

#WHAT WOMEN DON'T WANT?

Being Irrelevant, Lost And Unfound

Mira, Ma and Ashu are a close-knit family, having fun together. But beneath their apparent proximity and fun lurks another story



Abha Sharma

In India today, there are more divorces than ever but when it happens, the consequences are not the same for men and women. While divorce means a loss of space and identity to a woman, uncoupled man, however, continues to occupy the same space in society. Even women who choose to stay single face similar challenges as society quietly alienates them.

Three women novelists explored such aspects of modern life in their books. In her novel Hot Water, Bhavika Govil shared about the quiet disquiet of domestic life, where a mother and her children negotiate love, absence, and the weight of unspoken expectations in their world and within the world, she said.

Bhavika Govil shared about the quiet disquiet of domestic life, where a mother and her children negotiate love, absence, and the weight of unspoken expectations in their world and within the world, she said.

She said the story is about three members Mira, Ma and Ashu who are a close-knit family, having fun together. But beneath their apparent proximity and fun, lurks another story-that of a family in hot water. All three have their own secrets and all of them confront questions that have no clear answers.

Bhavika has tried to portray family life that is both heartening and heart breaking. Her novel tries to trace the ways in which love, family members feel for each other, can both make and wreck them.

The three women novelists, who have depicted their women protagonists struggling to prove their relevance in a society obsessed with ambition, right and wrong in their novels, emphatically talked about a key theme-What Women actually don't want?

"A woman in our country is given a script right from her childhood and she grows up happily embracing the label of goodness or expectations," said Shunali. It is not through half her age, that she works hard to establish herself by setting up a PR agency."

She tends to renege an aging film star terrified of irrelevance, a politician in urgent need of image rescue and a socialite trying to reinvent herself. While doing their image makeover, she continues to grapple with her own inner conflict as to what really matters in a world obsessed with appearances.

The Wrong Way Home gives voice to Nayanantara's desperation post divorce and her restlessness to prove she is still relevant, she added. Amrita Mahale talked about her novel Real Life, which is a Himalayan mystery where the disappearance of a young woman exposes also desires, the realities of AI and surveillance, and the constant battle between self and society.

In the remote Mahamaya Valley in the Himalayas, wildlife biologist Tara has vanished. Hunting for answers, Tara's best friend Mansi sets out to retrace her whereabouts in the days before her disappearance. Rendered in exquisite prose, Real Life is a gripping mystery that transforms into a masterful exploration of love and loss, visibility and erasure, AI and surveillance and the never-ending tussle between individual desires and societal demands.

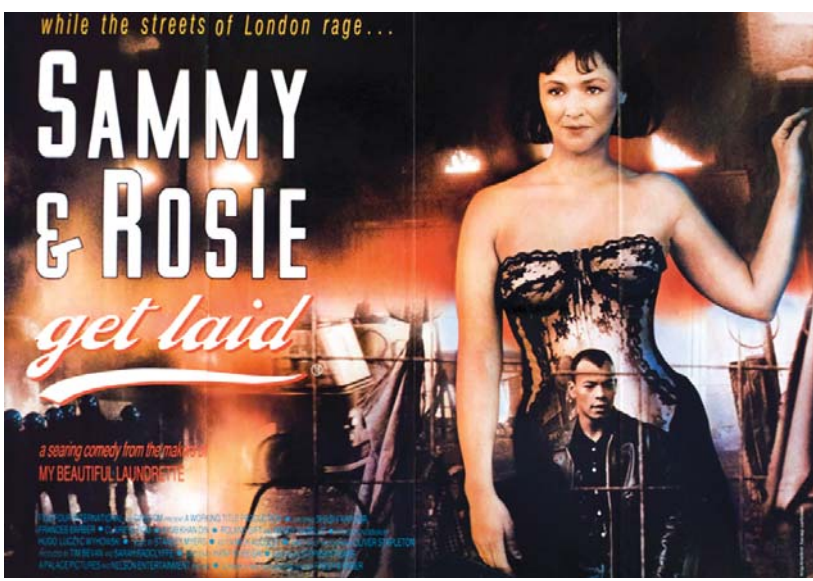
Asif Ullah Khan

met the British writer Hanif Kureishi quite by chance on the way to the Jaipur Literature Festival entrance at Diggi Palace. I recognized him immediately and stopped him for a photograph, then struck up a brief conversation.

