

For 20 kids living near Red Fort, cop dons teacher's hat

ANANYA TIWARI

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 20

INSIDE A temple courtyard at the Red Fort parking lot, constable Than Singh (32) takes time out from his duty hours to teach children living in the slums near the monument. Singh is posted at Kotwali police station in Chandni Chowk and is the area's beat constable. "Being in class stops them from getting into any kind of trouble outside," he said Tuesday before his 5 pm class.

On Tuesday, Delhi Police Commissioner S N Shrivastava met Singh and lauded his efforts.

At the class of 20 were students aged between 4 and 18 years, whose parents work as migrant labourers or at Lal Qila as labourers or gardeners. "We have disinfected the carpets and sanitised the hands of each child. We also ensure they wear masks," said Singh, adding that classes resumed a week ago.

When he first began taking classes in 2016, Singh had only a handful of students. "I had to persuade parents to send their children. But eventually, around 50 kids would come regularly — the number has gone down since the lockdown," he said.

At times, Class XII student Ankita Sharma (16), who lives



Constable Than Singh holds the class at a temple courtyard inside the Red Fort parking lot. *Praveen Khanna*

nearby, helps with the class. "If I get a call and need to rush, Ankita takes over," he said. Her brother Ankit (18), also in Class XII, was present on Tuesday, helping children with their doubts.

At the class, Singh made the children recite the alphabet and multiplication tables, periodically checking their notebooks or making them recite in turn.

Students are enrolled in schools either at their villages or in Delhi. Due to the migratory nature of their families, their studies often get interrupted.

Mahesh (18), who is in Class IX and hails from MP's Damoh district, said: "I am enrolled in a

school in the village, but there is hardly any learning there." He and his parents, who work as labourers, returned recently.

Right after the lockdown, Dharam Das (32), a gardener working at Lal Qila, left with his wife and three children aged below 9 years on foot to Tikamgarh in MP. They returned a few months ago. "I want my daughter Rashmi (8) to learn something, get some education," he said, as he watched her recite tables.

Singh said there are talks to tie up the classes with YUVA, a joint initiative of Delhi Police and Skill Development Ministry to provide training to marginalised youth.

NORTHEAST DELHI

In Shiv Vihar lane full of bakeries, riots and lockdown deal double blow

ANANYA TIWARI
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

IN NORTHEAST Delhi's Shiv Vihar, every lane had at least one family that made bakery goods from small basements and rooms. But the riots that ravaged the area two months ago and the subsequent lockdown have left them without equipment and manpower to run their units.

"After the riots, we were trying to restart our bakery, just like the first time we did 15

years ago. This entire area will have to rebuild from scratch," said Nadeem Mansoori (22), whose family runs Riyasat Bakery, selling mainly rusks.

During the riots on February 24-25, many residents fled to areas such as Mustafabad, Chaman Park and Babu Nagar. When they returned, many of their houses or shops were reduced to rubble or completely looted.

Mansoori, with his parents and five siblings, fled from home on February 25 to Mustafabad, where they have relatives. "We stayed there for

around 20 days. When we returned, we found that all the material required for baking was looted and the machines were broken," he said.

After availing help from non-profit groups and volunteers, the machines were fixed, but the business remains shut. "Right now there are no earnings, as everything has become very expensive. The sugar we would earlier buy for Rs 1,500-1,600 now costs around Rs 2,000," said Mansoori. The bakery used to earn them Rs 20,000-30,000 earlier, but now



the shop only makes rusks a few hours each day.

"A few bakeries have opened in the last 10-12 days, but there are hardly any customers," said Mansoori.

Mohammad Guldeen (37) too has had to shut his bakery operation as his staff of seven have returned to their villages in UP. Unable to find help, he now buys baked items from

Neighbours are the only customers at Mukeel Ahmed's shop. *Ananya Tiwari*

Mustafabad to sell at his shop.

"My family – my wife, two young children, and a nephew – fled our home on February 25. The rioters took everything, including stocks of flour, oil, sugar. Early March, the family returned home, but could not restart business without the staff. If the lockdown ends, hopefully our lives can go on. Maybe the people will come back," said Guldeen.

Meanwhile, some are slowly picking up the pieces and starting again.

Mukeel Ahmed (50), who

owns Prince Bakery, was fortunate as his two employees stayed put while he stayed with relatives in Mustafabad for 20 days. "A few raw items like flour were left behind. There was no money but it was enough for roti," he said.

Now, his only customers are neighbours and local shops.

"When we came back and tried to restart our business, the lockdown began. A few neighbours buy some things for breakfast, as do a few local shops. Everything is in loss right now," he said.

Rashes to UTIs, illnesses take a toll at relief camps

ANANYA TIWARI
NEW DELHI, MARCH 9

SKIN ALLERGIES, urinary tract infections (UTI), breathing problems, and lack of sleep due to stress — these are some of the ailments that have afflicted Northeast Delhi residents currently seeking refuge at the Mustafabad Eidgah following riots in the district.

At the Eidgah relief camp, set up by the Delhi Waqf Board and where over 1,000 families are staying, two medical camps have been opened by Holy Family Hospital and other doctors to provide aid and medicines for residents. At a Delhi government relief camp in Shastri Park, riot victims said ambulances provide them medical aid.

Skin allergies in the form of rashes from wearing the same clothes for too long was a common problem reported at the Eidgah camp among young children. Shama Parveen (30), mother of a one-and-a-half-year-old boy named Taimur, said, "He has only one pair of clothes and has developed slight rashes on his body."

Anshu Anthony, an organiser of the Holy Family Hospital camp, said: "Because of lack of cleanliness and from staying in a common place for long, toddlers are developing skin rashes. We are giving them new clothes and Dettol." With many women also complaining of UTIs, doctors collected their blood and urine samples and sent them for testing.

Soap and Dettol solution are being distributed as preventive measures against coronavirus, said Dr Imran Khan, who is volunteering at the Eidgah. All volunteers are wearing surgical or N95 masks.



The relief camp at the Mustafabad Eidgah. *Praveen Khanna*

Those suffering from mental health issues are being counselled by nurses and volunteers. "Stress and shock, along with a great degree of fear, is leading to sleeping disorders in many people... some have not been able to sleep for four-five days. We have given them sleeping pills," said Dr Khan.

