



A theatre workshop for students to help nurture their creativity

It doesn't matter what age you are. But if our hearts get opened and released — well that is what theatre can do, and does sometimes, and everyone is thankful when that happens," said veteran actress Vanessa Redgrave. Motivated by her words, Samashti International School, Coimbatore, has organised a theatre workshop for children this weekend. This event promises to provide students with a unique opportunity to explore their creative and theatrical inclinations.

The intensive and interactive theatre workshop will introduce children to the basics of theatre with a special focus on voice modulation, diction, body language, emotions and expressions, and physical movements on stage, says Managing Director of Samashti International School, Swetha Manthana. The sessions will aim at being interesting,

involving and informative, with the faculty using various experiential techniques and activities to develop different skills. Each activity is said to be formulated with a blend of both cognitive and practical exercises facilitating natural performances.

The management says that this workshop aims to benefit students in multiple ways:

- Develop communication and other soft skills
- Build confidence and help shed stage fear
- Increase concentration and retention of information
- Nurture creativity
- Encourage teamwork and collaboration
- Develop empathy

The workshop will culminate with the production of plays, where the students will perform for an audience.

I've worked hard to stay fit: Sharath

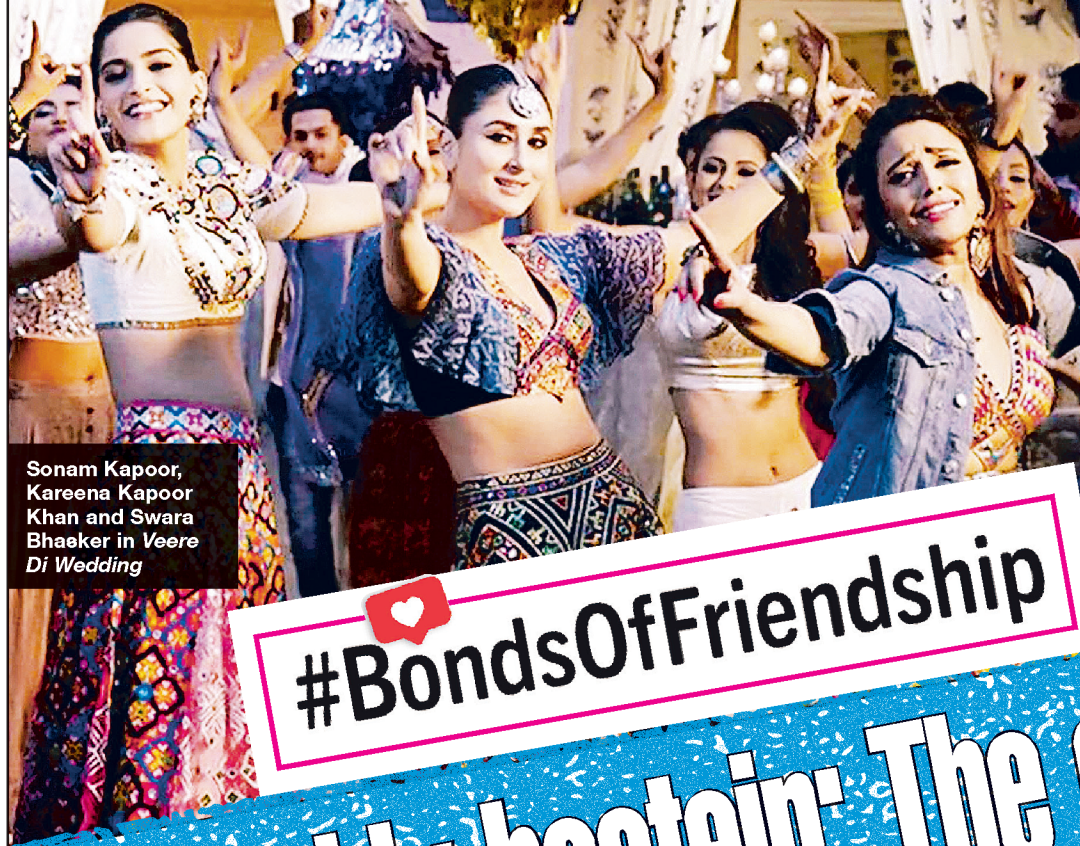
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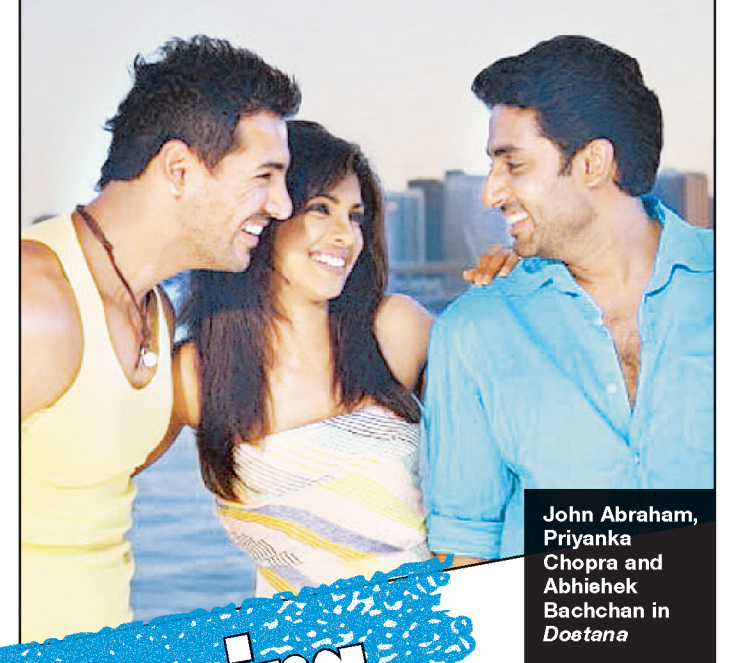
The gold medal in the team event, Sharath says, gives him a lot of confidence. "I hope this will inspire our women's team (they crashed out in the quarter-finals of the team event) as they continue playing other events," he tells us. One compliment that Sharath often receives is that he's ageing like fine wine. Ask the 40-year-old his secret and he says with a laugh, "I've worked really hard to stay fit. Also, understanding my peaking periodisation, and choosing what tournaments to play and how to play have helped me a lot. Credit goes to my fitness coach Ramji Srinivasan and table tennis coach Rajath Kamal as well."