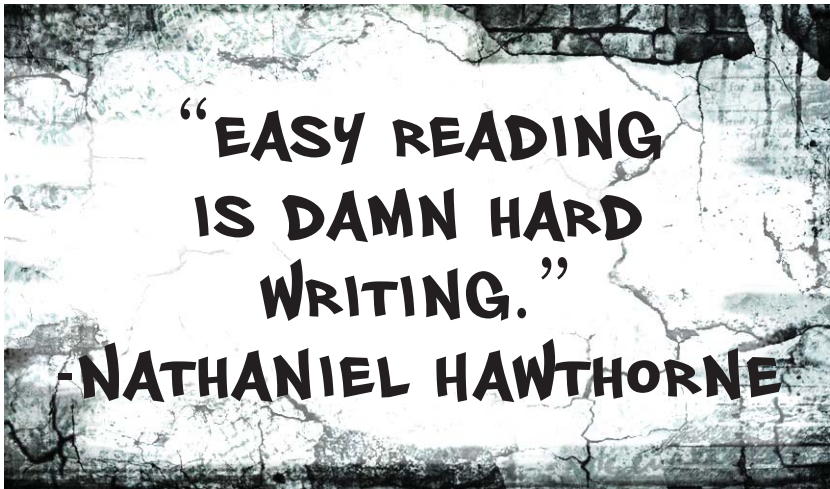
When I asked when he was speaking, he told me he was appearing in a session with V. S. Naipaul. I reacted instinctively and unguardedly, muttering, "That fossil," with some disdain-reflecting my own discomfort with Naipaul's later political positions in India and his perceived proximity to Hindu nationalist narratives in the aftermath of the Babri Masjid demolition. Hanif said nothing. He simply walked on.

Only later did I learn that Hanif was, in fact, in awe of Naipaul, and had even written a book-length study of him, The Last Word. The moment stayed with me not because of my own remark-which I would phrase differently today-but because it revealed something about Hanif: his ability to hold admiration and disagreement in tension, and his refusal to perform outrage for effect. Silence, in that instance, was a form of discretion.

I was never particularly interested in attending his session. What drew me to Hanif was not the festival spectacle but the personal history that ran through his work. His accounts of growing up as a mixed-race Asian child in Britain during the peak of everyday racism had long fascinated me. Hanif has spoken openly about how a teacher once told him, without irony, "You Paki bastard, you write so well."



THE WALL



Praise and abuse arrived in the same sentence, inseparable. Writing, especially the kind Hanif pursued, seemed neither safe nor respectable. That tension-between parental expectation and individual desire-would become one of the defining currents of his work. What made me follow Hanif closely, however, was 'My Beautiful Laundrette', the first film he wrote, set against the backdrop of Thatcher-era Britain. The film was groundbreaking in its portrayal of British Pakistani families navigating racism, ambition, and money in 1980s London. It refused easy moral positions, showing immigrants not as passive victims but as complex, sometimes compromised actors within a brutal economic system.

What truly shocked audiences-and particularly the British-Pakistani community-was the film's central gay relationship between a British Pakistani boy and a white former skinhead. At a time when homosexuality itself was still taboo in many communities, the idea of an interracial gay romance involving a Pakistani protagonist was explosive. For many within the community, the film was seen not as representation but as betrayal.

Hanif did not retreat. He never has. That refusal to flatter any audience-white, brown, liberal, or conservative-has been the most consistent feature of his career. He wrote from the fault lines, not the comfort zones.

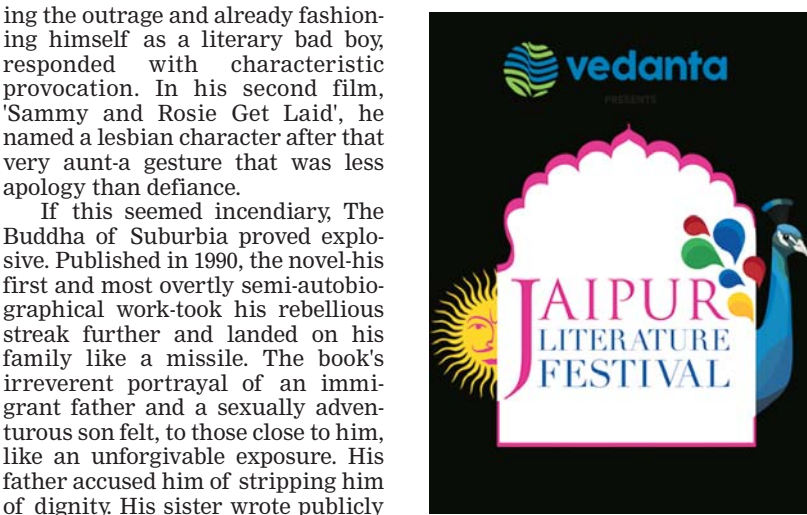
The backlash was not confined to public debate. It entered Hanif's own family with remarkable ferocity. One aunt was so furious at 'My Beautiful Laundrette' that she wrote to his father, accusing him of having raised a son who had brought shame upon the family name. Hanif, relishing the outrage and already fashioning himself as a literary bad boy, responded with characteristic provocation. In his second film, 'Sammy and Rosie Get Laid', he named a lesbian character after that very aunt-a gesture that was less apology than defiance.