The camp is also home to many pregnant women, with some of them giving birth since. "For two women, contractions began at the camp and we took them to the hospital for delivery," said Anthony.

Aasima (26), who is nine months pregnant, has been staying at the camp with her husband and two young girls since February 24. "I don't have any pain and doctors are regularly checking my condition," she said, adding that she does not want to go back to her home in Shiv Vihar just yet as she is afraid.

Anthony said infants not more than three months old had to be sent to the hospital as they developed jaundice: "One child was 22 days old, the other 18 days old."

Diabetic issues and difficulty in breathing were ailments seen

in the older women. Others were also provided medication for high blood pressure. Ruksaana (55), who is at the Shastri Park camp, said, "Because the diet is mostly rice, my sugar levels have risen. They gave me pills."

Noor Jahan (48) developed breathing difficulties and chest pain, and was given glucose. "This has not happened before. For the past few days, I've been having difficulty in breathing, and chest and back pain," she said.

With two adult working daughters and two school-going children, Jahan did not want to go back home to Shiv Vihar: "The house was looted, not burned down. But I've been living there for 30 years and everything has been fine. It is just not the same anymore."

A civil defence volunteer at Shastri Park relief camp, which had around 40 people during the day, said, "The camp fills up at night. People go back home during daytime, trying to build a routine. But they come back at night as they're still in fear. But if they don't go, the fear won't go either."



Govt plans to treat medical implants as medicine

PRABHA RAGHAVAN
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 18

FACING A backlash after faulty medical devices risked lives, the government plans to bring “all medical devices” and diagnostics in the country under the purview of its existing laws for medicine. If implemented, the country’s drug regulator will enforce standards to ensure safety and effectiveness of these products while its pricing regulator will monitor the prices, said experts.

According to a draft notification shared Friday, the Health Ministry proposes to notify all devices under a section of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, that would define them as “drugs” starting December 1.

This would include “all devices including an instrument, apparatus, appliance, implant, material or other article,”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Ex-Hindu Mahasabha leader, appellant in Ayodhya case, killed

MANISH SAHU
LUCKNOW, OCTOBER 18

KAMLESH TIWARI, former working president of the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha who had appealed on behalf of the organisation in the Ayodhya case before the Supreme Court, was killed Friday at his Lucknow home.

A controversial leader, Tiwari founded the Hindu Samaj Party about three years ago. He had been jailed in 2015 over a remark he made about the Prophet that triggered protests and violence. The Lucknow police had also



CCTV grab of the suspects (below); Kamlesh Tiwari

invoked the NSA against him but it was set aside a year later by the Lucknow bench of Allahabad High Court.

An SIT has been formed and police are looking for two youths, seen in CCTV footage, entering the Khurshed Bagh house around noon. A pistol and an empty cartridge, recovered from

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Assam NRC chief, criticised by state, moved out on SC's order

ANANTHAKRISHNAN G & ABHISHEK SAHA
NEW DELHI, GUWAHATI, OCTOBER 18

THE SUPREME COURT Friday ordered the transfer of 1995-batch IAS officer of the Assam-Meghalaya cadre Prateek Hajela, in-charge of the contentious updating of the 1951 National



BJP said he had published faulty list

GET NRC FOR WHOLE COUNTRY: RSS NO. 2

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Four of 311 deported from Mexico at Delhi's IGI Airport, Friday. Amit Mehra

Jungles to Mexico: ‘We drank sweat squeezed from shirts’

ANANYA TIWARI
DELHI, OCTOBER 18

DEFYING ILLEGAL trafficking cartels, illness, thirst and a torturous jungle trek through the Darien Gap in Panama, over 300 young migrants from Punjab and Haryana reached Mexico in a journey that lasted months — only to be deported and sent back to India by Mexican authorities Friday.

Approaching “visa agents”



Were made to walk through Panama jungles. Alexia Diamond

who demanded Rs 15-20 lakh each, the men, largely from agricultural families without jobs or prospects, left their families behind after “watching YouTube videos” and hearing about people who had successfully managed to reach the US, which was meant to be their final destination too.

“I saw videos on YouTube of the journey. It didn’t seem so terrifying; I had no idea we would have to walk in a jungle, without food or water,” Sevak Singh, 26, a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

In Mukerjeas’ meeting, PC sought payoff: Chargesheet

ANAND MOHAN J & ANANTHAKRISHNAN
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 18

NAMING CONGRESS leader and former Union Minister P Chidambaram, son Karti and 12 others including former bureaucrats of the Ministry of Finance in a chargesheet on alleged corruption in the INX Media case, the CBI Friday informed a Delhi court

that Chidambaram, as Finance Minister, had “demanded illegal gratification... in the form of overseas payoffs for himself” and guarantees for “the business interest of his son” in exchange for FIPB approval of INX Media’s FDI proposals.

The chargesheet was filed before the mandatory 60-day period — from the day of arrest of Chidambaram in the alleged

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

FEBRUARY DEADLINE: FATF Curb funding of terror or face blacklist: Pak is warned

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 18

IN A four-month breather for Islamabad, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Friday decided to keep Pakistan on the Grey List, but warned that it will be put on the Black List if it does not control terror funding by February 2020.

The global financial watchdog’s decision comes after India mounted a diplomatic offensive against Pakistan for its blacklisting as it had not met a majority of its commitments on terrorist financing and money-laundering. While Delhi led the charge, France, the US and European Union countries also pitched in.



FATF president Xiangmin Liu (left) and Executive Secretary David Lewis in Paris, Friday. AP

The FATF after its five-day plenary, which concluded in Paris Friday, noted that Pakistan addressed only five of the 27 tasks given to it to control funding to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

EXPLAINED

Clears space for regulation

IF IMPLEMENTED, all devices and diagnostics will need to meet specific standards. But in the absence of a law, the government will have to ensure it can effectively prevent issues like those seen with Johnson and Johnson’s faulty hip implants — which risked lives and were already notified as ‘drugs’.

EXPLAINED



SIMPLY PUT
MONSOON OUT, MONSOON IN
PAGE 16

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WEB EXCLUSIVE

EXPLAINED: WHY THE KING OF NETHERLANDS VISITED KOCHI

The Dutch royal couple will be touring the scenic coastal town of Alappuzha on Friday and spending time in a houseboat on the famed backwaters, before flying back to Amsterdam in the evening

VIDEO OF THE DAY

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EXPRESS AUDIO

Why Eliud Kipchoge's marathon record comes with big asterisk

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

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Calling woman ‘call girl’ not abetment to suicide, rules SC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 18

THE SUPREME Court on Friday upheld a Calcutta High Court order discharging a man and his parents accused of abetting the suicide of a woman he was planning to marry, after the parents called her a “call girl”.

