



Renée Kathleen Zellweger, 51, is an American actress. She is the recipient of two Academy Awards, two BAFTA Awards, four Golden Globe Awards and four Screen Actors Guild Awards. She was one of the world's highest-paid actresses by 2007.

NIKITA SHARMA

It all started when they met at a coaching class to prepare for Bachelor of Architecture entrance exams after completing their schooling in 1996. "None of us had to actually propose to each other. We just understood that we mutually wished to be with each other," recalls Rakhee Bedi Kumar, 40, about meeting her husband Shobhit, 42.

However, they secured a seat in different institutions – Rakhee joined Sushant School of Art and Architecture and Shobhit went to Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Gujarat, in 1997. A long-distance relationship ensued for six years, both adamant not to let the distance keep them apart. "We exchanged handwritten letters, up to 12 pages long, every week, describing our days in our respective colleges and how our lives were treating us," shares Rakhee.

Later, Shobhit got a job with Saka Architects in Gurugram, and Rakhee started working with Jyoti Rath Associates. Once, secure in their jobs, they told their families about the relationship. "We were very fortunate regarding our parents' reactions. They were amused because they already knew we were good friends," says Shobhit. He remembers how Rakhee's father had allowed him to take her on a date only after they got engaged. "Also, she was supposed to come back home by 9:30pm and he would not let us leave until 8:30pm. So we barely got any time together. We find it very funny and it still makes us laugh," shares Shobhit.

In 2002, they got their first project together, designing the interiors of a small villa for a client placed abroad. In 2003, they became life partners and then Founding Principals of RSDA. Well aware of the fact that working together comes with its own share of responsibilities, they have divided the work.

Rakhee handles matters pertaining to logistics, purchase and estimations, while Shobhit takes care of design and detailing of the projects. "We also divide projects at times to allow free flow of work. However, after every work call or meeting, we always discuss and collate our ideas to make the best decision," says Rakhee.

Disagreements are welcome

Ego can ruin a good relationship, be it work or personal. "But with our sense of humour and logic we make sure there is never a sour situation like that," adds Shobhit. While Shobhit is the disciplined one and the go-getter, Rakhee tends to get sceptical at times. But, that's how, they say, the two balance each other.

However, working together is not a cake walk. "It is challenging, since we tend to bring our work stress home. But we strictly follow our ground rules that forbid us from making things personal at work, and always solve every prob-

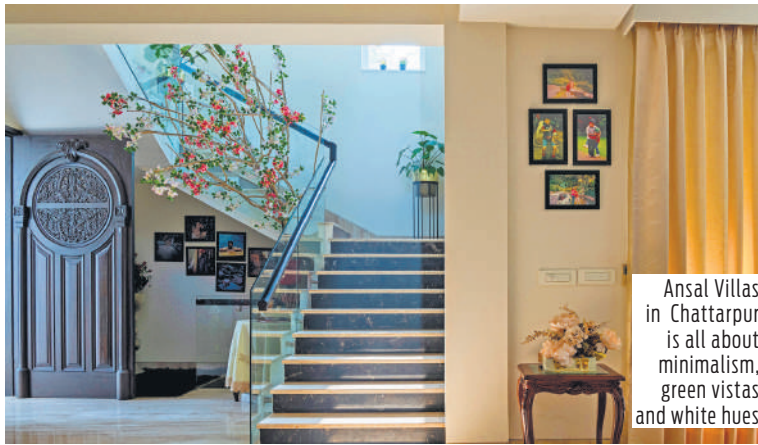


Two's Company

Rakhee Bedi Kumar and Shobhit Kumar

BRICK BY BRICK

Founders of RSDA design firm on managing work and a life together



Ansul Villas in Chattarpur is all about minimalism, green vistas and white hues



The Belaire, Gurgaon, aims for a clutter-free lifestyle

RAPID FIRE

● **What he likes about her:** Her passion in everything she does. Her attitude and vigour to achieve her goals.

● **What he dislikes about her:** Procrastination.

● **Something weird/funny about her:** Because of her sense of humour, she often ends up putting herself in situations at work! This is both troublesome and funny.

● **What she likes about him:** His honesty and sincerity to everything he does, whether its work, art, or friendship.

● **What she dislikes about him:** His tendency to overlook things at times.

● **Something weird/funny about him:** He has a good sense of humour, and he often plays pranks on me.

lem before retiring for the day. When rules are set and both parties are vocal, partnerships are truly enjoyable," adds Shobhit. Rakhee feels when two strong-headed personalities work together, disagreements are bound to happen. "But we consider disagreements as a positive factor that is beneficial for every project, as it helps us to view the situation from a fresh perspective," she says.