If this seemed incendiary, The Buddha of Suburbia proved explosive. Published in 1990, the novel's first and most overtly semi-autobiographical work-took his rebellious streak further and landed on his family like a missile. The book's irreverent portrayal of an immigrant father and a sexually adventurous son felt, to those close to him, like an unforgivable exposure. His father accused him of stripping him of dignity. His sister wrote publicly in The Guardian, suggesting that Hanif was pursuing fame at the expense of family loyalty.

After that, there was no looking back. Hanif did not retreat, revise, or reconcile his work to familial approval. He moved forward, faster and more assuredly, into a career defined by confrontation rather than conciliation. By the early 1990s, he had emerged-perhaps second only to Salman Rushdie-as one of the most significant British writers of Asian origin, a figure who had irrevocably altered the landscape of British literature and cinema by insisting that immigrant lives could be messy, erotic, contradictory, and politically unsettling.

But that rebellious momentum was abruptly broken (literally) by tragedy on December 26, 2002. While on holiday in Italy that day, Hanif collapsed suddenly while walking, falling heavily and grotesquely twisting his neck. He lay in a pool of blood until three anonymous police

#HANIF KUREISHI

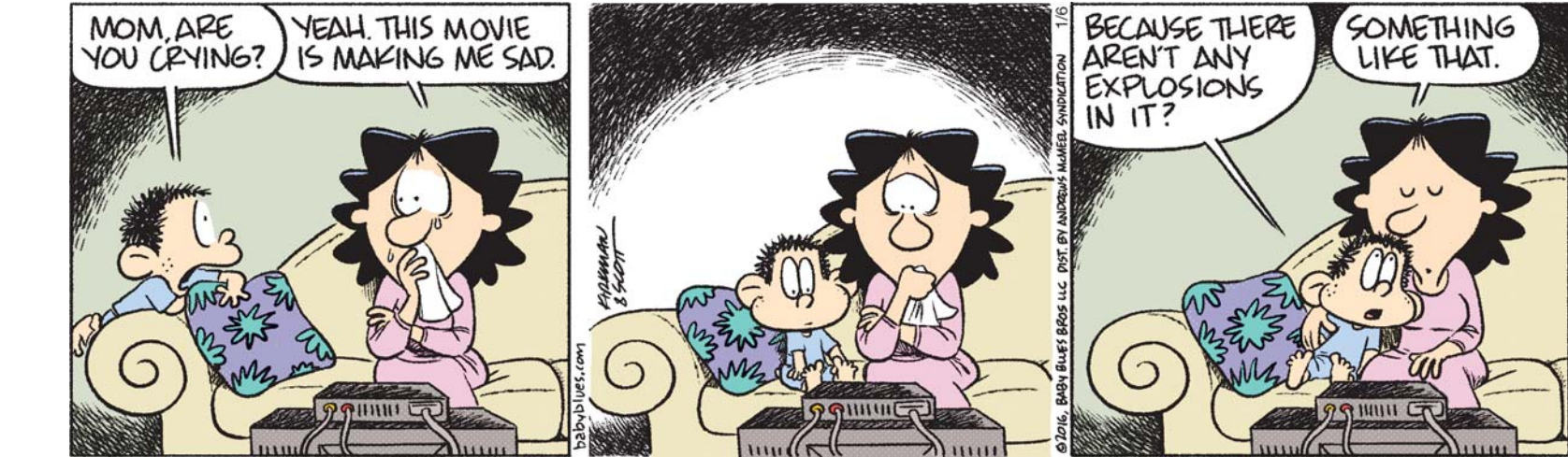


men came to his aid and rushed him to hospital. The spinal injuries were catastrophic. When he regained consciousness, he found himself tetraplegic-paralyzed in all four limbs, unable to walk, write, or feed himself.