A bench of Justices Indu Malhotra and R Subhash Reddy refused to interfere with the HC order, which said that “terming the deceased as a call-girl, there was no utterance which can be interpreted to be an act of instigating, goading or solicitation or insinuation, the deceased to commit suicide”.

The HC relied on an apex court ruling, in which it had said that similar utterances like asking another “to go and die” does not constitute an offence for abetment. It said that “the act or conduct of the accused, however insulting and abusive, will not by themselves suffice to constitute abetment of commission of suicide, unless those are reasonably capable of suggesting that the accused intended by such acts, the consequence of suicide”.

Agreeing, the SC said “by considering the material placed on record, we are also of the view that the present case does not present any picture of abetment allegedly committed by respondents. The suicide committed by the victim cannot be said to be the result of any action on part of respondents nor can it be said that commission of suicide by the victim was the only course open to her due to action of the respondents. There was no goading or solicitation or insinuation by any of the respondents to the victim to commit suicide”.

The incident dates back to March 2004. The woman was a painter and artist, and to improve her English proficiency, her family engaged a man as her teacher.

Tejpal’s plea to delay victim’s cross-examination rejected by HC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PANAJI, OCTOBER 18

THE HIGH Court of Bombay at Goa on Friday dismissed former editor of *Tehelka* magazine Tarun Tejpal’s appeal to delay the cross-examination of the victim — with the dates still standing on October 21. Earlier, a Mapusa court, which is hearing the in-camera rape trial against Tejpal, had scheduled the cross-examination for October 21, 22, and 23.

Public prosecutor S Rivankar confirmed on Friday that the Court had dismissed the appeal.

Citing that his lawyers are not available till the year-end, Tejpal had asked for a date in December. With a Supreme Court deadline to finish the case in six months from August, the High Court said it cannot afford any more delays. The victim has been examined by the prosecution and will now face questions from Tejpal’s lawyers.

The prosecution is then expected to reveal the witnesses it wants to question, based on the manner in which the cross-examination is conducted. Earlier too, Tejpal had sought a change of dates citing lack of electronic evidence shared by investigating team to his lawyers to present a suitable defence.

FROM PAGE ONE

Appellant killed Mexico camp

the spot, are being analysed. Police are looking into call detail records of Tiwari’s mobile phone and will question a policeman stationed at the house for his security. They are also drawing sketches of the suspects.

After a preliminary check, doctors told police that Tiwari’s throat had been slit. Later, Additional SP (West Lucknow) Vikas Chandra Tripathi said the “postmortem report of Kamlesh Tiwari stated that there is a bullet injury near the neck”.

Tiwari’s wife Kiran has lodged an FIR against two clerics of Bijnor mosques, accusing them of murder and criminal conspiracy. She alleged that they were behind the killing. In 2015, after Tiwari’s remark on the Prophet led to protests, the clerics had announced cash rewards for his head. Incidentally, one of them was arrested a year later by Bijnor police on the charge of rape.

Meanwhile, police are also looking into a Gujarat police chargesheet from two years ago. Alleged IS operatives Kasim Stimerwala and Obed Mirza, arrested in October 2017, told Gujarat police about plans to kill Tiwari.

Confirming this, Gujarat ATS DIG Himanshu Shukla said: “In the chargesheet, it is mentioned that Kasim and Obed had confessed to police that they had planned to kill Kamlesh Tiwari because he had allegedly made objectionable remarks about the Prophet”.

Following his killing, Tiwari’s supporters and area residents blocked the Naka road crossing, demanding immediate arrest of the assailants. Stones were hurled and shops downed shutters.

Hari Shankar Jain, Tiwari’s lawyer before the Supreme Court, said: “Kamlesh Tiwari was one of the appellants in the Supreme Court in the title suit of Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid. The appeal was admitted in the Supreme Court.” He said the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha had filed its plea through Tiwari.

Additional SP Tripathi said Tiwari’s assailants appeared to be known to him, and police are also probing personal enmity as a possible motive for the murder.

Swarashtra Deep Singh, in-charge of Tiwari’s party for Kushinagar district, who was present in the room when the assailants arrived, told *The Indian Express*: “At around 11 am, Kamlesh Tiwari received a phone call after which he asked his wife, Kiran, to clean the room on the first floor of the building since some visitors were arriving. He also asked her to prepare tea for them.”

Over an hour later, two persons showed up and went straight to the first floor where Tiwari was waiting for them. Kiran was on the ground floor while their three sons were not present in the house, Singh said.

“After half-an-hour, one of the visitors gave me money to go and buy cigarettes for him. When I returned after a few minutes, I was shocked to see Tiwari lying on the floor. There were injuries around his throat and blood was oozing out. The visitors were not around,” Singh said, adding that he raised an alarm and Tiwari’s wife ran to the first floor. The police were informed.

Tiwari was taken to the Trauma Centre of the King George Medical University where he was declared dead. While police officers claimed a policeman, deployed for Tiwari’s security, was present on the first floor of the house, Singh said he did not see him.

Tiwari hailed from Sitapur. He contested the 2012 assembly election from central Lucknow on the ticket of the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha but was defeated.

farmer from Jalandhar who left India on July 29 told *The Indian Express*.

The 311 men landed at Delhi’s IGI Airport Friday after Mexico deported them for illegally entering the country and trying to cross over to the US from there.

Finding “visa agents”, the men said, was the easy part. Deep Singh, 23, a farmer from Sangrur, said, “Many of our friends are now in the US; we just ask them about these agents. In Jalandhar, there are also many WhatsApp forwards meant to sell this idea to young men.”

The only thing each needs is his photo. “We just had to get to Delhi from Punjab and then we got tickets which had details of where to go. We don’t even need to ask anything, the agents just know,” said Deep.

After a flight to Ecuador, the men were transported by road or flight to Colombia, Brazil, Peru, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, and finally Mexico. They spent weeks lodged in cheap hotels, passing one immigration check after another. “At several points in the journey, five-six people carrying guns would accompany us,” said one man who did not wish to be identified.

