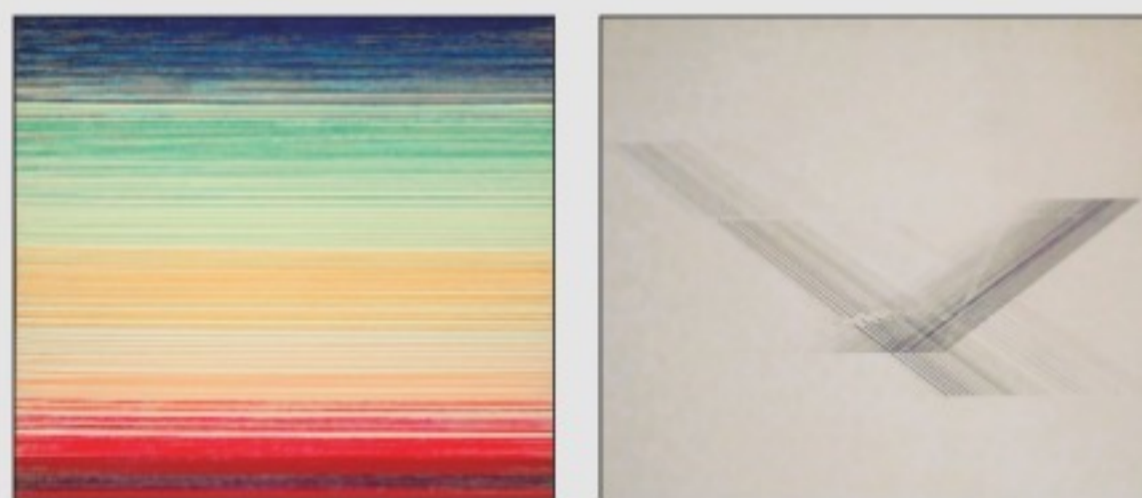
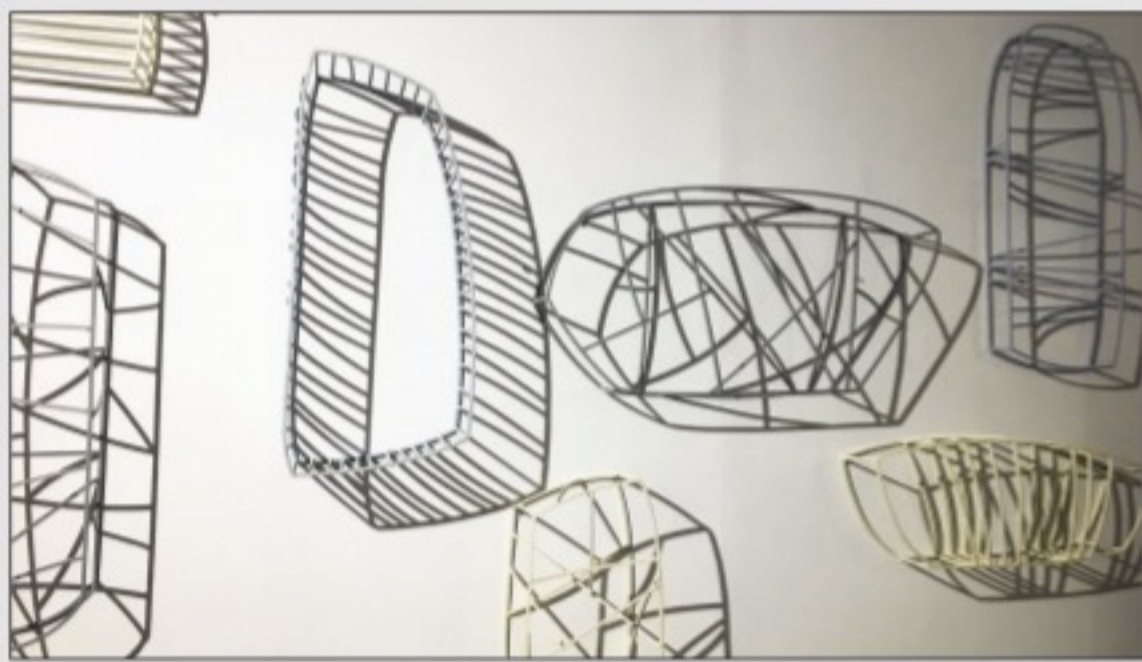
"Sunil Jaglan, Bibipur's village chief, is a crusader for equal rights — from opening a vocation centre for women, to teaching them their rights, the father of two daughters is such a voice of reason that his detractors are constantly slapping court cases on him. There's also Baljit Singh Malik, a Khap leader, who oversees 1,440 villages across Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan — he took it upon himself to declare that women no longer needed to wear *ghunghat*, and that inter-caste marriages should not be opposed," says Bakshi. But at the heart of the film is Chhatar's long and lonely battle for justice and closure; both seem elusive for years to