In his first international broadcast interview after the accident, speaking to the BBC World Service's Newshour, Hanif described the moment he believed he was dying. "I saw Death; Death was chattering to me," he said. He asked to video-call his children to say goodbye. It was his partner, Isabella D'Amico, who persuaded him not to remain present, to imagine life continuing in some altered form.

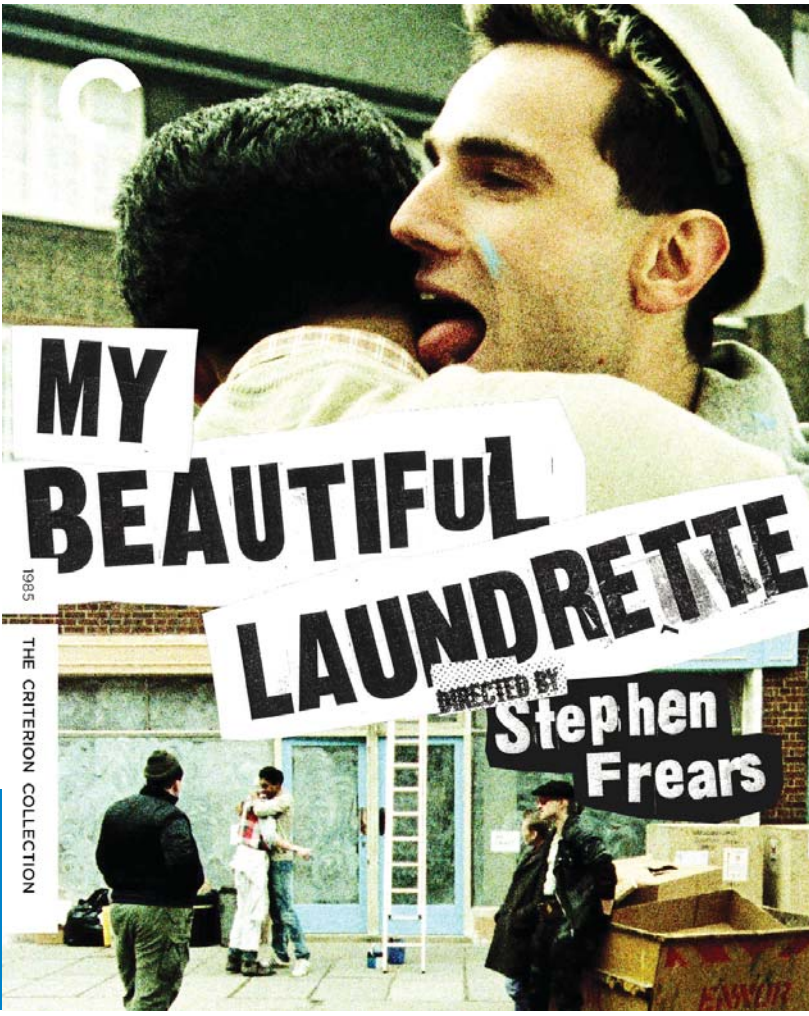
Today Hanif finds himself in the condition of sculptor Ken Harrison (played by Richard Dreyfuss) in 'Whose Life Is It Anyway', as he can no longer hold the pen in his fingers, walk or feed himself. He says he was struggling to come to terms with the fact "I

BABY BLUES



National Winnie the Pooh Day

ational Winnie the Pooh Day, celebrated on January 18, honours the beloved fictional bear created by A.A. Milne. This day marks both the birthday of Milne and his charming creation, bringing joy to fans of all ages. Winnie the Pooh, with his love for honey and gentle wisdom, has become a timeless symbol of friendship, kindness, and simple pleasures. On this day, fans celebrate by reading stories, watching adaptations, or sharing Pooh-themed activities with children. It's a reminder to cherish imagination, laughter, and the heartwarming lessons that this iconic bear continues to inspire across generations.