Their golden rule is: never go to bed without resolving a fight. Both make sure to have breakfast with their sons and enjoy their coffee in the evening and dinner together. "We love traveling together, I always enjoy her company when I visit my small farm near Sohna," he shares.

At the start of the raging pandemic, both took out some time for self-growth by attending TED talks and seminars virtually. "And now

that the cases have begun to rise again, things are uncertain, but we cannot stop work on projects that are already under construction. We need to take drastic measures to curb the spreading of the virus on-site, but as always, we will manage to devise a system that works for all of us."

Their last project together was the Camellias, a residential building in DLF Golf Course. "We had to complete it in a record time of 1-1.5

months because we started it before the pandemic and had to make sure that we got the NOC. The constraint was challenging, yet thrilling," adds Rakhee.

Another project, Plumeria House in Dera Mandi is under progress. "We have been contacted by someone overseas for some interiors work. We also have some institutional designs in the pipeline that we hope to execute soon," concludes Shobhit.

national corporations engage with my programmes every year. The key scale-up opportunity is to extend the content, offer personalisation, build a trainer ecosystem and digitise the business end to end.

What are some of the irrevocable changes you see in Learning & Development as a result of the pandemic?

The learning and development mandate has gone through a massive overhaul. For companies to navigate through uncertain times, they have to build a culture of learning which should address the top three concerns – upskilling/reskilling employees to drive revenues; addressing post-pandemic morale and mental agility and maintaining productivity. Companies are desperate to train people at light speed and make them equipped with a post pandemic work situation. The marketplace of digital learning tools has stepped up, and L&D is the key tool for organisations across the globe.

With the huge surge in online learning, how is Genius Inside going to go forward in the future?

We understand the gap between training offered and the impact on the participants – why regular style training doesn't work. Also, the platform is capable of physical, digital or phy-gital as required, making it flexible for our clients. We can help unlock ones true potential while giving them full control over how they learn and in how much time. Talking about the current scenario, we have already kick-started the hiring process as per the strategy and are in the advanced discussion stage with clients and prospects for long term partnerships.

InFocus

'My relationship with history is romantic'

EXPRESS FEATURES

PROFESSOR of History at Jamia Millia Islamia, Farhat Nasreen has published a new book *The Great Mughals* (publisher: Rupa). The book encompasses the stalwarts of Mughal Empire from Babur to Bahadur Shah Zafar. It charts the origin, rise, success and downfall of an empire that ruled India for three centuries. One will find myths and mysteries of the Mughal times, including narratives about its courts and harems, bazaars and battlefields, blood and gore, and the gloss and glamour of the Empire. Nasreen previously penned *Kashful Baghaavat Gorakhpur* – a rare eyewitness account of the Revolt of 1857 – along with several monographs and articles on historical themes, including the much acclaimed, *If History Has Taught Us Anything*.

Please introduce us to *The Great Mughals*.

The Great Mughals is a term used to describe the most powerful of the Mughal emperors; Babur, Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb. Their empire played the double role of being a modern version of an ancient state and an ancient version of the modern one. Like players of the Rubik's cube, they twisted and turned their policies to create the Mughal brand. Raw power supported their sovereignty but only just. They made a great play of spirituality to unify people of their multi-religious empire. Eventually, the Mughal brand grew to command an almost unbelievable brand loyalty even as late as 1857.

Could you reflect on the research you undertook for this book?

My relationship with history is romantic, which made the research easy. I read most of the primary and secondary sources relevant to the Mughals. Grasping of the significance of sub themes like economic and social history, etc., is critical because many pieces complete the jigsaw. To situate the Mughal Empire as a microcosm of the medieval times, reading non-Mughal histories was equally vital. My father; a judge by profession and my teachers

taught me to hold on to facts and then approach history from various angles. It is only then that one can see a new fantastic point of view.

What are the certain paradigms of history writing that an author should consider before bringing out a title?

A historian must be watchful of the statics and dynamics of the past and present. Characters of the past were implicated in the power relations of their own times.