come. "The film's editor, Hemanti Sarkar, and I exercised a lot of restraint; a story about a rape is not about the survivor or its perpetrators. We wanted to show the audience how we as a society have got to this point where such a thing can happen with impunity. Most of all, we wanted to show the unshakable resolve of ordinary people caught up in extraordinary circumstances, who continue to fight, no matter what," she says.

Shot over two years, from 2016 till 2018, *Son Rise* had its first screening in February this year, and since then, the buzz around the film is getting louder. Last week, in an unprecedented show of support, the Consular Corps, comprising consul generals of 10 countries — Brazil, USA, Italy, Canada, Norway, Sweden, South Africa, France, New Zealand and Sri Lanka — along with UN Women and the Films Division, hosted a screening of *Son Rise* at the newly-opened Museum of Indian Cinema in Mumbai's Pedder Road. "My film is not going to solve the problem, but if it can start the conversation, I have succeeded," says Bakshi.

# Line and Length

A group of artists spanning different generations attempts to look at the world through line and light



(Clockwise from top) Manisha Parekh's *Is It Me or Is It You?*; Nasreen Mohamedi's untitled work; Shobha Bruta's untitled work

#### PALLAVI CHATTOPADHYAY

THE CANVASES of Aligarh-born Indo-American artist Zarina Hashmi have always been riddled with longing for home. The reason is the violence she witnessed during the Partition. She was 10. Hashmi saw her family disintegrate on both sides of the border. They left India permanently a decade later, following the discomfort faced by the Muslim community post the division. But she continued to harbour affection for the country she'd loved. This is visible in the noted printmaker's woodcut prints in 'Delhi Series I, II and III', which offers a bird's eye view of the Capital and a cluster of its grid-like buildings. Hashmi, who is based in New York, has created the work using a mesh of abundant lines. On display at Delhi's Shrine Empire gallery, her works are part of the group exhibition "Shadow Lines: Experiments with Light, Line and Liminality", that highlights artists who have experimented with lines and light.

Curated by Meera Menezes, the show displays the softness of a line through Shobha Bruta's untitled works, where she has used colourful wool and yarn, signalling the onset of chilly winters, and stretched it across a white canvas. Bruta, 76, says, "I wanted a soft line, different from a normal brush stroke, so I thought what better medium than wool." Author of *Vasudeo Santu Gaitonde: Sonata of Solitude*, a book on the revered abstractionist, Menezes says, "When researching on the book, I saw linkages between works of various abstract practitioners and their engagement with line and form. I decided to bring together artists spanning several generations to see their involvement with line and light in the broader sense of abstraction."

Known for her monochrome line-

based drawings, much like Hashmi's minimalist, abstract language, famous abstract artist Nasreen Mohamedi's untitled mixed media work from 1975 features a row of simple geometric pencil lines forming a 'V' and divided in between. It appears like an aeroplane taking flight. Menezes says, "Nasreen drew a lot from a spiritual place. Her works were inspired by Buddhism and Islamic influences."

Highlighting harsh conditions that welders are subjected to, especially during the soaring temperatures in summer, Delhi-based Manisha Parekh has created objects of irregular shapes and sizes from mild steel. These are painted with enamel with the help of welders in Delhi's Krishna Market near Kalkaji. By welding linear fragments of steel of varying sizes in *Is it me or is it you?*, pinned on a wall of the gallery, reminding one of the vessel holders in domestic kitchens, Manisha drew parallels. The 55-year-old artist says, "By connecting two bodies of steel, I found connections with how humans build relationships."