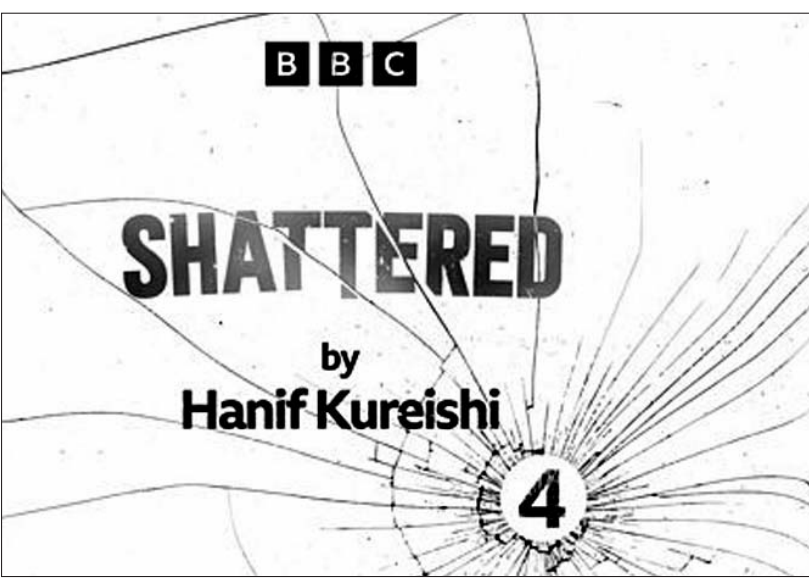
tence by sentence-are not simply creative acts but economic necessities. In one of these pieces, Hanif reflects on his father, who named him after the legendary Pakistani cricketer Hanif Mohammad, hoping his son might one day become the first Pakistani to play for England. Terrified of the cricket ball, Hanif disappointed those dreams early. "I hate cricket now," he writes, "and can barely stand to watch it." The irony extends into the next generation: one of his sons is named Sachin-whether after Sachin Tendulkar or as a private joke remains unclear.

These reflections echo long-standing themes in Hanif's work: fathers and sons, inheritance and rebellion, expectation and refusal. He has often described growing up in what he calls an "almost Dickensian" emotional climate, where children were rarely praised and affection was withheld.

Now, in an unexpected reversal, encouragement arrives daily. Readers write to tell him how much his writing means to them and how his refusal to sanitize suffering offers comfort. "I am grateful for the encouragement," he admits. "I need the appreciation, and it certainly cheers me up."

There is something quietly devastating in that admission. The writer who once dissected masculinity, power, and success with ruthless clarity now openly acknowledges his need for affirmation.

Across decades-through 'My Beautiful Laundrette', The Buddha of Suburbia', his essays, novels, and screenplays-Hanif has written from the margins, interrogating who belongs, who speaks, and who is allowed comfort. Today, he inhabits a new margin: that of the



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



#WHAT IS FREE SPEECH?

Important And Regularly Lying!!!

...So, the overarching idea was that freedom of speech is good, liberty of speech is good but licentiousness of the press, which means 'bad, abusive liberty,' is bad



n 2016, Donald Trump, US presidential candidate then, during one of the primaries debate in South Carolina, had called the Iraq War a "big fat mistake" and had bluntly accused George W. Bush of lying about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction to fool Americans into supporting the war in Iraq. "Obviously the war in Iraq was a big, fat mistake, all right?" Trump had thundered. He added "George Bush made the mistake. We can make mistakes, but that one was a beauty."

This incident was recalled by Oscar Guardiola-Rivera, author of the critically acclaimed, "What if Latin America Ruled the World", and teacher of International Law and International Affairs at Birkbeck College, University of London, during a conversation with Fara Dabhoiwala, author of 'What is Free Speech? The History of a Dangerous Idea' and a historian at Princeton at an engaging session on the third day of the Jaipur Literature Festival.

Oscar touched upon the Jan 3 presser of Trump where he announced the capture of Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro. And emphasised that politicians regularly lie as Trump did on Jan 3 and "knowing fully well that they are lying and they no longer care." Oscar was intrigued as to how we came to this situation.

Civilians doubt free speech

The authors noted that most civilisations considered free speech as a dangerous idea. Dabhoiwala said there are many older, classical, ancient ideas about free speeches for religious purposes, for scholars, for artists but the modern idea on free speech is taken for granted- that citizens have a right to speak out on matters of public affairs.

The authors noted that most civilisations considered free speech as a dangerous idea. Dabhoiwala said there are many older, classical, ancient ideas about free speeches for religious purposes, for scholars, for artists but the modern idea on free speech is taken for granted- that citizens have a right to speak out on matters of public affairs.

Civilians doubt free speech

The authors noted that most civilisations considered free speech as a dangerous idea. Dabhoiwala said there are many older, classical, ancient ideas about free speeches for religious purposes, for scholars, for artists but the modern idea on free speech is taken for granted- that citizens have a right to speak out on matters of public affairs.



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman