

**EVERY DAY IS  
WOMEN'S DAY**

BY

**Kerosene**  
DIGITAL

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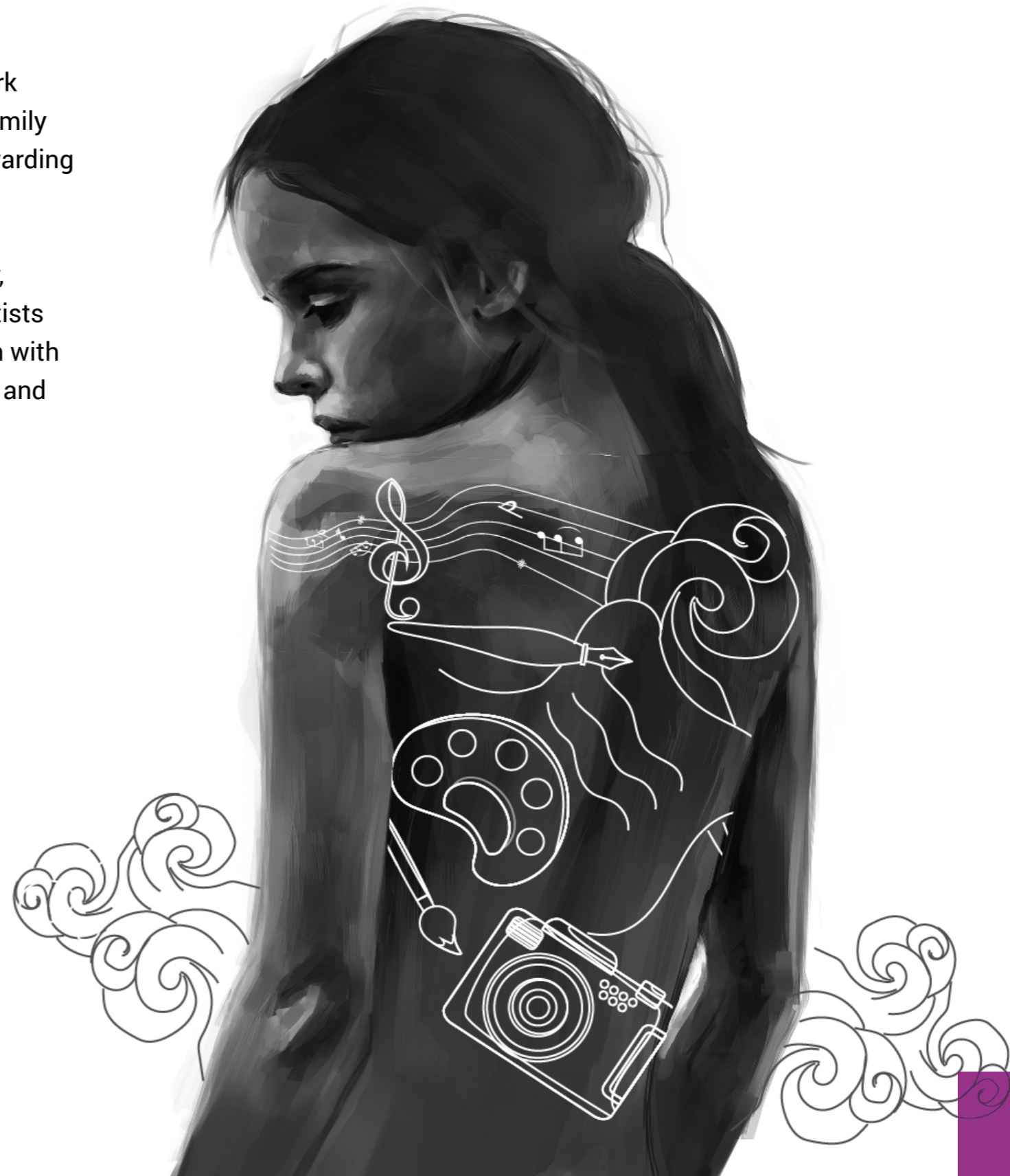
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# INTRODUCTION

On International Women's Day, we honour the incredible work that women are doing, as students, activists and leaders, family members and friends, to power a bright, equal, safe and rewarding world.

And in this guide, we're celebrating smart, supportive, funny, curious and fantastic desi women poets, photographers, artists and trailblazers; women who push the boundaries, entertain with wit, and bring fresh perspective through their art, narratives and stories.

## TEAM KEROSENE



# Kanika Kaul

## Visual Artist



Artist Kanika Kaul's 'The Perfect Indian Woman' poster series pulls no punches.

Each takes on the establishment, showcasing the absurd expectations demanded of Indian women and the roles they are expected to play in society.

Kanika's interplay of visual and verbal is striking; there's sharp and thoughtful satire at play here making a powerful statement to the folly of our man-made societal norms.