Jaipur-based Prashant Pandey, 35, has utilised holy ash on strips of glass slides, to paint a mammoth scroll. The light on the ceiling puts the spotlight on the tiny 3000 symbols and drawings he has created, almost like his own manuscript. Human figures are seen running amid trees, or interacting with animals such as a dog or a cat, along with sand, sun and moon in the backdrop, to reveal various facets of human experiences. Pandey's medium includes materials that are by-products of human activities, be it sweat, flooded bank notes, expired chocolates or human blood, and has used his latest art work to chronicle human experiences, of love, life, attachment and detachment.

The exhibition is on at D 395, Defence Colony, till May 18



A t-shirt from The Souled Store (above); the fourth offering of the Avengers franchise has earned 1.2 billion dollars globally



# Ahead of the Game

*Avengers: Endgame* has raked in the highest ever opening for a Hollywood film in India and the fans are overjoyed with the three-hour spectacle

#### EKTA MALIK

I MAXED out the 10-seat capacity that the ticket booking app allowed and saw the midnight show at iMax the next day. I'd been waiting for this film for a really long time because I'd read the *Infinity Gauntlet* comics. To see it come alive on this scale was quite something. I kept scanning the app, and we made quite an experience of watching the film," says Tejas Menon, indie musician and founder of Geek Fruit, a podcast on pop culture.

Menon and his group of friends were not the only ones who helped *Avengers: Endgame* get Rs 189.7 crore earning in four days of its release in India. Nishant Singh, 33, a Noida-based sales expert in industrial equipment,

saw the film on Friday, at 8 am, alone. "On Sunday, I will take my wife and five-year-old daughter. My wife is not into this genre, but because I have gone crazy, she saw *Avengers: Infinity War* on TV, so she knows what to expect from *Avengers: Endgame*," says Singh.

Globally, the fourth offering of the *Avengers* franchise has earned 1.2 billion dollars. According to *Bookmyshow*, a leading entertainment aggregator and ticketing service, these figures will only grow. "*Avengers: Endgame* has done phenomenal business of

over Rs 155 crore through the opening weekend and is likely to touch Rs 250 crore by the end of this week. The fact that it is holding strong even on a Monday is a great sign. The film is expected to do a lifetime business of Rs 350-375 crore and is a sure-shot mega blockbuster," says Ashish Saksena, COO-Cinemas, BookMyShow.

Tickets for *Avengers: Endgame* went up for sale the Monday before the film's release and were sold out within minutes. Over 11 years, and 22 films, the fandom of the Marvel Cinematic Universe has grown exponentially.

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Characters like Thor, Hulk and Captain America have become global references for pop culture. Catch phrases like 'Wakanda Forever', 'That's what heroes do', and 'I am Iron Man', are now part of colloquial pop jargon the world over. The result is that *Avengers: Endgame* has put the franchise on a pedestal. "The phenomenon around the film series has been very well-cultivated by Marvel, by introducing one character at a time. They were patient enough to take 11 years and 22 films to deliver a conclusion like *Avengers: Endgame*. The fandom transcends age groups because the older generations have memories of the comics and the newer ones have followed the films religiously," adds Saksena.

It's not just the films, the fans are indulging themselves in an immersive experience — be it wearing t-shirts pertaining to the Marvel world as they go watch the film, or sporting merchandise and memorabilia — baseball caps, watches and backpacks etc. Menon wore his favourite Ant Man t-shirt to the screening. Social media is brimming with pictures of fans wearing their favourite superhero costumes at the screenings. E-commerce spaces in India, too, have capitalised on this trend. Brands like Voxpop, The Tee Store and The Souled Store have stocked in Marvel merchandise, and are doing brisk sales. T-shirts remain the most favoured of all merchandise. "People are going crazy for Marvel t-shirts, especially the limited edition 'More than a fan' t-shirt, which is flying off the shelves. Captain America and Iron Man are some of the favourite characters. Sales have quadrupled ever since the release of *Avengers: Endgame*," shares Vedang Patel, co-founder, The Souled Store. While the *Avengers* franchise has reached an end, Marvel fans have a lot to rejoice with *Spider-Man: Far From Home* slated for a July 2 release, and a spate of other Marvel movies lined up for release. This could be a second beginning.