Varun Dhawan and Manicoh Paul in Jugjugg Jeeyo



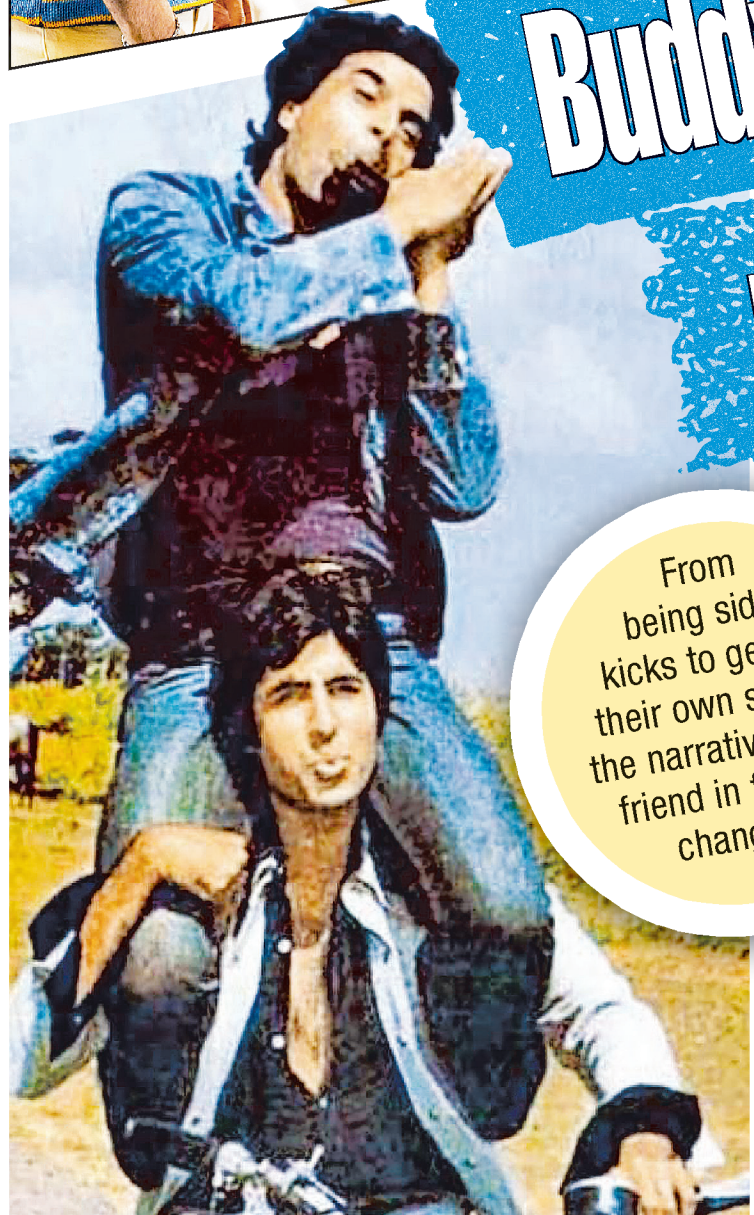
Sonam Kapoor, Kareena Kapoor Khan and Swara Bhaaker in Veere Di Wedding