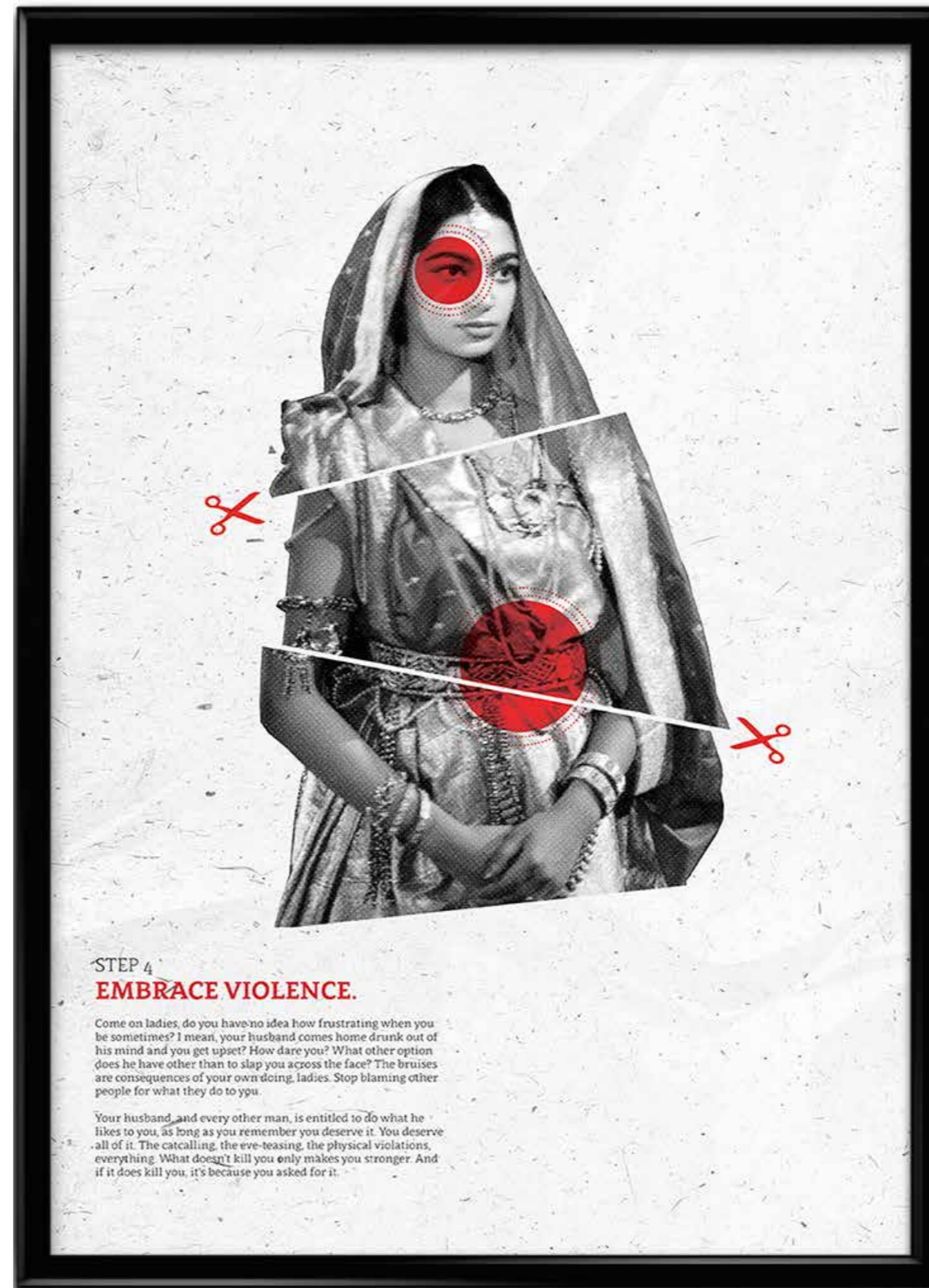
### 1. Tell us a little about yourself

I'm a 26 year old graphic designer from Delhi, though I now live in Bangalore. I majored in Visual Communication Design at Srishti School Of Art, Design & Technology, and then moved to IDC IIT Bombay for my Masters.

I enjoy a good cup of tea (which I am horrible at making) and binging a good Netflix series with my two cats curled up right next to me (they enjoyed Stranger Things as much as I did).

### 2. What's the story behind The Perfect Indian Woman poster series?

They were designed for a course during my first year at IDC. We were encouraged to take up a social issue and explore it in any way we liked. As part of the course, we used to have open discussions in every class on current issues and social concepts, and feminism was one of the topics that came up. I decided to take that forward in my work.



*"I definitely see a more political edge in contemporary art in India these days"*

The inspiration for the project is literally everywhere around me. In our homes, in our workplaces, in public spheres, women are fighting hard to be taken seriously while the men receive an inherent respect whether it is deserved or not. I took a sarcastic route, creating a guideline for "The Perfect Indian Woman" - the steps you need to follow in order to live peacefully as a woman in this country.

I was overwhelmed by the response. It resonated with women across the internet - even Amy Poehler's Smart Girls featured the posters on their site.

### 3. What do you think about the contemporary art in India?

I definitely see a more political edge in contemporary art in India these days. It stems from the currently divisive nature of the politics in the country at the moment.

I also support and appreciate the more consumable nature of contemporary art in India that's being made available through events and programs like the Kochi Biennale and St+Art India. More than ever, contemporary art is being shared, talked about, and as a result, taken seriously.

### 4. For you, what does it mean to be a woman working in art today?

I find myself often having to fight for space in the workroom, because the space for me doesn't exist. I have to be loud and disruptive in order to be considered. I have learnt to ignore the dismissive comments muttered when I point out obvious sexism. While I need to deal with microaggressions, at the same time the work I get to do is its own reward.



Constantly experimenting, constantly sharing stories, we imagine Hanisha Tirumalasetty's mind must be a whirlwind of intriguing ideas and strange-yet-striking Guillermo Del Toro-esque style visuals. It's probably this constant flux of ideas that makes looking at her pieces akin to Alice falling down the rabbit hole; they provoke discussion and kindle debate.

## Hanisha Tirumalasetty

"Sometimes yes, I want to say something through my artwork but a lot of the times I just want to leave it open-ended or draw for myself," she says. "The dialogue between my artwork and society in those times seems like it's a byproduct. Everyone interprets it in completely different ways and it's interesting to see where they take it from what it was intended."

Click [here](#) to read our interview with Hanisha, and [here](#) to find her on Instagram.

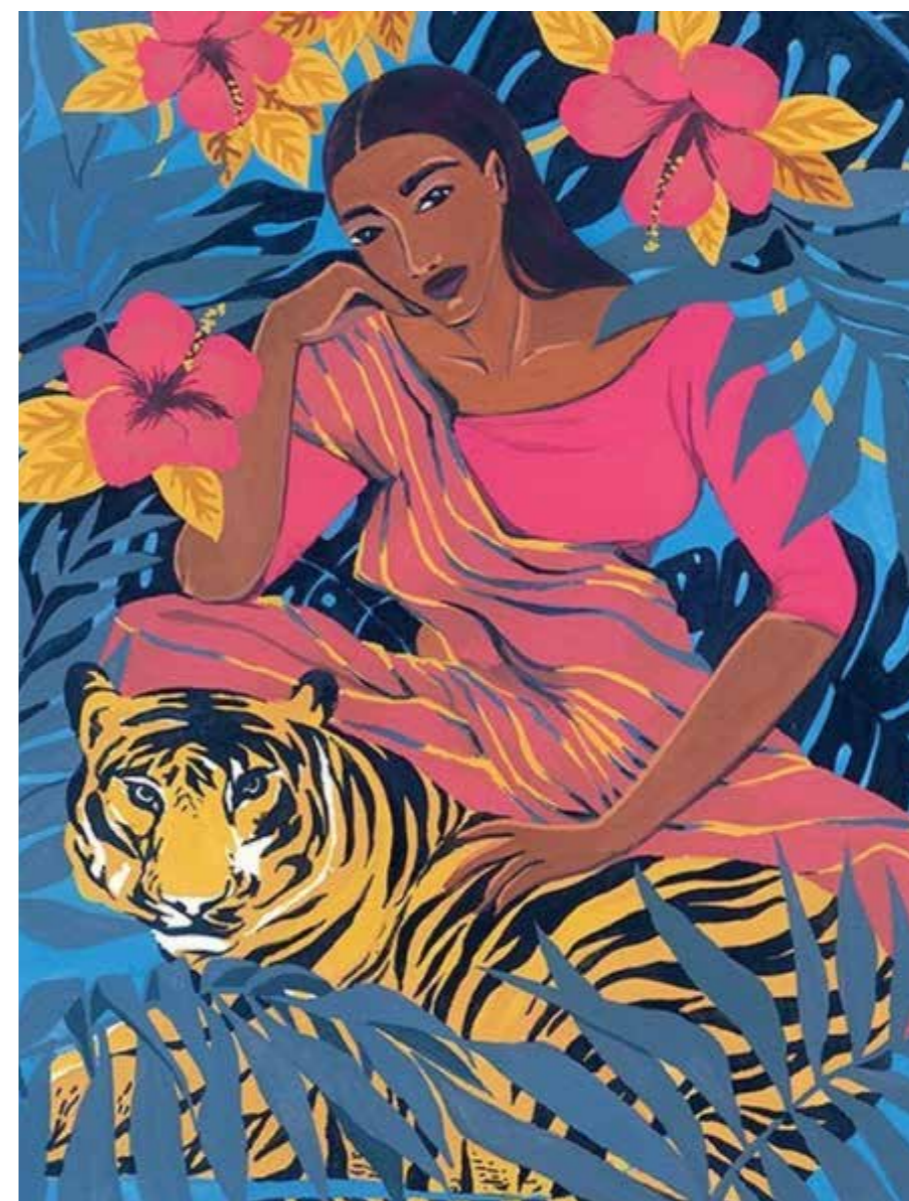


Sudeepti Tucker's art demands your attention. It's vivid, vibrant, and impossible to ignore. Whether illustrations of mythical monsters or vivacious and wild women, each piece created by this artist from Delhi packs a powerful visual punch, and seems to suggest a moment from an untold story, prompting viewers to ruminate and create their own narrative about the piece.

## Sudeepti Tucker

Sudeepti uses her art to explore and question ideas about identity, often through her depiction of women. "We forget how it wasn't so long ago things worked very differently for women. Now we are in a place that we can identify as powerful, confident, free and unapologetically female. My work explores these ideas, these identities. And I hope to find them within the women I know and meet."

Read our interview with Sudeepti [here](#), and follow her on Instagram [here](#).



# 10 ARTISTIC LADIES TO FOLLOW ON INSTAGRAM



**Tosha Jagad**  
**@toshajagad**

Simple yet stunning creations pique plenty of curiosity and daydreaming.



**Devika Joglekar**  
**@devika\_joglekar**

Art that whisks you away into nostalgia, childhood, magic and movies.



**Sneha Shankar**  
**@illustrated\_whimsy**

Sneha captures mundane activities and surreal narratives alike with a gentle elegance.



**Ritika Merchant**  
**@rithikamerchant**

Rithika's aesthetically intriguing narratives speak to everyone in different ways.



**Anisha Shankar**  
**@anisha1593**

Anisha blends the downright strange with the everyday for unforgettable results.

# 10 ARTISTIC LADIES TO FOLLOW ON INSTAGRAM

**Sadhna Prasad**  
**@sadh.press**

Sadhna's colourful fantasy worlds are vibrant, lively and just plain fun to look at.



**Kirti Kishore**  
**@latin\_dance\_india**

Bangalore's famous salsa dancer inspires and motivates everyone to get up and shake that booty.



**Aditi Sharma**  
**@aditiatwork**

Bright hues and clever messaging makes it hard to look away from Aditi's art.



**Anshika Khullar**  
**@aorists**

Anshika's art is bold and badass, exploring themes of identity, beauty and femininity.



**Priyanka Shah**  
**@pri\_ism**

Priyanka's fantasy botanicals are always weird and wonderful.

## Aarthi Parthasarathy Webcomic Creator



Seldom do webcomics burst onto the scene and shatter our worldview by being entirely poignant, funny, and captivating – but then, most aren't the Royal Existentials.

Created by the savvy and always clever filmmaker and webcomic creator Aarthi Parthasarathy, this groundbreaking webcomic quickly spawned a huge

fandom, addressing issues of race, gender, and sexuality in India through wit and with verve.

Aarthi is also the co-creator of UrbanLore, a collection of graphic stories about urban life in India, and she is part of the online feminist art collective Kadak.

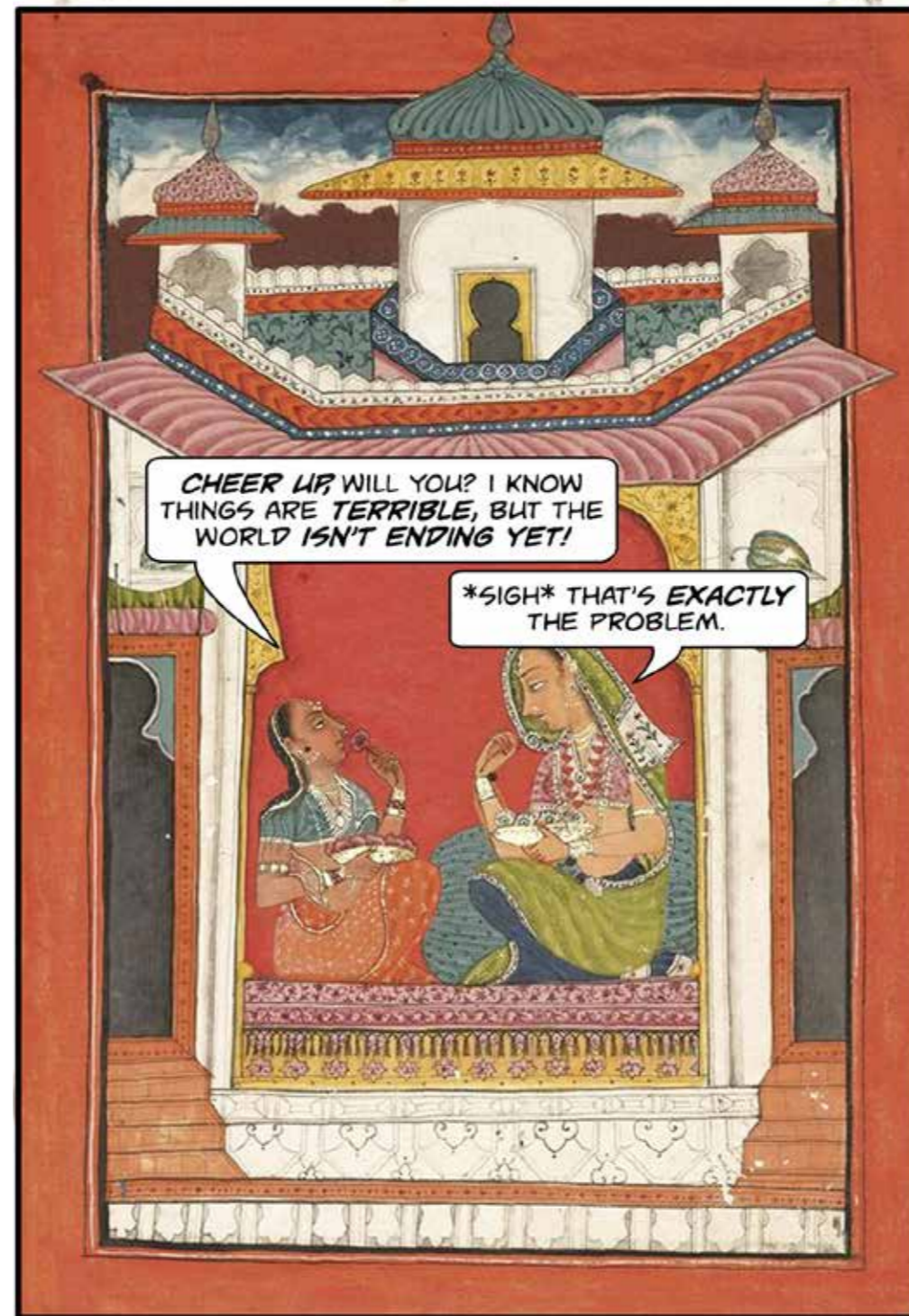
### 1. What drew you towards creating webcomics in the first place?

I love comics, always have. I used to write small pieces for and by myself. I started with Royal Existentials only to see if I could write humour and sustain it as a weekly endeavour.

### 2. What prompted you to start the Royal Existentials? And why did you choose to use vintage Indian art for this series?

I came across David Malki's comic 'Wondermark' about 8 years ago and loved it! I remember thinking "Someone should do an Indian version!" So, when my friend Chaitanya Krishnan and I started Falana Films, a film and animation studio in Bangalore, and decided to make time for fun personal projects aside from work, the idea came back to me and I made one strip. And then I decided to make it a weekly thing, as I've always wanted to make a webcomic.

royal EXISTENTIALS 175 - Neverending



royalexistentials.com

Story: Aarthi Parthasarathy  
Art: Indian Miniature Paintina. sothebvs.com



*"Seeing people engage with the comic instantly and have conversation about themes like politics and gender makes it worth it"*

### 3) We love the blend of social commentary and humour in your work. Why is it important to have this balance?

Humour is a very important and valuable tool to create conversation. Humorous political commentary helps critique and challenge the status quo, which is very necessary for a democratic society.

### 4) Tell us a little about 'Aloe Vera and The Void'

'Aloe Vera and The Void' is a graphic short story which records a conversation with Purushi, a transgender woman, about body, belief, god and exclusion.

The transgender community finds itself outside the mainstream in terms of representation, media, politics and religion. It is also one of the most oppressed and underrepresented minorities in Indian society.

This story attempted to present a sensitive and nuanced look at the systems of belief, philosophy, gender, gender identity, savarna privilege and minority oppression as they play out in the transgender community. It was conceived for Gender Bender 2016, to be part of the Reading Room exhibit by the Kadak Collective. For this story, I collaborated with artist Renuka Rajiv.

### 5) Webcomics take quite a bunch of time, from inspiration to execution. What makes it all worth it?

Seeing people engage with the comic instantly and have conversation about themes like politics and gender makes it worth it.





The eccentricity of daily life. A universe people with weird and wonderful people. Their hidden stories. You'll find it all in Solo's work.

With Ojoswi 'Oz' Sur, she's the mastermind behind Strip Tease-The Magazine, writing about comics, graphic novels and webcomics in India and around the world. She's also tackled social issues through her work, having created the Beginners Guide to Indian Homophobes with Oz, and separately launched a series called Solo's Sadventure Time about her Borderline Personality Disorder to create awareness and offer humour and support.

### Sreejita 'Solo' Biswas

"As a form of expression, a creator's art in turn reflects their social and political opinions and at times even personal experiences," she says. "When the art is consumed by the public, they become more aware, understanding and sensitised. With more exposure to art, they may soon find themselves in a position to critique, review and even adapt these creations"

Click [here](#) to read our interview with Solo and [here](#) for her Instagram page.



## POETRY

by Sadia Khan

### A BLACK SWAN

Poetry,  
A dark emotion,  
Scarred,  
Swanning high—  
Should unfurl its sanguine wings,  
Unashamed,  
In the wet nudity of thy soul...

Come here,  
Let me bare this being,  
Taking off  
The absolute true farce,  
Of thy garish clothes,  
Erring skin,  
Flesh  
And bone...

Behold, could thee?  
Incandescent is the nothingness,  
Beneath the ennui  
So grey,  
In thine eyes, afloat  
Since a sinless life!

'A Black Swan' is taken from Sadia Khan's collection of poetry 'In My Patina Cup'. Sadia was felicitated with the "Frang Bardhi" Literary Award – 2014 for her contribution in literature. Click [here](#) for more information on her book of poems.



## Seemal Karthik Photographer



Photographer Seemal Karthik's brings stories to life with her camera; in each picture there's a curious blend of intimacy and intensity that makes her work whimsical, wondrous and distinctive.

From a trip through Japan to time-travel tokens and carefully styled set-ups to stunning portraits, she mixes an eye for simple details with a creative flair for storytelling, capturing images that we could gaze at all day long.

### 1. Tell us a story about how you became interested in photography

My parents have always really liked taking pictures. My father took many pictures of me and my mother, with his film camera and used our bathroom (with the windows blacked out) to develop these himself. It was the coolest thing.

And my mom would carry a basic Kodak film camera on all our holidays. Our family albums are full of photos she took. I can easily remember her, with her camera neatly tucked in her small purse.

### 2. Why is storytelling so important to you as a photographer?

I'm always telling stories. I can spend hours just listening, reading or watching a good story. That makes me want to be good at telling stories too. A great piece of art will pull you into the frame, it will make you feel, make you wonder, guess and take you to the place it wants to.



*"My advice is always: work hard, put your heart into it"*

I believe this applies to good photography as well. When I'm shooting an art portrait, I'm asking myself-what are people getting from this? Do they see what I see? If they do, even if its just a little bit, I feel like I've achieved something incredible. It makes me really happy.

### 3. Women feature prominently in many of your photoseries. What themes or subtleties do you explore and express through them?

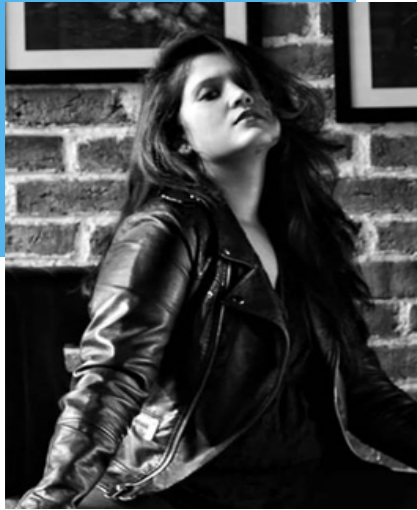
I am not really sure. It's not a very deliberate choice, nor that I have refrained from shooting men, it's just that at this point I have met more women than men that I have found fascinating.

It's also that I'm also still discovering who I am as a woman as I'm growing older. I think as I'm going about it, I'm trying to project that discovery and process onto images I'm shooting with incredible women, taking that energy, that story and make it something special.

### 4. What advice would you give to aspiring photographers?

My advice is always: work hard, put your heart into it. I tell myself this often as well. Just go outside and take photos. Whatever it is that you like to photograph, go find it, and take pictures. Use whatever you have handy. You'll find your style, your area of interest.

Another thing- don't expect handouts, okay? Don't look for instant fame. Work really hard and it'll pay up in the end. It shows, really. I believe that the heart that you put into your work- always, always translates. There are no shortcuts.



It takes just a single glance at Niveditaa Gupta's Instagram page to completely discard any notion of architectural photography as, well, a simple image of a building, and instead as a complex investigation of light, shadow, man, nature and building. Each image taken by this photographer reminds us to look anew at buildings we would normally pass through without a second glance.

## Niveditaa Gupta

"Architecture may seem like the easiest subject to photograph, because it is not a moving subject. But light moves, and so shadows move too," she says. "I guess that waiting for the correct light, and different perspectives of the building that glorify it, make shooting architecture different from other forms of photography. And to capture the way this movement reflects in a building is exciting."

Check out Niveditaa's photographs and interview [here](#), and follow her on Instagram [here](#).



## POETRY

by Menka Shivdasani

## IMPLOSION

When you have much to say  
but choose the padlocked door  
and feel the grating of rusted keys  
upon your tongue, the levers  
click and move though no one knows.

Silence descends like a butterfly on the wood  
flutters and flirts with unrelenting grain.

These terrors have no sophistry,  
no plutonium snaking up jelly thighs.  
They fall like shrapnel from bombed-out walls,  
they coat your tongue with char.  
The flamingos have left our city;  
this marshland swirls and gurgles in my throat.

The padlocked door has been forced open now  
but the silence sticks like soot.

'Implosion' is taken from Menka Shivdasani's newly released book 'Frazil' and was first published in Plume magazine. Menka is also the author of two collections of poetry 'Nirvana at Ten Rupees' and 'Stet'. Click [here](#) for more information on 'Frazil.'



## Candida Louis Biker



Candida Louis has come a long way from quitting her regular day job at an IT firm to follow her passion for the road.

By virtue of once spending 7 months as a solo rider, covering 24 states, she believes that each ride has changed

her own perception about herself and what it means to be a solo woman traveller in India.

Today, Candida heads out on overseas biking trips frequently, on Royal Enfields, BMWs, Kawasakis and more in places like Cambodia, South Africa and Bali and she's going to be heading to Antarctica in 2019 too!

### 1. The obvious question: How many kms do you think you've travelled so far on your motorcycle?

On the Thunderbird 350 that I own- 45000kms. But over 2.5lakh in all my years of riding bikes.

### 2. What got you out riding around the world to begin with? What is it that keeps you going?

I always dreamt of riding around the world, but only when I took my first step towards it, did I discover the joy of being on the road and became hooked to it.



*"Every day on the road is like a new adventure, a new story to tell"*

I quit my job as a finance professional at Infosys and set off on a 37,000 km solo biking trip and after that there was no looking back. Ever since, I've biked whenever and wherever the opportunity has taken me, from short drives around the country to riding up a volcano in Bali.

The people, the cultures, the challenges, the laughs and the magic of having the freedom to explore is what keeps me going.

### 3. What's one of your favourite memories on the road?

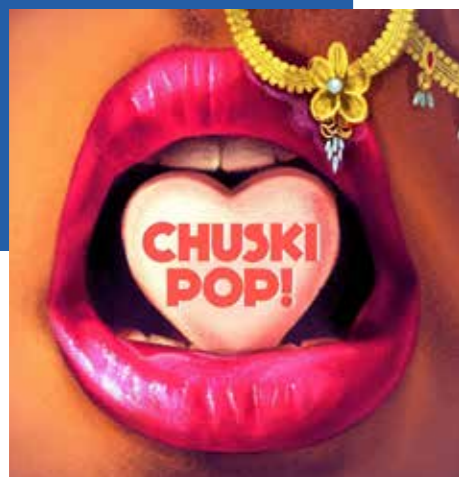
Every day on the road is like a new adventure, a new story to tell. Each is different and special in its own way.

