



And to get it for you, the perceptive observer reaps.  
**Varada Kachroo & Mariam Fatma, AIS VKC Lko, IX B**  
 Page Editors



# NO MORE SCARRED

## Sheroes Café – Where Acid Attack Survivors Get A Whole New Lease Of Life

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**Trigger Warning:** Violence  
 \*splash\*

As seconds passed, agonised screams of a woman engulfed the streets as she struggled to pacify the blazing fire on her face. She scratched, scraped, and screeched as hard as she could, but the end to her suffering was nowhere in sight. A few months later, she found herself in the emergency ward, with her aggrieved parents by her side. “Our life’s over,” they said. Baffled, she questioned “Why?” till she saw, with what was left of her eyesight, her disfigured face in the mirror nearby. It wasn’t her face; it wasn’t the body she remembered, yet it was her life that ended! But did it really? Alok Dixit, co-founder of the Sheroes Hangout Café, says no! For “there is nothing stronger than a broken woman who rebuilds herself,” he tacked on.

### The idea

Nestled amongst a row of busy shopfronts in Lucknow is a café named Sheroes, housed and run by women who have survived acid attacks and are now on a course to redefine their lives. “Many women survivors led solitary lives prior to working at the café. They were ostracised and left to struggle with feelings of shame and trauma. Hence, it became necessary to wipe out those scars from their subconsciousness. Sheroes does exactly that by aiding them at the earliest,



**GROUND REPORTING**

The beautiful bravehearts of Sheroes

and by treating them as fighters rather than victims,” asserted Alok.

### The inception

“Being appalled by the staggering figures of acid attacks in India coupled with a complete lack of awareness about the issue, I started the campaign #StopAcidAttacks way back in 2013. But somewhere along the road, I realised that the survivors of these brutal attacks required more immediate attention. For most of them faced unemployment and were forced to rely on their families that were already exhausted by the burden of their medical expenses. This is when I resolved to turn my campaign into something more concrete,” summarised Alok.

In 2014 thus, he inaugurated an organisation, namely the Chhanv Foundation, for the rehabilitation of these women. Upon further realising that many of them lacked the necessary professional skills, he laid the foundation stone for Sheroes, where both skilled and unskilled women work and earn together. Its first branch, entirely based on crowd funding, was set up in Agra in 2016. This was followed by a second café in Lucknow.

### The execution

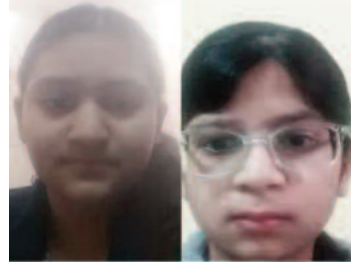
With stories of the survivors’ horrific ordeal inscribed on its walls, Sheroes not only works towards the empowerment of women, but also materialises it in the form of an eatery, an information hub, an

activism workshop, a one-point centre, and a help desk for the victims of violence. “Guests can avail these facilities, all while learning about acid attacks and meeting the strong, resilient women who endured them. One would find Farah at the counter; she was attacked by her husband in 2019. Shanti, who was attacked by a distant relative over some familial dispute, can be found serving the orders, and Rani, who was 17 when she was attacked by a random suitor, managing the helpdesk,” detailed Alok.

### The reception

Sheroes was honoured with the Nari Shakti Puruskaar in 2016 by the then President of India, Late Pranab Mukher-

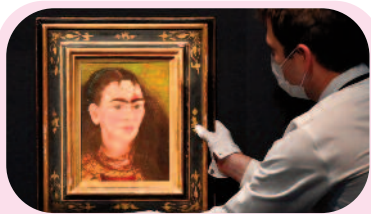
jee. It has also been acknowledged by numerous global organisations such as the German Best of Business Awards, as its reach extends far beyond the country’s borders. However, the journey to empowerment wasn’t always smooth or as Alok puts it, “In 2018, we received a notice from UP Mahila Kalyan Nigam to vacate the café, citing its inability to fulfil its ‘purpose’ as one of the reasons”. However, the general public extended their support to the café, and protests were held to express solidarity with the survivors. As the matter reached the Allahabad court thus, orders were issued to revoke the notice. This is how a café championed the cause of women, of survivors, not once but twice! [G T](#)



GT reporters with Alok Dixit

## Around The WORLD

GT keeps the newswire ticking by bringing you news from around the globe



### USA

#### Diego y Yo sets a record

Diego y Yo, the self-portrait of the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, featuring her husband Diego Rivera, was sold at an auction at Sotheby’s in New York for 34.9 million USD, setting the record for the highest price ever paid for a painting by a Latin American artist. Bought by an unidentified buyer, Diego y Yo (Diego and I) was completed in 1949, and is one of Frida’s most revered paintings, depicting a teary-eyed Kahlo with Rivera on her brow, who has a third eye embedded on his forehead.

### CANADA

#### State of emergency declared

A state of emergency has been declared in the Canadian province of British Columbia, as torrential rains continue to pour in the region, with floods and landslides blocking roads and railways, leaving thousands stranded and several mountain towns isolated. With one death and 3 missing reports filed so far, and evacuation attempts well underway, some 18,000 people have been reportedly displaced in what is termed as a ‘one-in-500-year event’.



### AZERBAIJAN

#### Cease-fire after border clash

Fresh skirmishes between Armenia and Azerbaijan broke out on Nov 16, killing 7 Azerbaijani service members and wounding another 10. Armenia has also reported 1 casualty, with 13 soldiers captured and 24 missing in action. After the violent exchange of hostilities, both sides are currently under a Russian-brokered ceasefire with the additional deployment of 2,000 peacekeepers into the hostile region. The clashes marked the worst fighting between the two nations since the six-week long war last year.



### AUSTRALIA

#### Quantum Science essential

Having identified Quantum science as “vital for national interests”, PM Scott Morrison, on Nov 17, 2021, laid proposals to invest over 73 million USD in the field to develop quantum technology in the country. As part of its economic plan to further revolutionise industries such as AI, healthcare, and finance amongst others, the government would also fund and support nine other fields of technology including advanced cyber security, communications, mineral extraction, autonomous vehicles, novel antibiotics, etc., in the upcoming years.

### INDIA

#### Defence equipment for army

As a major push towards the agenda of ‘Aatmanirbhar Bharat’, PM Modi, on Nov 19, handed over indigenously designed and built equipment of defence to the three chiefs of armed forces in UP. These included equipment like light combat aircrafts, built by HAL, for the Air Force Chief; drones and UAVs, built by Indian startups, for the Army Chief; and advanced electronic warfare suites, built by local sources, for the Navy.



### BRAZIL

#### Elon to provide SpaceX aid

To help the government keep a check on illegal deforestation in the Amazon rainforest, Elon Musk has offered to provide satellite technology in the region. In the meeting with the Communications Minister, he also highlighted how advanced tech like Starlink and SpaceX can monitor Amazon, the world’s largest reserve of flora and fauna that has already lost 8% of its forest area in the past 18 years.