John Abraham, Priyanka Chopra and Abhishek Bachchan in Dostana

#BondsOfFriendship

Buddy, buddy baatein: The changing portrayal of dosti on the big screen



Dharmendra and Amitabh Bachchan in Sholay



Varun Sharma and Pulkit Samrat in Fukrey

From being side-kicks to getting their own stories, the narrative of the friend in films is changing

Sunayana Suresh

From *Jai-Veeru* to *Munna-Bircuit* and *Rancho-Farhan-Raju*, friendship has always been an essential part of the narrative in Indian cinema. In the past decade, this portrayal of 'the hero's friend' in cinema has undergone a makeover. These friends are not lingering in the plot as comic relief or as the lead's sidekick anymore. They are taking center stage. Ahead of Friendship Day, we speak to filmmakers and actors about the changing trend.

FINDING A REALISTIC CONNECTION

Filmmaker Mrigdeep Singh Lamba of the *Fukrey* franchise says, "We have had some iconic buddy movies in the past as well, with *Sholay* being the biggest example. But lately, people have been looking for more realistic characters. This is how the idea of *Fukrey* came about. We needed to bring real characters to the screen. We've seen that in *Pyaar Ka Punchnama*, *Dil Chahta Hai* and in *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*, too."

Tarun Mansukhani, who directed *Dostana*, explains that Indian films have had friendship as a theme from time immemorial. "Just that, the conversations between friends on screen have evolved from personal stories to gossip, sexuality, politics and economics," he says. Elaborating on how we need to make the audience relate to the screen characters, Tarun adds, "True friendship goes beyond gender, sexuality or background of any sort. Which is what *Dostana* was all about - a friendship that goes beyond the stages of love and sex. And I think it was perceived by the audience that way. The camaraderie of Sam-Kunal-Neha made the audience relate with the bond they shared with their friends in real life."

In *Veere Di Wedding*, the makers showcased a story of female friendship, a rarity in Indian cinema. What worked for the film, featuring Kareena Kapoor Khan, Sonam Kapoor, Swara Bhaaker and Shikha Talsania, was that the characters were real and relatable. Ekta Kapoor who produced the film, in an earlier interview with us, had said, "I don't look at it as a film about four women; it's about friendship. The beauty of *Veere*... is that it doesn't try to show the perfect woman. I want to see four friends sit down and say... why the hell did this happen to me? That is real."

FRIENDS ARE THE NEW FAMILY

Earlier, we would turn to our family and relatives for help in any situation. However, as *Veere Di Wedding* director Shashanka Ghosh rightly puts it, "Things have changed. Now, it's friends that we fall back on. Friends are the new family and that reflects in today's cinema." Maniesh Paul, whose character of the best friend in *Jugjugg Jeeyo* was well received, says, "In *Jugjugg Jeeyo*, technically I was Varun Dhawan's friend, but people saw me more as his brother. At times, there are things that you can share with your friends, and not your family." In filmmaker Yogaraj Bhat's Kannada films, friends play a pivotal role, especially in his *Caalipata* franchise. "No amount of material wealth can match what friends bring to the table. At times, they are a bigger part of our lives than our family members. It is also why friendships have grown to be an increasingly important part of narratives in films today and people want that personal connection," he explains.

Actor Varun Sharma, who plays one of the characters

in the *Fukrey* franchise, adds, "I think the equation we have shown in the film is similar to the friendship we all have off screen with each other. That also goes a long way in displaying our onscreen camaraderie effectively. We're all equal characters in the *Fukrey* universe and Mrigdeep sir has maintained that aspect throughout."