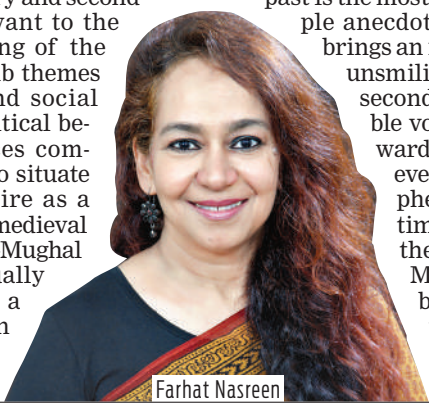
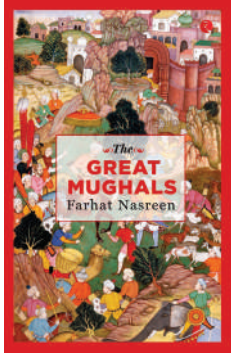
Therefore, using current standards to judge, criticise or mythicise them could be unfair. Likewise, deconstructing time frames and labelling them as good or bad can be tricky. With the passage of time it becomes difficult to retrieve the past, luckily the historians are trained to recover it. They must spend the treasures of memory-facts and interpretations in such a way that they can buy peace and humanism.

How has history shaped your life?

More than anything else, history has taught me to be humble. It has shown that the countless riches of the rich perished, blood of celebrated bloodlines spilled uncounted, blinding dazzle of glory faded away and so on. It has taught me to value what I have now, because I may not have it forever. History extracts the truth and presents it before decision makers – individuals who decide for themselves and leaders who often decide for many. It maintains a logbook of choices made and prices paid. It reminds us that nothing is free.

Are you working on any new book?

Yes, I do hope to present more writings on history. Besides, there is the idea of 'Omnipresent Past' which argues that past is the most everlasting thing. A simple anecdote from one's childhood brings an instant smile on the most unsmiling of faces. Each passing second adds to its immeasurable volume. Present speeds towards the future, but both are eventually overtaken by the phenomenon of passage of time and get converted into the past. I feel each of the Mughal rulers deserves a book that contextualises their lives in the present-day scenario.



Farhat Nasreen

SHANTANU DAVID

GENIUS Inside, an AI-powered digital platform of transformation (L&D Edu-tech), started by Priya Kumar, Tarun Katial and Puneet Johar, who have spent decades in corporate training and management. The motive behind the soon-to-launch platform is to provide a personalised and defined learning journey with tangible results in transformational leadership development leading to more value/wealth creation for employees and corporate organisations.

Kumar has been training business leaders for over 25 years now, and Genius Inside is a scaled-up model of her existing services. By leveraging advancements in AI intervention and Machine Learning for the recommendation engine, combined with phy-gital mentoring, Genius Inside hopes to help users benefit from continued learning and personalised transformation, on-demand. Excerpts from an interview with Kumar:

Could you take us through the journey of Genius Inside, from conception to execution?

I have been in the corporate training industry for 26 years now, helping people overcoming their limitations and self-imposed barriers toward their success. If one chooses to get honest with themselves, they will realize that they are the only real obstacle toward their goals. That is the core of what I do. Tarun Katial, Ex CEO of Zee5 and now co-founder of Genius Inside, and I had been speaking about scaling up the reach of my work and purpose through the digital platform, leading to the conception of Genius Inside. In fact, through digitalization I am able to create a far greater and tangible

Log in to your inner genius

Trending



Priya Kumar

impact by personalising the journey to every individual and bringing to them timely support through coaches. Especially now, the attempt to bring order and direction in one's life has never been so urgent. And yet, the solutions remain elusive or hard to implement. We plan to address four primary segments – Post Graduate students on the verge of their corporate journey, management trainees, middle management and the C level Suite.

What are some of the key areas/industries you focus on?

The two main product offerings are:
● **a. Genius inside for Business** Self-Help today is a 40 billion dollar industry projected to grow to 80 billion dollars by 2025. And yet, look at the state of the world. There has never been such large-scale chaos ever. Today, CHROs are

faced with an acute shortage of skills which will only intensify the talent war in the next couple of years. The traditional hiring metrics might need to be re-evaluated as the learning mandate for the corporates undergoes massive change induced by the pandemic. The Genius Inside program helps corporate professionals to overcome their barriers, inhibitions, and shackles of resistance, so they can unleash their potential.

b. Genius inside for Students

The youth believe anything is possible. But once out of the safe environment of their homes and colleges and universities, that's when reality hits and they are not prepared for it. The rate of unemployment of fresh graduates in India is 60 per cent. Educational qualification being a constant – recruiters are looking for dynamic personalities, problem-solving abilities, leadership traits, self-confidence, self-assured mindset, ability to work with and get along with others, decision making, exceptional communication skills, creativity, innovation and so much more. That is the deciding factor whether the doors to your dreams will open or shut on you even before you start your life.

Could you please elaborate on how your Priya Kumar Training Systems (PKTS) works?

It is a premier leadership training institute. My flagship programmes, 'Personal Breakthrough', 'Ignite The Fire Within/ the Fire Walk', and 'Dream Dare Deliver' have been attended by over 300,000 participants across 47 countries. More than 100 multi-

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