### 4. Tell us about the challenges you have faced as a woman when biking

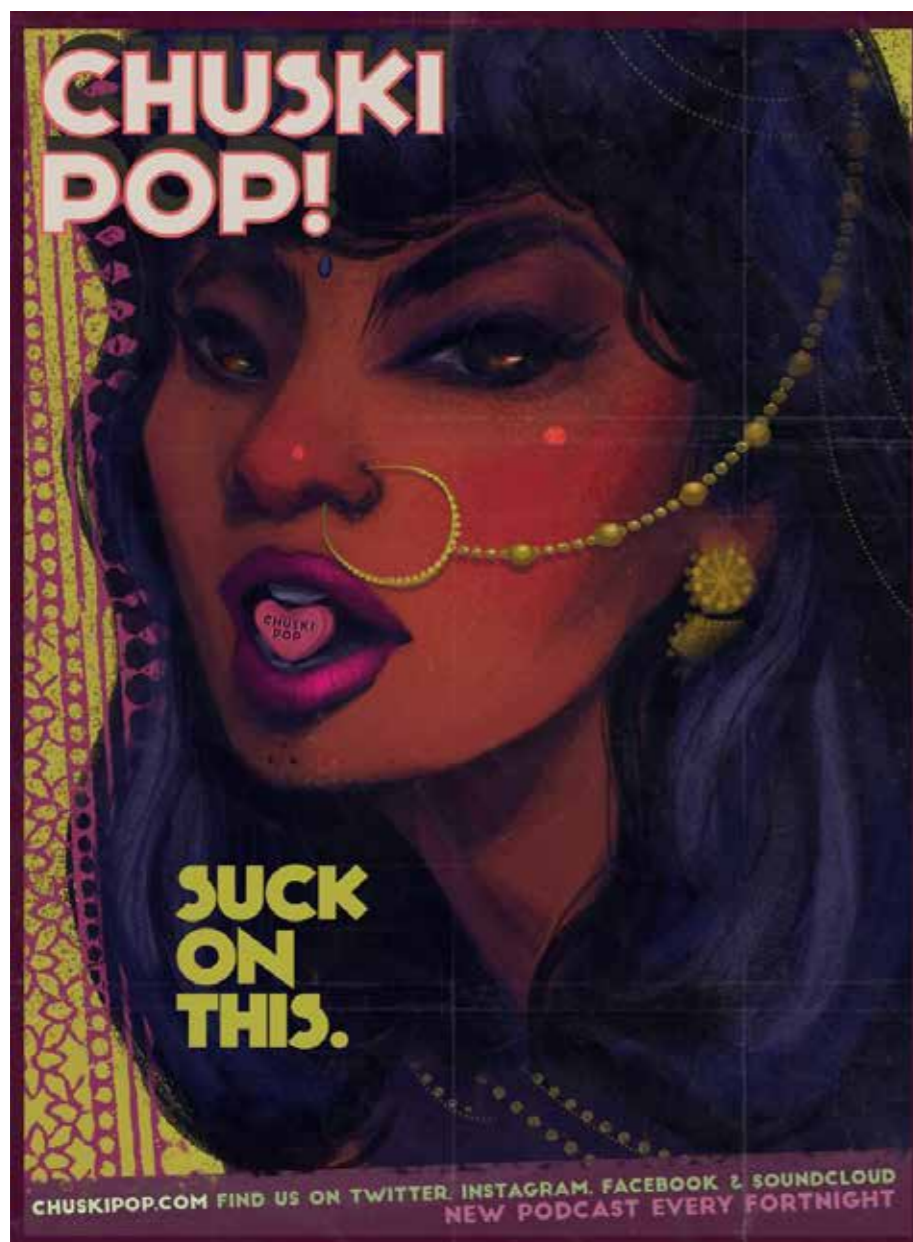
Earlier I would get quite a lot of stares from people, especially when I used to go on solo riding trips, and people would also start to race me, overtake me and knock me down. But lately, I've seen a lot of change with more and more people starting to accept women bikers.

### 5. What does it mean for you to be a role model? And what advice would you give to those inspired by what you do?

I don't really consider myself as a role model. It's just me doing something that I love. Dream big, work hard towards it and you will definitely achieve it.



If you want an earful of desi culture, the 90s, bad art, existential crises, sex, drugs, Bollywood, puppies, bunnies, feminism, unicorns and rainbows, we know the perfect podcast for you: Chuski Pop brought to you by Sweety and Pappu.



## Chuski Pop

Inspired by Lily Singh a.k.a. IISuperwomanII's comedy, in each episode the duo discuss aspects of desi-ness such as complaining how their mothers want them to learn cooking or neighbours acting as moral police, instances, issues and stories that are desi yet universal, delivered with elan. Plus, each episode comes with artwork by Sweety, that's a combination of pop art featuring bold Bollywood actresses and tongue-in-cheek desi sass.

Click [here](#) for more information on Chuski Pop's artwork and podcasts.



Avril Stormy Unger is one of the most innovative performance artists in India, and the founder of The Storm Factory. She's known for her use of public spaces, raw and powerful productions and performance art installations. She focuses on deconstructing the relationship between audience and performer.



## Avril Stormy Unger

If you're a Bangalorean, you may have come across one of Avril's street performances. Using time-based media often spanning many hours, the artist is seen near highways and under flyovers where she stages symbolic performances to draw attention and awareness to issues of importance.

Click [here](#) for our interview with Avril and [here](#) for her Instagram

# NGOs FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

## SAYFTY

Sayfty's vision is to make the daily lives of millions of Indian women safer by empowering them to take a stance against gender violence.



The NGO teaches and instills respect for women through online campaigns that empower women and girls by making them more aware of their rights, helping them identify and speak out against gender violence, and they conduct self-defense workshops to help women and girls be more confident in their ability to protect themselves. Sayfty also provides safe spaces (online and offline) for open conversations with boys and men to bring about a fundamental shift in how violence against women is perceived.

Click [here](#) for information about the organization.

## MAJLIS

Majlis is dedicated to providing legal counsel to women and educate women about their legal rights.



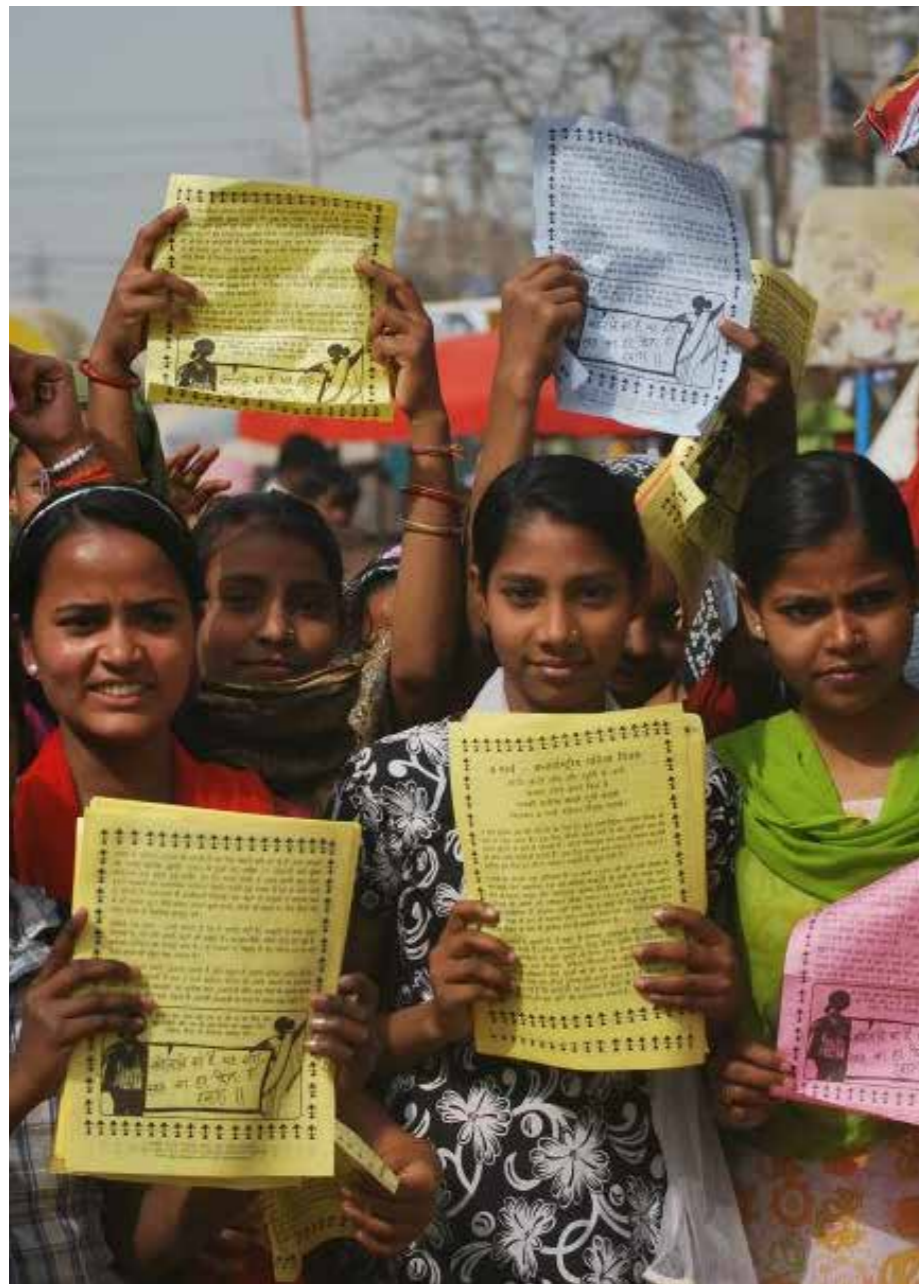
Majlis started in 1991 as a response to a growing need for lawyers with a gender perspective who could drive innovative legal practices to defend women's rights. And today, it comprises of a team of lawyers and social activists who work towards quality legal representation for individual women in court, changing mindsets through advocacy and training and evolving a gender-just ideology through campaigns and interventions.

For more information on Majlis, click [here](#).

# NGOs FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

## JAGORI

The word Jagori means "Awaken, women!" And the NGO accordingly works to redesign public places to make women feel safe, and build a just society through feminist values.