But none could anticipate the terrifying journey that awaited them at Panama, where they were told to trek by themselves for five-seven days through a dense jungle. “The path is made, and markers using plastic bags are already in place. For three days, we did not even have water. We drank the sweat we would squeeze out of our shirts. There was no food. There were animals in the forest, and a lot of us fell ill,” said Sonu, 22, a graduate from Kurukshetra University.

Manjeet Singh, 28, from Amritsar claimed the “mafia” accompanying them would ask for \$50 (roughly Rs 3,500) from each man every once in a while. He claimed some men had died on the journey but did not provide further details.

Once the men arrived in Mexico, they were arrested by authorities and put in “camps”, which were “like jails, where they took us out at specific times and gave us food twice a day”, said Sevak. Rinku Ram, 24, from a village in Haryana, recalled suffering from a severe allergy and falling ill at the camp. “They used to keep us shut inside; everyone got diseases,” he said.

The agents had told the men to ask Mexican authorities for “passes” that would let them leave the camps temporarily, which is when they would enter the US. “Once we cross over (to the US), we make up a story and a case is filed. But we can work still,” said Manjeet, recalling what he had been told by the agents.

But the men soon realised no such passes would be provided to them. “They kept us there for 25-30 days and then deported us,” said Sevak.

Back in India, the men say their plan for a fresh start has left them worse off than before. “It took me four months to reach Mexico. For 45 days they kept us in the camp. I sold my land, now I don’t know what to do,” said Deep Singh. Manjeet Singh said: “I have been unemployed since 2014 after getting a diploma, and this was my last chance... but I will come back.”

(With inputs from Alexia Diamond)

Prateek Hajela

for this “forthwith and in any case within seven days from today”.

“Upon hearing Mr. Prateek Hajela, learned State Coordinator, the learned Attorney General and the learned Solicitor General and taking into account the totality of the facts of the case, we order for the inter-cadre transfer of Mr. Hajela to the State of Madhya

Pradesh on deputation for the maximum period permissible under the relevant rules/regulations,” the bench said in its order.

Significantly, the order is also CJJI Ranjan Gogoi’s last one on the NRC update process since the bench directed that other NRC-related matters would be heard on November 26. The CJJI who became part of the bench hearing the NRC matter in August 2014 is scheduled to retire on November 17, 2019.

The Supreme Court took over the monitoring of the update process in December 2014, and the final updated NRC was published on August 31 this year. The final NRC included 3,11,21,004 names and left out 19,06,657 persons.

When Attorney General KK Venugopal asked the bench if there was any reason for the transfer order, CJI Gogoi replied “Is there any order without a reason?” He did not elaborate.

When contacted, Hajela declined to comment. Assam’s Commissioner and Secretary (Home and Political) Department Ashutosh Agnihotri also declined to comment.

State government sources, however, said Hajela’s transfer follows his deteriorating relation-

ship with the Assam government, and mounting criticism of his by the state unit of various political parties including the BJP and the Congress in the last few months. They said the NRC update process was anyway complete.

In July this year, the Assam government and the Centre petitioned the SC for re-verification of a sample of names included in the draft NRC - 20% in border districts and 10% elsewhere - but this was dismissed by the apex court after Hajela said that re-verification of 27% names was already done.

Since then, the state government and the state unit of the BJP have sharply criticised Hajela. In a statement on July 24, the state BJP said, Hajela was working under the direction of “certain forces” to “publish a faulty NRC with names of illegal foreigners in it”.

On August 1, the state government released the exclusion data of the draft NRC to question the accuracy of the process and criticised Hajela. In its reply on the floor of the Assembly, the state government had said that Hajela’s reasoning was wrong.

Chidambaram

corruption case — runs out on October 20.

It refers to a meeting at Chidambaram’s North Block office where, according to the CBI, this demand for “payoffs” was made in the presence of journalist Vir Sanghvi.

Reached for comment, Sanghvi said: “I told the CBI and the Enforcement Directorate that during that period, we met several people in Delhi to tell them about the venture. I do not exactly remember who all of them were and have no specific recollection of this meeting. In any case, Peter Mukerjee knew Mr Chidambaram from his Star TV days... This is all in my evidence as are my two meetings with Mr Chidambaram after I had left INX a few months later when I urged him to investigate irregularities in INX’s finances. The FIPB clearance was for INX Media, an entertainment company. I worked for INX News, a separate company.”

The CBI, in its chargesheet, said: “Smt Indrani Mukerjee, the then Director M/s INX Media (P) Limited and Sh Pratim Mukerjee, her husband as the then Chief Operating Officer, M/s INX Media (P) Limited along with Sh Vir Sanghvi had met Sh P

Mumbai terror attack mastermind Hafiz Saeed to withdraw funds from his frozen accounts. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had meetings with their counterparts of many FATF member countries over the last few weeks, especially at the UN General Assembly in New York. While Modi had met leaders from Belgium, France, US, UK, Italy, New Zealand, South Africa among others at the UN, Jaishankar had met his counterparts from Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Singapore, Turkey, Japan at the UN in New York. He has also met his counterparts from the two regional organisations in the FATF - the GCC and the EC.

Earlier, Jaishankar met leaders from Finland - on his way to New York - and his counterparts from France, Germany, Canada. NSA Ajit Doval and Jaishankar had also visited Russia separately.

enough in a moment of growing number of safety disasters involving devices and the CDSCO’s pathetic track record in responding to them. We have been asking for strengthening and comprehensive reforms of regulation for patient safety,” said Malini Aisola of patient activist group All India Drug Action Network (AIDAN).

“Continuing attempts to incorrectly regulate devices as ‘drugs’ may not help fully address patient needs to access affordable safe devices that are indigenously available,” said Rajiv Nath, forum coordinator of Indian medical devices lobby group, Association of Indian Medical Devices Industry (AIMED).

“Devices need a risk proportional penal system and decriminalisation of most offences. Regulator needs to have administrative powers to... protect public or ensure field safety actions or product recalls and not feel inept or handicapped to do so as was seen last year in the J&J case. Every minor issue need not be referred to an overburdened judiciary with limited technical knowledge,” he added.

