

All news is not Bollywood!



Last month (May 2007) Bollywood starlet Shilpa Shetty was on our cover. She had addressed a media conference in Melbourne (promoting her new movie 'Metro') and hence the opportunity to grab whatever possible remained a goal.

A story on her, on the movie and a photo feature formed part of South Asia Times (SAT). This was an exception rather than a rule. Our entertainment section has a lot on Indian cinema and Bollywood forms part of it.

Compared to this most of our issues concentrate on community events and news analysis from the Indian subcontinent.

With limited resources, we try to bring you community happenings and subcontinent reports/analysis. Readers must have noted that our news items

are sourced. This means that if a story is from the BBC or IPA, it finds mention at the end of the story. If it is written by someone, his or her name is mentioned in the beginning or end. There is no cut and paste.

We also do not believe that only Bollywood stories constitute news or you do not like reading on other subjects.

There is a tendency among many others to project Bollywood as the main news to attract more readers. As if people are, dumb and do not see beyond the silver screen.

Let us take the example of the much-hyped marriage of Aish and Abhishiekh (our best wishes to them). All sorts of photos (taken by a neighbor) of the marriage hit the internet and were splashed all over the media.

Nothing wrong because after all the couple came from the first

family of Bollywood. Once the marriage was over the focus shifted to their honeymoon. Then what happened during the honeymoon and thereafter a happy couple watching the French Open along with father-in-law Amitabh Bachchan. The hype went on and god knows what story will come next.

What I am trying to say is that there is a limit to publicizing. I am sure thousands of other marriages and honeymoons took place during the period.

Will we ever know how an ordinary man's daughter gets married? How the poor in the Indian subcontinent celebrate their marriages? How black money (unaccounted) money is used in marriages?

How people pay hefty dowries (money coming from life long savings) to marry off their daughters? The less said the better.

The issue is that the free papers, which we read, ignore

social issues rocking the community. Yes, 'rocking' the community.

These also constitute news just like the Ash-Abhishiekh marriage, a fashion show or the coming of Shilpa Shetty. Are you aware that amidst you are people who hit their spouses?

Domestic violence? There are people who misbehave with seniors. Well, privacy laws stop the media from naming/exposing people who do such misdeeds. We have thousands of students from the subcontinent who are suffering in an alien land.

However, little is written about them. We at times tried and it helped. However, much more needs to be done.

Then there is a notion that all free papers are the same. This notion suits the 'cut-paste' types (no source) for whom a female's figure and some Bollywood stuff is essential.

Forget the stories flowing from the vibrant society (in the subcontinent) with all its positives and negatives.

God forbid, if you do a 'negative' story (exposing a social evil or a contemporary issue like bonded labour or a human rights violation) you will be branded anti-Indian or anti-Pakistani.

At the South Asia Times, anything can constitute news. Not just Bollywood. Bollywood constitutes news but so do others!

Your issues, social issues, community reports, human rights violations, issues of social justice and much more will constitute news in our paper.

As we are almost finishing four years, we will try our best to give you news, which reflects every aspect of society.

-Neeraj Nanda



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