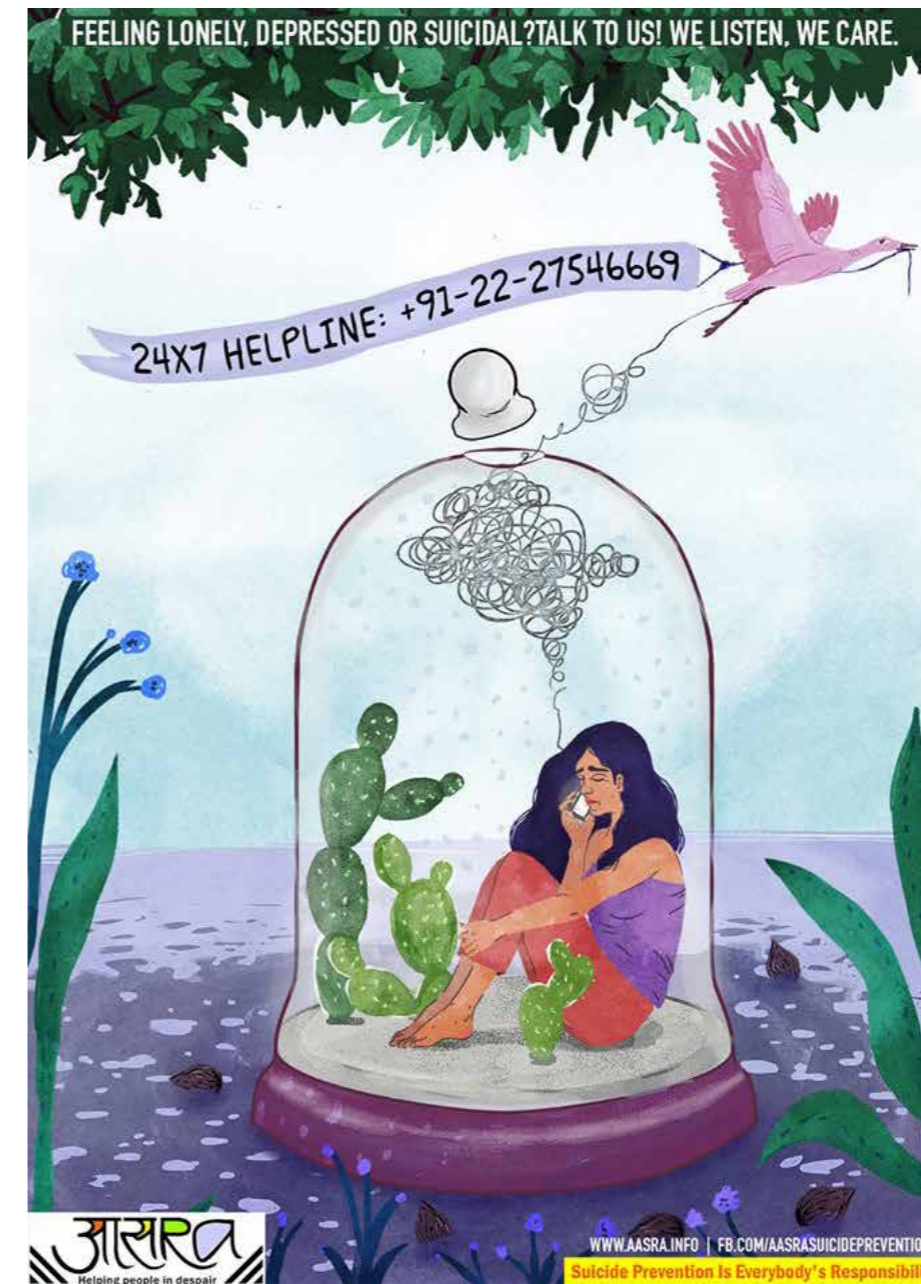


Their projects such as 'The Gender Equality Project', 'The Gender Inclusive Cities Programme' and 'The Safer Cities free from Violence against Women and Girls Initiative' helped deepen feminist consciousness with partners from marginalised urban and rural areas in support of women's rights. The NGO is active in policy dialogues and law reforms on issues of ending violence against women.

Click [here](#) for more information about Jagori.

## AASRA

"Life is a war. Doctors fight disease. Lawyers fight injustice. Teachers fight ignorance. AASRA fights to prevent suicide." Aasra is a crisis intervention centre for the lonely, distressed, and suicidal.



The objective of AASRA is to alleviate human misery by offering active listening, i.e. non-judgmental and non-critical listening to anyone who would like to avail services when they feel anxiety, stress and despair. In the past ten years, AASRA's services have been accessed by telephone, face to face, emails and letters by over 3 lakh people seeking active emotional support for feelings of despair, depression and suicide.

For details on Aasra, click [here](#).

## Aditi Ramesh Musician



This Mumbai-based singer-songwriter quit her job as a corporate lawyer for a career in music, and boy are we glad that she did.

Noted for her 'herculean' voice, Aditi is an exceptional vocalist, possessing a range of techniques and tonal modulations. Her songs are influenced

by jazz, the blues, traditional Carnatic melodies (in which she has been trained in her childhood), and collaborations with contemporary independent artists.

### 1. What kindled the move from lawyer to musician?

I always felt like a misfit in the law firm. Towards the end of my career as a lawyer, I felt this great dissatisfaction about the fact that I was 10 years out of touch with music and not getting to play or practice at all. As I started to explore music throughout 2017 I realized more and that this was what I am meant to do. It just felt right.

### 2. Your musical style is gorgeous. Who are your inspirations? Who did you grow up listening to?

My earliest introduction to music was old Tamil and Hindi film songs and Carnatic and Western classical music by my parents. The first songs I ever sang were AR Rahman's Tamil song's from the film 'Roja'.

My inspirations are vast and varied, including powerful yesteryear singers like Etta James and Billie Holiday and modern day soul queens like Erykah Badu, Esperanza Spalding, Emily King and Lianne La Havas.



### 3. Tell us a little about 'Autocorrect', your songwriting process and how the EP came together.

Autocorrect is a very personal connect between the me and the listener and is a glimpse into my mind, so to speak. The name itself is meant to signify everyday, ordinary problems (such as silly autocorrect goof ups in texts) faced by all of us ordinary people. I use my daily and relatable experiences as a starting point and a lens through which larger, macro level questions are sometimes asked.

The EP's musical style is an exploration in blending genres in the most organic way possible. I also sometimes like to structure my songs with multiple distinct musical sections in a way that you don't know what to expect next while listening. I hope to explore the common spaces between different genres further with my future work.

### 4. What is your favourite song to perform?

That's a tough one! I guess I'd say 'Efflux of Time' for the reaction I get from the crowd when looping the harmonies. I also love performing a new song called 'Don't be Rude' because it is full of wacky improv segments by all members of the band, culminating in a big jugalbandhi.

### 5. Our last question: any new music coming our way in 2018?

The plan is to put out a bunch of new music in 2018. I will be releasing a new single this month and will begin work soon on an EP with my all girl band Ladies Compartment. There are quite a few collab tracks in the works as well with a number of musicians and producers across the country. Lastly, I hope to begin work on a full album sometime this year.





Some songs by Mali make you smile, some make you dance, and others evoke an image, a feeling, something specific, yet relatable. Sunlight spilling in through a window. Driving in the rain. A glass of wine after a long day.

## Maalavika Manoj

Her signature sound - tinged by pop, country and soul - is honest, poignant and multi-influenced, no doubt, the result of working with industry heavy-weights including AR Rahman, and performances around the country - and even in a restaurant in Bangkok!

"All my songs are about my experiences," she says. "Sometimes I like to write from the point of view of someone I know. It makes it interesting to put yourself in someone else's shoes and visualize the world."

Click [here](#) to read more about Mali's music.



Anyone who has lived in Hyderabad for a couple of years is likely to have come across Pranati Khanna. She is both artist and musician, performing solo around town as well as with The Ragamuffins which has evolved from an indie-pop, semi-acoustic sound to a full-blown, loud and proud rock band.

## Pranati Khanna

"The stories of our songs are little vignettes from my life, but I've written them in such a way that they could mean something personal and different to everyone who listens to the words," she comments.

For instance, the song 'Tell Me' is about mistakes we all make, written from a teenager's perspective and 'The Gorkha' is a story based on her grandfather who fought in the Gorkha Regiment. And there's plenty more on the way with The Ragamuffins' new album 'Tell Me' out!

Read Pranati's interview [here](#) and [here](#) to listen to 'Tell Me.'



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