'IT'S IMPORTANT HOW SUCH CHARACTERS ARE WRITTEN'

Dostana depicted bromance between Abhishek Bachchan and John Abraham. For Tarun, there is no Sam without Kunal in the film. "I had written both the characters as a combined singular character - and be it in the film or on set, they just became that singular entity," he shares. Sikandar Kher, who has been a part of ensembles in films and web series, opines, "At the end of the day, it is the writing that matters and there are people writing more such characters. Every character

WE SHARE A SIMILAR BOND OFF SCREEN AS ON SCREEN IN FUKREY. ALL OF US ARE VERY CLOSE AND WE UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER'S TIMING WELL, WHICH GOES A LONG WAY IN DISPLAYING THAT CAMARADERIE ON SCREEN EFFECTIVELY
- Varun Sharma, actor

should be well etched-out and, if that is the case, even if it is a friend who comes on screen for two minutes, he or she should leave an impact."

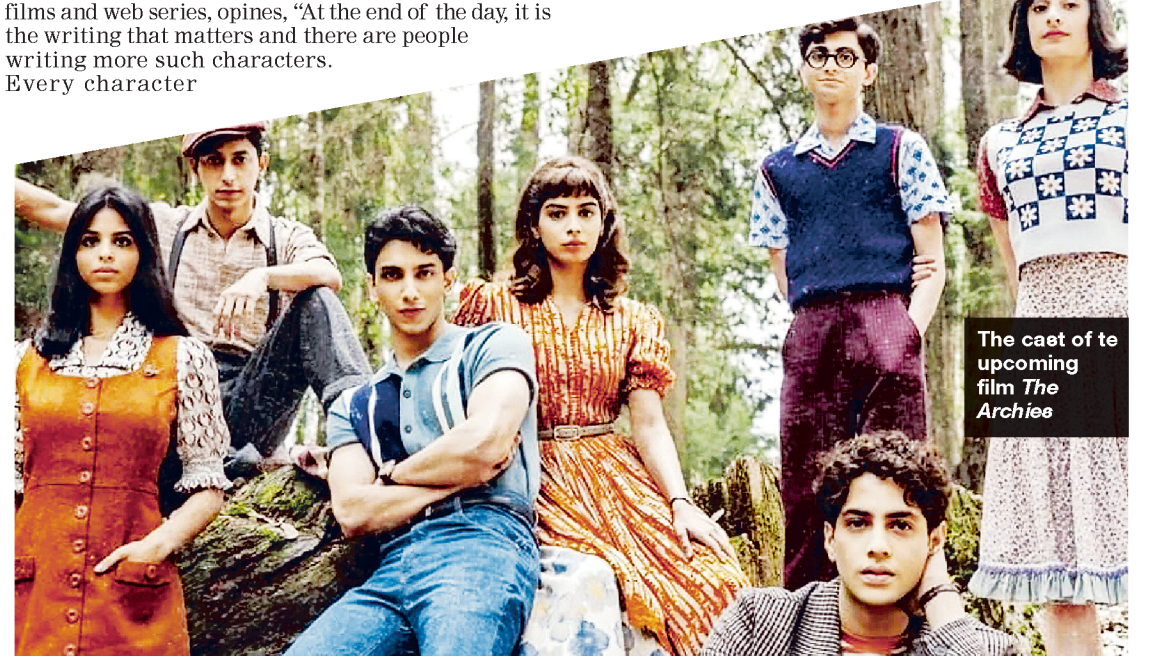
Actor Swapnil Joshi has been a part of many films revolving around friendship. Citing the example of his Marathi film *Duniyadari*, Swapnil seconds Sikander's thoughts and says, "The characters in the film, Shreyas (played by me) and Digya (played by Ankush Chaudhari) were very real. While some found Digya relatable, some identified with Shreyas. Even though they had contrasting personalities, both of them were shown as two strong individuals. Of late, the portrayal of onscreen buddies is being given a good thought by the writers and directors."

— Inputs by Rachna Dubey, Onkar Kulkarni, Renuka Vyavahare and Preeti Atulkar



GROWING UP, WE TURNED TO FAMILY FOR HELP IN ANY SITUATION. NOW IT'S FRIENDS THAT WE FALL BACK ON. FRIENDS ARE THE NEW FAMILY AND THAT IS REFLECTED IN TODAY'S CINEMA
— Shashanka Ghosh, director

IN *DOSTANA*, SAM (ABHISHEK BACHCHAN) AND KUNAL (JOHN ABRAHAM) WERE WRITTEN WITH THE IDEA OF BOTH CHARACTERS BEING A COMBINED CHARACTER. BE IT IN THE FILM OR ON SET, THEY JUST BECAME THAT SINGULAR ENTITY. THERE IS NO SAM WITHOUT KUNAL
— Tarun Mansukhani, director



The cast of the upcoming film The Archies