Chidambaram, the then Finance Minister in his office at North Block, New Delhi, regarding the FIPB approval. In the said meeting Shri P Chidambaram demanded illegal gratification from Smt Indrani Mukerjee and Sh Pratim Mukerjee in the form of overseas payoffs for himself and he also demanded that business interest of his son Sh Karti P Chidambaram should also be taken care in lieu of FIPB approval of M/s INX Media (P) Ltd and M/s INX News (P) Ltd.”

It refers to another meeting at the Hyatt Regency coffee shop in New Delhi between the Mukerjees and Karti in June 2008 after the Income Tax raised questions about the FDI proposal. Seeking clarifications, the I-T asked: “Whether M/s INX Media (P) Limited, which had an approval for FDI of Rs 4.62 crores only, could receive excess investment to the tune of Rs. 262 crores (as on May 2008)” and “Whether M/s INX Media (P) Limited could also make a downstream investment in M/s INX News (P) Limited without the FIPB approval.”

“During the meeting at the coffee shop at Hotel Hayat Regency, New Delhi, Sh Karti P Chidambaram assured Smt

Indrani Mukerjee and Sh Pratim Mukerjee that the contentious issues of M/s INX Media (P) Limited would be resolved. It is corroborated by the fact, revealed during investigation, that no punitive action was taken against the company by FIPB for the above violation by the company and for this a demand of US \$1 Million was made by Sh Karti P Chidambaram. Of this amount, Rs 9,96,000 was paid through cheque by M/s INX Media Pvt Ltd as advance, subsequently, in the garb of false invoices showing consultancy favouring M/s Advantage Strategic Consulting Pvt Ltd - an indirectly controlled company of Sh Karti P Chidambaram.”

Indrani Mukerjee, who has been pardoned after turning approver in the case, has not been chargesheeted though her husband Pratim Peter Mukerjee figures in it. Others named in the chargesheet are S Bhaskararaman, an associate of Karti; Sindhushree Khullar, the then Additional Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs (DEA); INX Media Pvt Ltd, presently 9X Media Pvt Ltd; INX News Pvt Ltd, presently Direct News; Chess Management Services Pvt Ltd; Advantage Strategic Consulting Pvt Ltd (AS-CPL); Ajeet Kumar Durg Dung, the then section officer of FIPB unit (MoF); Rabindra Prasad, the then under secretary of FIPB unit; Pradeep Kumar Bagga, the then OSD (CM&I), FIPB unit; Prabodh Saxena, Director of FIPB unit; and, Anup K Pujari, the then Joint Secretary (Foreign Trade) in the DEA.

In May 2017, the CBI had registered an FIR alleging irregularities in the FIPB clearance granted to the INX Media group for receiving overseas funds of Rs 305 crore in 2007 when Chidambaram was Finance Minister. The ED later lodged a money laundering case in the matter. Chidambaram denied any wrongdoing, and rejected the charges levelled at him by the two agencies.

Arrested on August 21 by the CBI which is probing alleged corruption in the case, Chidambaram has been in judicial custody since September 5.

On Friday, the Supreme Court reserved its order on Chidambaram’s bail plea with the CBI opposing it, claiming it was at a crucial stage of investigating more cases of FIPB approvals to companies and their alleged financial transactions with his son Karti, and that granting bail at at this stage would hamper probe as his very presence would intimidate witnesses.

Appearing for the agency, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told a bench headed by Justice R Banumathi that the FIPB approval granted to INX Media was not only the issue under investigation though this was the only one mentioned in the FIR.

He said that one of the witnesses in the case had given a statement under Section 164 CrPc about attempts to influence him and that the CBI had not revealed his name in the chargesheet.

Mehta too referred to the meeting at Chidambaram’s office, saying investigations had revealed that the Mukerjees, along with a third person, had met him in his office on March 9, 2007, but the visitor’s register was stated to be destroyed because of lapse of time.

“However, contemporaneous evidence collected from Hotel Oberoi corroborates the statements of Indrani Mukerjee, that she and Peter Mukerjee were staying in Hotel Oberoi, New Delhi between 6.3.2007 and 9.3.2007 and they having used the hotel vehicle for internal travel on 9.3.2007, which was used for travelling to the petitioner’s office where the meeting was held,” he said.

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BAY AREA CENTRIC, GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM

SF School Board Recall Recruits An Unlikely Desi Campaigner



by Ananya Tiwari

March 29, 2022



A parent led revolt in San Francisco has roiled California politics. (Image Credit: Siva Raj and India Currents)

The postman went door-to-door on San Francisco's historic Haight Street, as I waited in front of a grilled door. As he excused himself, I peeked inside and saw a steep staircase going up and Siva Raj,

a 49-year-old hailing from India greet me from above.

Stacked at the door, were boxes of posters supporting the **recent recall election** of the now dethroned school board members of the **San Francisco Unified School District** (SFUSD), which occurred last month and garnered national attention. On February 15 this year, the city voted overwhelmingly to recall its three board members – Alison Collins, Gabriela Lopez, and Faaauuga Moliga – over the failure to reopen public schools, the neglect of public school children during the pandemic even while promoting social justice issues, and attempts to change merit-based admissions to Lowell School to a lottery-based system.

San Francisco's last recall election was in 1983 and it failed. This recall was driven by the various frustrations parents across the country have expressed, as schools, especially public schools, remained closed for months in the end.

And it stands out as one of the most vehement rejections of local leadership in the Bay Area. During this period, the racial inequity gap in education grew – with **data showing** that while one-third of the schoolchildren of the city attended in-person classes at their private schools (and most of them are white), its large public schoolchildren population – comprised of Asians, Latinos, and Blacks – fell behind. Moreover, there was a 10 percent drop in enrolment, and the board faces a budget deficit of **\$125 million consequently**.

Infuriated by the neglect, parents with children in SFUSD came together by the thousands to get their kids back to school in one of the most successful grassroots political campaigns in the city. Liberal city voters were maligned and accused of being **Republicans and “white supremacists”**, even as the donors and parents emailed the board members in thousands appealing to have schools reopen. **A poll conducted in February** by private pollster EMC Research also revealed that 60% of San Francisco voters—and 69% of the city's public-school parents—supported recalling the school board members.

And Raj and his partner Autumn Looijen emerged as the faces of this campaign.

Background on the Recall Duo

Siva Raj and Autumn Looijen (Image Credit: Siva Raj)

Raj, who is from the southern state of Tamil Nadu in India, with a mass of thick, curly hair, and a broad smile, ushered me indoors to his kitchen, where Looijen sat around the dining table. Both were busy working from home, with their laptops and papers strewn on the table – and the sunlight streamed in and lit up the entire room.

As Raj poured me some orange juice, I asked him what he was up to now – and he said that now both Looijen and he – who share five kids under 18 years amongst themselves – are trying to round up candidates who can be appointed to the school board to serve temporarily until elections are held. As of now, **three new board members** – Lisa Weissman-Ward, Ann Hsu, and Lainie Motamedi – were appointed by Mayor Breed on March 11.

Raj, who used to live in Rochester, New York, moved into the Bay Area suburbs in 2018, with his two children – fifteen-year-old Shriyans and nine-year-old Rishaan, after separating from his wife.

He first settled in Pleasanton, even as Looijen lived in Los Altos. They moved into the city with Looijen in December 2020, during the pandemic, and got his children admitted to public schools.

Yet the schools remained closed for in-person learning till late 2021. Elementary schools started to reopen in phases from April 19, and middle & high school students didn't go back — except for the graduating class of seniors who did a few “zoom” sessions on-site so the school district could get some of the incentive money tied to reopening, said Raj.

“I was kind of expecting schools to reopen. But they sent an email in January 2021 saying that schools will remain closed for the entirety of the year.” He remembers feeling frustrated as did Looijen, who has three children in elementary and high school. And as they would soon realize, so did thousands of parents.

Shriyans, his elder son studying at **Raoul Wallenberg Traditional High School**, lost interest in all work during the online schooling, said Raj. “It was fine for a few months. And then he went on from being an honor student to hitting rock bottom in terms of his grades. He was also struggling mentally.”

Even though Looijen and Raj built an app for the children to keep track of their homework, it didn't work. “He was really struggling to motivate himself and the school experience was really terrible. I mean, you know, he would have the Zoom classes, and pretty much all his peers would shut the camera off.”

Raj grew up in the town of Chennai and entered the U.S. in 2000, working for Bausch & Lomb. After some interregnum periods spent in France, UK, and Dubai, he is now a long-term resident here and received his permanent residency status in 2021. Despite living on the west coast since 2018, he had not lived in San Francisco due to the lack of openings for his kids in the city's lottery school system.

“But due to the pandemic, and because so many people left the city at that point, there were openings in the school district. There were enough openings that I could look at and say, alright — there's some decent stuff here. And I was actually impressed overall,” Raj admitted.

When Raj was growing up alongside his younger brother in Chennai in the 1980s, his father worked as a clerk at a multinational company that eventually shut down, forcing his small family to shift to two bare rooms on top of a cardboard factory, where his father took up a job as a security guard. Raj's family struggled to send their two kids to a private school when people like him — living in a slum area and from the working classes — did not have the means to do so.

A day before his critical math board exams in 12th grade – an exam that partially determines the various colleges one can attend – his father suffered a stroke. He remembers, “He survived after the open-heart surgery – but I didn’t know that as I was writing the exam”.

Fortunately for Raj, he got into the economics program at the University of Madras, studied econometrics for his master’s, and moved to the US with his wife.

Raj’s father got financial help from his grandmother’s brother, who lived at Berkeley and had shifted there permanently in the 1940s. Even as his mother had only a handful of saris to wear, both he and his brother, went to private schools, since education was a priority.

“If not, we would all have ended up in a government school, or something. This means that we both would’ve completely lost interest...so yeah, I was one of the lucky ones,” said Raj, reminiscing about his childhood growing up in a working-class, slum-like neighborhood.

Raj feels that his experience living in poverty may have driven him to act for a recall too. “I can see the difference that education made in my life...without that, I wouldn’t be here talking to you. That’s the only thing we have – no money, no connections, no nothing. We were living on the fringes of society. My parents worked so hard for me to afford school...I wish to work as hard for my sons too,” said Raj.

San Franciscan parents in early 2021 were seeking a representative to do the work of amassing signatures for a recall. Eventually, it fell upon Raj and Looijen, who were ready to take on the work. They began by reaching out to Joel Engardio, a local journalist who sent out newsletters and began an online campaign.

Canvassing the streets of San Francisco (Image Credit: Siva Raj)

In mid-February 2021, expecting around three hundred parents to sign up for the mailing list, they were astonished to realize that over 7,000 had signed up, and their Facebook group grew to gather over a thousand followers. Looijen, with her experience working in tech and for non-profits, created directories. The couple woke up every day thinking of a new reason that recall was necessary, to be shared with their followers.

Looijen recalls of the school board members, “Collins, the way she related to people, she really did not seem concerned.” They remember how hundreds of emails were sent by the parents to Collins and the board – without any response.

Many parents were afraid they would be called racist and were also doxed. “We had people telling their friends not to donate to our campaign because they would lose their business...apparently it is like that. Campaigners had their backgrounds doxed and scrutinized, they’ve been bullied...”, said Raj. Though he did not keep a track of such incidents, he said, “The most **egregious example of**

harassment was when a political activist and school board supporter tried to steal petitions from one of our volunteers at a farmer's market."

In **late January last year**, the board hurriedly passed a resolution to introduce a lottery system for Lowell High School, which upset the significant Asian American population living in the city. By March-end, **Collin's past anti-Asian tweets** came to light. Written in 2016, Collins had written – "Many Asian Am. believe they benefit from the 'model minority' BS," and that "They use white supremacist thinking to assimilate and 'get ahead.'" When these tweets came to light, she hurriedly apologized.

Anti-Asian Hate and Discrimination-A History

Anti-Asian discrimination is not new to San Francisco, with its **history** encompassing one of the first Asian urban settlements in the country, starting with the era of the gold rush, the making of the railroads, the agricultural expansion of the state of California, and industrialization of the US. The sweat and blood of Asian workers from China, Japan, the Philippines, Korea, and Punjab are intertwined with that of white workers during these pivotal eras of American development.

A sampling of the controversial tweets from Collins

These Asian workers were paid less by white workers and used to silence strikes by them. Consequently, labor conflicts with white workers during a time when over 30 million white workers immigrated to the US from Europe, led to hostile marginalization of these ethnic communities and to various laws excluding them, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 prohibiting the immigration of Chinese workers and the Gentleman's Agreement Act of 1907, which sought to restrict Japanese immigrants into the US.

Segregation of public schools was commonplace too. **On October 11, 1906**, the San Francisco school board issued an order ordering all Japanese and Korean children to attend "Oriental" schools where Chinese students were already studying. This even violated treaties the US had with Japan which sought to protect Japanese people in the US from discrimination. With the media, majority white society, labor unions, and politicians screaming aloud against the "yellow peril" growing in the city and California, Asians struggled to integrate and thrive.

It was only in 1952 that the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) allowed Asian immigrants to gain citizenship. And then, a massive civil rights movement shook the US post World War 2, when the country was forced to look at its treatment of minorities even as they fought against fascism abroad.

The term **model minority** was **coined by William Petersen**, a sociologist writing for the New York Times in 1966 while referring to the Japanese immigrants in the US. Titled “Success Story: Japanese American Style”, Petersen emphasized that the community’s hard work and work ethic had paid off to overcome discrimination.

A generation that suffered **internment during World War 2**, when people of Japanese descent – even those with American citizenship – were regarded with utmost hostility and paranoia by President Roosevelt after the bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japan in 1941, was referred to as a “model minority” for quietly, silently assimilating to American culture despite the discrimination they had faced. In the past century, Japanese immigrants – who were often more educated than other Asian immigrants – were known for being extremely American in their ways and attaining high educational status– and yet facing immense marginalization when trying to assimilate into the majority-white workforce.

Petersen lauded their work ethic and Confucian values. Yet, this term **easily masked hard-wrought freedom struggles by Asian communities**. Written during the height of the Civil Rights Movement, many critics say that the term was not only a method of the majority white community to **absolve itself of its guilt and accountability**, but also to **pit various non-white communities against each other**.

“Most immigrants don’t want to understand politics...that’s the last thing you want to do,” said Raj. “There is this complete lack of understanding and empathy about the immigrant experience, calling everyone who is hard-working a white supremacist.”

After Collin’s tweets were dug out by a volunteer made public, many volunteers began to reach out to the various Cantonese, Vietnamese, and

Korean communities, and the Filipino and black ones, and conducted outreach in the native languages. The Chinese American Democratic Club joined the efforts.

“Many Asians thought that this was particularly targeted at their community. I still don’t understand the connection, right? Because racist incidents are happening in a lot of schools. But they use that as a pretext to then push through this admission change...even if you think this is wrong or right, I

personally have no stake here...what upsets me is that you don't just push through this change in five days, and that's an illegal way to pass a resolution and make a change, right, without consulting the community," said Raj.

As the recall campaigning gathered steam, supported also by Asian Americans and other immigrants, their volunteer list grew by thousands. For the first time since the pandemic, which saw an immense rise in Anti-Asian violence, it seemed like the Asian Americans of the city were finally **asserting themselves politically**.

Powering to Victory and Beyond

A sampling of the controversial tweets from Collins.

According to various news reports, **the campaign garnered nearly \$520,000**, with more than half of the donations being less than \$100 or equal to it. From the city attorney to the mayor, the campaign gained immense support from its citizens. Over the pandemic over 200 school boards across the nation have held recall elections or have seen frustrations expressed by parents over the closure of schools, masking and testing policies, and the inclusion of critical race theory in the curriculum. San Franciscans too followed this trend and theirs was one of the most successful ones.

On February 15, over 76% voted to recall Alison Collins, 72% Gabriela Lopez, and 69% Faauuga Moliga. Some 179,981 votes were tallied out of 499,771 registered voters. That means turnout was 36 percent of all San Francisco's registered voters, as per the Department of Elections data.

Recently Raj came out as bisexual to his children. He remembers that it was less scary than he thought. "My older son was like – alright."

Now living in a 4-bedroom apartment on Haight Street – known for its past hippie culture and dotted with multicultural restaurants – he feels freer and more confident. "I don't feel like that in the rest of the world, and in a socially conservative place like India," said Raj. He says that his entire life he was providing for his family, and now for the first time, he is trying to figure himself out.

LIFESTYLE

Sima Aunty From Mumbai Hosts An Indian Matchmaking Mixer In San Jose

Sima Aunty of Indian Matchmaking plays Cupid at a mixer for young desis in San Jose. Will her arrow find its mark?



by Ananya Tiwari
May 8, 2023



Sima Taparia from Mumbai (image : Twitter)

Meet Sima Aunty

Hansa Narasappa, 33, arrived at a five-star hotel in downtown San Jose for an April 29th meet-and-greet mixer headlined by Sima Taparia of Netflix's **Indian Matchmaking**. Hansa hoped she would meet someone worthy of investing time and effort in a long-term committed relationship, possibly even marriage.

A software developer for a healthcare firm, Narasappa had searched dating apps for years for her 'soul mate.' And like others who attended, she too preferred meeting people in person rather than through dating apps — and she has had plenty of experience with that.

At the meet and greet, *Sima Aunty* as she is popularly known, met fans for a photo op and a taste of 'Sima Aunty-isms.' In the audience, young (under 40), educated Indian 'techies' working in Silicon Valley absorbed her words as wisdom as they scanned faces around them for signs of a potential life partner.

Who's looking?

In the Silicon Valley tech bubble, data from 2015 indicates that over **89,000 Indian 'techies' live in and around San Jose**, and constitute **about 6% of its total workforce**. Foreign-born Indian immigrants make up **75% of the 4.6 million Indians** in the U.S.

Fortune reported that "of the 3 million foreign-born people who identify as Indians, 29% have been in the country for less than five years—and 51% are non-U.S. citizens." They arrive in the U.S. on student visas and are employed in various industries on a non-immigrant H1-B visa.

What falls by the wayside as young immigrants chase career dreams abroad, are the connections that create opportunities for people to find partners — at home a reliable network of family and friends get to work. But living abroad, there is no one to fill the gap.

In recent years dating apps serving the Indian diaspora have proliferated. But successful matches are hard to make, especially for young Indians raised in traditional backgrounds where dating apps did not figure in the search for a soulmate.

That's the gap Sima Aunty hopes to fill.

The Mixer

As guests collected their tickets, they were given green bands to wear indicating that they were single and ready to socialize. A red band signified they were not. The venue had a dance floor and Bollywood hits such as ‘Mujhse Shaadi Karogi?’ blared from a loudspeaker. Occasionally it proclaimed Sima Aunty’s personal email address.

The matchmaking queen held court from a chair where guests were invited to take pictures and chat as she shook hands with a warm smile, and talked to anyone who had questions or wanted to share experiences.

Taparia kicked off festivities by sharing her personal journey as a matchmaker. From her perch on a make-shift stage, she described her social circles in Mumbai where she first began helping people like her sister find potential life partners.

“I’m very proud of my Indian traditional values, and my Indian values have made me a star,” Taparia said.

Traditional Indian values

Those values first came to light in a gritty 2017 documentary ‘A Suitable Girl’ featuring Taparia. In it, she says, “As the girl is born, it is understood that she has to get married one or the other day. She has to leave her parents. She has to go to her in-law’s place, that is fixed. That’s our Indian culture. After she gets married, we lose her.”

The documentary is a far cry from the glitzy reality show that followed in Indian Matchmaking. A Suitable Girl follows three women searching for a husband. In fact, one of the women was Taparia’s own quietly rebellious daughter.

The documentary showcased the rigid caste and beauty standards the women must match, the rejections they suffer, the jobs they must leave, and the sacrifices they must make to find and keep a husband. It was co-produced by Indian Matchmaking producer Smriti Mundhra, who initially approached Taparia for a match and discovered her matchmaking enterprise.

Indian Matchmaking

Arranging marriages has been good for business. Since Indian Matchmaking launched, Sima and her husband Anup Taparia have built a clientele of around 700 people.

Their digital database documents the ‘biodata’ of candidates from Indian communities around the world, in countries such as the USA, Canada, Hong Kong, and UAE. Their clientele base is gradually opening up to Bangladeshi, Pakistani, and even a few Germans and Singaporeans.

“We cater to those we can...for Europeans and the far East people we do not have matches, so we cannot cater to them,” said Anup Taparia.

The Taparias are open to matching the LGBTQ+ community as well if it’s “what the clients want – and if we have the matches in our database.”

The modern Indian marriage

In many ways, the traditional Indian arranged marriage is a distant memory. Today Sima Aunty blends the traditional search for matches with a modernized version of blind dating.

She firmly believes her services are better than dating apps, because of the personal touch she offers. “I meet them, I scan them, I ask them the criteria, and then I match according to that. So, there is a mediator, a human being between them, so the success of the marriage is higher this way...that is the beauty...,” Taparia explained.

Cyberdating vs Face-to-Face

Hansa Narasappa, like many other singles, feels the human element is missing from cyber-dating. Meeting people face-to-face is a better way to judge chemistry and personality than swiping on Dil Mil. It’s a popular dating app among young Indians in the U.S. There’s a greater chance of a connection leading to marriage because cyber daters are unwilling to commit.

Gita, 36, a software technical leader said that she loved the Indian Matchmaking show because the personal touch is important. “I’ve tried many apps, for almost 10 years. But it is tough to get commitment nowadays.”

“I do socialize, and go to meet-ups, and I have even tried dating apps,” said Narasappa. But she is yet to find someone who is seriously seeking a relationship. “For me, it has been very hard” finding people willing to commit.

Caste no barrier

The new generation of Indians doesn't regard caste or community as a factor in finding a soul mate. They may however use those criteria to whittle potential candidates from a larger pool. What matters more was finding someone who is Indian.

"I'm open to meeting people from all backgrounds," said Aniket Payade, a 32-year-old software engineer. But he acknowledged that matching with someone from his background would make it easier for his family to "have a normal conversation" with them. Payade said he faced additional obstacles – his height (he is 5 '6) and most of his matches landed on the east coast. And he felt he was meeting women who "want to take a lot of time and are confused."

What are your intentions?

It's hard to ascertain a person's intentions from a dating app, said San Francisco-based Anjali Naskar, 33, who attended this event. She's from **season 2 of** Indian Matchmaking. "I started looking during the pandemic, and I was struggling with dating apps." Naskar said she was not finding the right people and wanted to go via the Indian Matchmaking route "because the people are pre-vetted."

In the show, she was matched with Arshneel Kochar, but that did not work out. Naskar is now dating someone from Chennai in a long-distance relationship. Ironically they met through a dating app. "We are from very different backgrounds," said Anjali, who belongs to the Bengali and Maharashtrian communities.

Did she think the arranged marriage system was regressive given that traditionally, it's based on religion and caste? Anjali dismissed the thought. "This is not a typical arranged marriage at all. That perception has evolved. You meet someone, and you date them for a few months before committing to anything."

She candidly admitted that one can identify with people of the same culture, as there is a base level of commonality. "I have dated all ethnicities and never been in a serious relationship with an Indian person – until now," she added.

Few choices

Today many young Indians tend to be more open-minded about caste and religion because of limited choices. The Taparias said that Indians abroad are more likely to seek an intellectual or mental connection, while in India, young adults were more focused on criteria like family, community, and even height difference.

But Anup Taparia shared it was difficult even in India, to match people according to caste or community preferences. “At first, people want people from their own communities, but when we tell them we cannot take their case because (of such limitations), they become more flexible,” he said.

But Payade said that neither he nor his family cares about caste or community, and both Gita and Hansa Narasappa agreed that that was not important to them too.

Vetting candidates

Caste and community were far from the minds of attendees. With badges displaying quirky personality traits (Payade wore one that read: “Confused soul gym foodie. Worst cook.”), green band-wearing guests scoured the crowd for others wearing their hue.

Once Sima registers interested candidates, the Netflix producers scrutinize her list of potential candidates for Indian Matchmaking. “It’s very difficult to come on the show,” said Anup. The producers choose candidates after a rigorous process of selection, interviews, on-screen tests, and criminal and psychology tests. Nor do the Taparias just choose *anyone*. “Some are very difficult to match...such as people divorced 3 times and with many kids,” said Anup. He refused to share information on consultation fees.

And after a while, the event turned into a Bollywood dance party. People either gave up or just left. A few met at a bar in the hotel to continue conversations. Hansa Narasappa was disappointed. She had not found anyone who met her expectations.

After the meet and greet, Sima Aunty expressed her frustration with modern youth. She said they were picky. “They give a lot of their criteria that are so specific,” and “vague.” They don’t like it either when she advises them to not be choosy.

A week after the event, Sima Aunty said that she is yet to find a client from this last audience. Some may have exchanged numbers or connected via social media – but have not reached out to her yet.

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