Hinesh Jethwani) and the

#### Sharmila Ganesan-Ram | TNN

ube lights are not usually known to do justice to make-up. Inside the gloomy, sepia-toned room at Alfred theatre near Grant Road, however, these weak, dusty white pipes are doing their best to subdue a row of Bollywood faces that have assumed the various hues of Govinda's shirts. Om Puri's face is unusually pink, a vein in

Khulbushan Kharbanda's forehead is verging on saffron rusted table fan and touches up Sunny Deol's puffed and Raj Babbar's cheeks cheeks on a 40-by-8are green because in 65-year-old S Rehfoot poster of the 1990 film Ghayal man's imagination, that is (The wounded) justice. And The title could that is how well be his own story. For, there was a time when this father of three kids couldn't return home for consecutive ("which would make my suspi cious"), so buwas he

been for the past 50 years till the advent of villains like vinyl, scanners and Photoshop: things which if he could draw on canvas, he would paint deep blue-the colour of Amrish Puri.

Today, in this time-warped studio adorned with cobwebs, photographs of artistes who have passed on and decadesold banners of films like Mughal-e-Azam and Mother India, Rehman lights up a cigarette, turns on the uniformly

being partially resurrected by art lovers here and abroad painting posters for nine to ten theatres. Today, he paints for the only cinema hall in Mumbai that respects his obsolete talent. "We feel like our hands have been cut off," he says resignedly, speaking for the endangered community of poster painters in Mumbai, who were severely hit both emotionally and financially by the onslaught of inexpensive plastic photographic

posters in the late 1980s.

Within the last two dechand-painted Bollywood poster art has gone from being the only form of creative outdoor film publicity overseen by actors and directors themselves to be coming a mere Indian idiosyncrasy like nude tribals or misspelled menus. Some of these veteran poster artists have reluctantly taken up mass production of photo collages or digital images. These cut-andpaste jobs, fail to satisfy the paintbrush-wielders who revelled in the creativity fuelled by minimal resources. "Earlier, we used to be giv-

Paint my love

A young CA's mission to give underprivileged

schools a colourful makeover has benefited the

students in more ways than one

en black-and-white work stills and were shown film trials at times. We would then visualise and work our own imagination," recalls 50-year-old Achal Agarwal, whose Prabhadevi studio has now taken

up digital prints. In this new job, he misses the "personal touch". By this, he means eyecatching elements in the post-

ers like symbols, songs or

**VANISHING** 

REELING UNDER Sixty-five-year-old S Rehman (left) does not find takers for posters like this one anymore

When heroes were

In this new series on dying professions in Mumbai, TOI looks at film

poster painters... a breed whose heydey is well behind it but which is now

red and villains blue.

fight scenes that decorate the backdrop of the actors' magnified faces. One such dramatic element in S Rehman's Inaam Dus Hazaar poster was perhaps what inspired Sanjay

Dutt to work out. After watching the trial in which the climax shows an unbeefy Dutt taking his shirt off in a fight sequence, Rehman decided to replace Dutt's body on canvas with that of Rambo's wellsculpted Sylvester Stallone. Everyone loved it. People still remember that poster in Mahalaxmi," says the artist who has even inserted the Tai

Mahal between the two lead actors of the 1963 movie with the same name and for whom the rendering of the perpetually ploughing Nargis in the Mother India poster what fed me for a year".

Moreover, stars used to drop in every Thursday to encourage these painters. Now PROs visit. "Actors used to respect us," says Agarwal, who recalls Raj Babbar, Feroz Khan and Randhir Kapoor

S Rehman's 'Inaam Dus Hazaar' poster was perhaps what inspired Sanjay Dutt to work out. After watching the climax, Rehman decided to replace Dutt's body on canvas with Sylvester Stallone's well-sculpted Rambo

fondly referring to Agarwal's painter father as 'Dada'. Agarwal, who has painted for Yashraj and Subhash Ghai films in his career of 25 years, adds that "we even used to carry the posters on handcarts ourselves". The advent of vinyl posters, which came at Rs 10 per square foot when canvas paintings used to cost Rs 150 per square foot, however, marked the beginning of their doom. Photographic posters, which producers themselves offer marketers for free, later completed the execution of the industry.

Today, however, collectives like Indian Hippy (founded by

French Limona Studio are tying up with poster artists to rescue this art from oblivion. They offer custom-made post ers and other hand-painted products to tourists and any one who wants to use them as personalised gifts. "We knew that Dadar was an area where the studios used to be," says Sarah of Limona Studio. "We met three painters and began to work with them. The last poster painters of Mumbai come every year in residency and workshop in France to demonstrate their art to the Europeans. They make some posters for movie and theatre festivals and also some for private customers who want to be in a Bollywood poster."

Lucas Mondal, a veteran poster artist who now works with Indian Hippy, recently prepared a poster of Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge as the backdrop of a wedding in Goa Though he is elated about the slow resurrection of his profession, custom painting, he says, has its challenges. "We have to sometimes attach a plump face on a lithe body or a fair face on a tanned SRK's neck," he says,

Worse still, some foreign ers try to negotiate, "That makes us feel bad," says Rehman, who lives in a 120square-foot room with his family—an area which a visiting Spanish artist told him was as big as his bathroom. "I don't even have enough resources to hold an exhibition," laments Rehman, who paints Mother India posters from memory. Sadly, though, she has stopped feeding him.

#### Mansi Choksi TNN

very morning, the teenaged twins of the Sheikh family would wake up to the shrieks of foul domestic arguments piercing their ears. They would stare at the leaking ceiling of their tumbledown home in Chandivli's Tunga village, peel themselves off the bed, robot ically slip into their school uniforms, hoist their school bags and lifelessly wave good bye. For more than a month, 14-year-olds Irfan and Imran didn't raise any suspicion when they ambled down the crowded lane with straight faces, furtively avoided the road leading to their school and ended up at Powai Lake to watch the still waters, play and shout till it was time to re-

A few days after a neighbourhood boy squealed on them, a cheery woman armed with brushes, paints and roll-

turn home

ers landed up at their classroom at Shivner Vidya Mandir (English) School, a dilapidated institution nestled in the middle of a slum in Asalpha village in Ghatkopar. The twins were chosen along dents for an unusual task: painting the dull brown walls of the classroom that cruelly swallowed them with every boring lecture.

The woman spoke to the group about its favourite colours and its dreams and promised that the job would be fun. Over five weekends, they laughed and talked as they lost themselves in the vibrant palette. Six brightly painted new classrooms later, there was a sea change in their behaviour. "Irfan and Imran's attendance jumped by more than 80 per cent and their semester totals by over 50 marks after the workshop. What they needed was recognition, a pat on the back and to see the physical manifestation of their hard work," says the school's principal Vinayak Gajanan Dongre.

atmosphere) and gets them in-

volved with colour, whose

therapeutic powers are wide-

ly known in the alternative

healing sphere. Critics may

dismiss colour therapy, but

Dhandia was convinced that

it could change lives, "It's like

a hunch you've always ha-

d-you don't need someone to

prove it scientifically to know

idea, the young woman pains-

takingly worked towards it by

and some were even on the

brink of tipping over to sui-

cide bombing. This was no

comedy club. "I was reluctant

at first," says Chulani. Once

there, he got down and dotty.

to make them laugh, and one

girl shot back, 'I saw my fam-

ily killed in gunfire, and you expect me to laugh?' "Chula-

ni recounts. He made a wager.

"I told her I'd give her \$100 if I

didn't make her laugh." He

then turned on a CD of The

Black Eved Peas and broke

out dancing like the Indian

he is, which is to say, goofily.

He kept his money, and bro-

The camp was a wa-

kered no small change.

"I told the kids I was going

After being seized of the

that it will work," she says.

called Paintbox-This is, in sum, what 27-Dhandhia, the woman with home spaces with bright murals-in 2009. "I set up Paintthe paints and rollers, has box only to fund this project made her full-time job. This graduate from the New York that I've always dreamt of. A University's Stern School of little bit of colour can give Business identifies on-thebrink economically backward students (with behavioral problems, a low attendance rate and a troubled home

Six brightly painted new classrooms later, there was a sea changein Irfan and Imran's attendance. It jumped by more than 80 per cent and their semester totals by over 50 marks

TRUE BLUE These volunteers believe that a little bit of colour can give some students a second life

some students a second chance at education," she says. A year and several transformations of dull offices and rundown cinemas later, Paintbox had gathered

first launching a for-profit enough for Dhandia to morph two schools—the Umedbhai lad's Sundernagar and Shivner Vidya Mandir.

The CA's team of brush-

toting volunteers includes engineers, stockbrokers, fashion designers and college students. Each school kid chosen to paint is mentored by a volunteer with similar interests. 'The volunteers talk to the children about their ambitions and how realistic they are. That's, of course, after they've broken the ice with cricket and Bollywood," Dhandia smiles. The students are responsible for guiding the volunteers with the painting process to impart "a sense of responsibility and team work", and the camaraderie continues in the lunch break where all play landgi and khokho and volunteers explain what they do to the awe-struck

teens-accounting for such additions to their vocabulary as "investment banking", and "chartered accountancy"

Dhandhia insists that the workshop be held during school because she believes the transformation occurs only when there's a buzz in the corridors. "The students need to feel the perceptions of others changing too," she says. And others do change-—like the attitudes of the teachers towards students who often share a wall. Eighth-grader Devendra's attendance, in fact, went from 70 per cent to 90 per cent.

At the end of the painting party, Dhandhia pulls off a awards ceremony where students are felicitated on the basis of discipline, attendance, punctuality and commitment. "The top three kids get their school fees paid for a year, others get school uniforms, stationary kits, schoolbags or painting boxes," she says

Since chromotherapy is the basis of the project, the palette is crucial, as each colour is believed to produce a particular vibe. Yellow is associated with ego, orange with emotions, blue with spiritual communication, green with love and responsibility teachers of Shivner asked me to use colours that would calm the kids. So I used more blues, reens, and yellows," says Dhandhia, adding that designs are also kept simple and age-neutral because the same classroom is shared by differ-

ent grades and mediums. Initially, Dhandhia wasn't sure if her belief would translate into results. Especially when she was confronted 16-year-old Faheem Shaikh, who cussed and hit another student on the first day of the session. She immediately asked him to leave without an explanation but he turned up the next day, wept and apologized. After the session, Faheem's semester total went up from 265 to 302. Put it down to the power of colour—and love.

## Duel in the sun

Some very ancient sports are beginning to get popular among youngsters in the city

Neha Thirani & Rachel Rickard Strauss | TNN

ur epics will tell you that Indians make top archers. "It's in our blood," explains coach Swapnil Parab. Although, with bow and arrow no longer the weap on of choice for pinning down your lunch or fighting baddies, the sport over the decades re-

treated into obscurity. However, in a renaissance of sorts. hoary arts such as archery and fencing are coming back into vogue in a modern avatar. In Mumbai there are now several places where you can show off your prowess with a bow and arrow: like Kandivali, Goregaon and Dadar. It's just the thing the doctor ordered for improving mental and physical agility and building up stamina.

#### **RETRO ACTIVE**

In the Swatantryveer Sa-Dadar. Parab teaches India's 25.000-year-old tradition to students from age eight to 55-indeed, some of his students who began training only a few months ago, are already winning state-level competitions. Says 11-year-old Ishvari Chavan, "I thought it looked like fun so I tried it, and now I train for hours every week." Ishva-ri's father Yashwant, who ioined at the same time, thinks archery is more than just a fun hobby, "Since Ishvari started archery, her grades have gone up. It's excellent for concentration." As Ishvari pulls back her arrow, focusing fiercely on her target with one eye, you can see what he means.

Another ancient tradition being revived is fencing. "Anyone who tries it gets hooked," says Dhananjay Dukhande,



TARGET PRACTICE Archery is helping kids improve mental agility

president of the Mumbai Suburban Fencing Association. "Once dressed in the uniform and mask and holding a sabre, ordinary people look like royalty. No other sport offers that." Sneha Nirmalie, 16, who's been fencing for three vears, says it also has other You learn to make decisions on the spot and be prepared for any situation in self-

defence and in academics." From fencing to war: although the days of sharpening your strategic thinking on the battlefield are over, there are a few places left where one can overcome perilous obstacles. fight enemy camps and practice team strategy. Abhimanyu's Chakravyuh has been reinvented on the paintball field-that urban war zone involving projectile paintballs. Kanak Seth, 25, who'd played the game in America, helped start Headrush at Hiranandani in 2008. Although paintballing is an expensive hobby—an average game for four can set one back by thousands of rupees—the sport is catching on with younger audiences and corporates. "There is now a large enough audience in Mumbai to organise paintballingleagues," says Seth.

something of a basic instinct.

Scaling heights is also

but now you can do it in the comfort of air-conditioning. There are rock-climbing walls in Essel World, Mantralay Gymkhana. School, Hiranandani, Goregaon and the Golds Gym at Pali Naka. "Train smart, not hard," says fitness professional Roma Patel. "Rock-climbing is a great form of functional training—it keeps the body agile and builds lean muscles. Adds Ram Vengurlekar, who has been a volunteer instructor at the 43-foot Arun Samant Climbing Wall in Goregaon for over ten years, "The wall is frequented by mountaineering clubs who trek the Western

their mid-70s but are very fit." Yes, you may not be challenged to a duel by your nemesis, forced to chase your dinner up a mountain or prove your agility on the battleground. But by all accounts these ancient sports are still enjoya-

with soul by combining his

training as a motivational

speaker with his grounding

in comedy. Apart from his

work with children, Chulani

also coaches adults who he

calls 'retired kids'. Some of

them wield guns. "I was invit-

ed to Las Vegas to the Inter-

national Conference for Hos-

tage Negotiations," he says.

"The room was full of these

tough ex-marines, and one of

them challenged me with

'How are you going to help me

"I asked the guy what was

resolve conflict?'

Ghats. Some of them are in

#### Joeanna Rebello Fernandes TNN

nand Chulani is a funnyman who takes his job very seriously. His repertoire extends beyond prurient one-liners, ethnic gags and overdone impersonations. While others use humour for subversion, Chulani uses it for deliverance. It's why he devised a system built of improv, dance, comedy, and role-play, and built on the foundation that laughter can relieve stress, boost self-confidence and strengthen relationships. He calls it the LOL Method. Not Laugh Out

### **JOKES APART**

makes you do anyway.

The Leaders of Laughter (LOL) programme was born of a grave mission. In 2007, Antony Robbins, that Promethean self-help guru (who had a cameo in Shallow Hal), asked his student, Chulani, to assist him on a peace project. They were called to Fiji to engage with Israeli and Palestinian teenagers through comedy. These were embattled youngsters be-

tween 16 and 19 years, who

had seen conflict up close,

Loud, but it's what Chulani

tershed for Chulani. He set out to work primarily with children thereafter. "LOL is not drama school for kids but rather a system of education that harnesses the power of positive reinforcement and fun to empower kids to develop emotional intelligence, boost self-confidence and learn more effectively," says the man who's taken the LOL Method to schools, communities and even hospitals. Chulani is now in India to bring the LOL Method to Indian

schools. He teaches kids to

use laughter, not to hurt or

# Mission LO



JUST KIDDING Anand Chulani harnesses the power of fun to empower kids to develop emotional intelligence ods we use is to get each kid to

hide behind, but to connect. "The method had turned bullies and victims around and enabled them to get along,

How? "One of the meth-

write down what makes him or her geeky. They then read out their list proudly, as if reading their Oscar acceptance speech," he says. Chula-

ni leads the lot, with his own elegy to geekhood. "I am a geek because I once waxed my back for a girl, and continued waxing it even after she broke up with me," he

This funnyman uses laughter to engage with the conflicted, war-afflicted, hostage negotiators and even geeks

reads out. By reveling in what's considered embarrassing and un-cool, Chulani gives it inverted cachet and power—to make people laugh and connect through the currency of confession. He also creates systems to reinforce taught values through workshops and guidelines for parents and teachers. And he coaches kids one-on-one, especially those with low self-confidence, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder or those dealing with emotional challenges like divorce in their family or bullying.

His familiarity youth's terrible turf of selfconsciousness and censure

stems from having compassed it in school. "At Harrow where I schooled (and where Churchill and Nehru schooled before him), I was routinely bullied for being Asian. Even my English teacher derisively told me not to try to speak English. I left school feeling stupid, with nothing to offer," he says. But college at Georgetown University in Washington DC changed that. Here, he studied literature, history, psychology and theatre—the bones that would later build his body of work.

Chulani began his career manning the doors at Saturday Night Live, where he took spot lessons in comedy from Will Ferrell, Robbin Williams and Bill Murray. He went on to perform at comedy clubs toured with Martin Lawrence and Russell Peters ("We're like brothers except he hates Indians"), and even scripted sketches for Goodness Gracious Me and even The Simpsons. "I had to do a Bollywood dance number in The Simpsons' writers' room for 20 Jewish guys, where I played every character, the actor, actress and even the tree," he jokes.

Now he does stand-up

the most stressful thing he'd ever done. 'Shoot a guy' he shot back. He rated it 10 on a 1-10 stress meter. I asked him what the domestic scene was like after a 10-rated workday He laughed and said. 'My wife's a cop. She too has a gun.' Then I've met you just in time," Chulani ribbed The rest of the session gave the negotiators tools for stress relief, taught them

how to shift their state of mental being and how to resolve conflict in difficult situations—on a decided lighter note than most were used to. Because Chulani genuinely believes laughter can save the world.