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What's inside



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Tradition in motion

Trace the Bharatnatyam steps of guru Priya Venkatraman.



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Crunch mode: ON

Crack the science behind the chip's crispy superpower.



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One marvellous Monday...

A captivating photo-comic that chronicles a syllabic habit.

THE GT POLL

Practical Magic 2 and The Devil Wears Prada 2 capitalised on nostalgia. Do you feel it is a 'creative death' for fresh ideas?

A) Yes B) No C) Can't say

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THE GT POLL RESULT for GT Edition Sept 14, 2026

Which word best describes your view on the 'whimsy-maxxing' aesthetic?

52%

Creative expression

38%

Overconsumption

10%

Indifferent

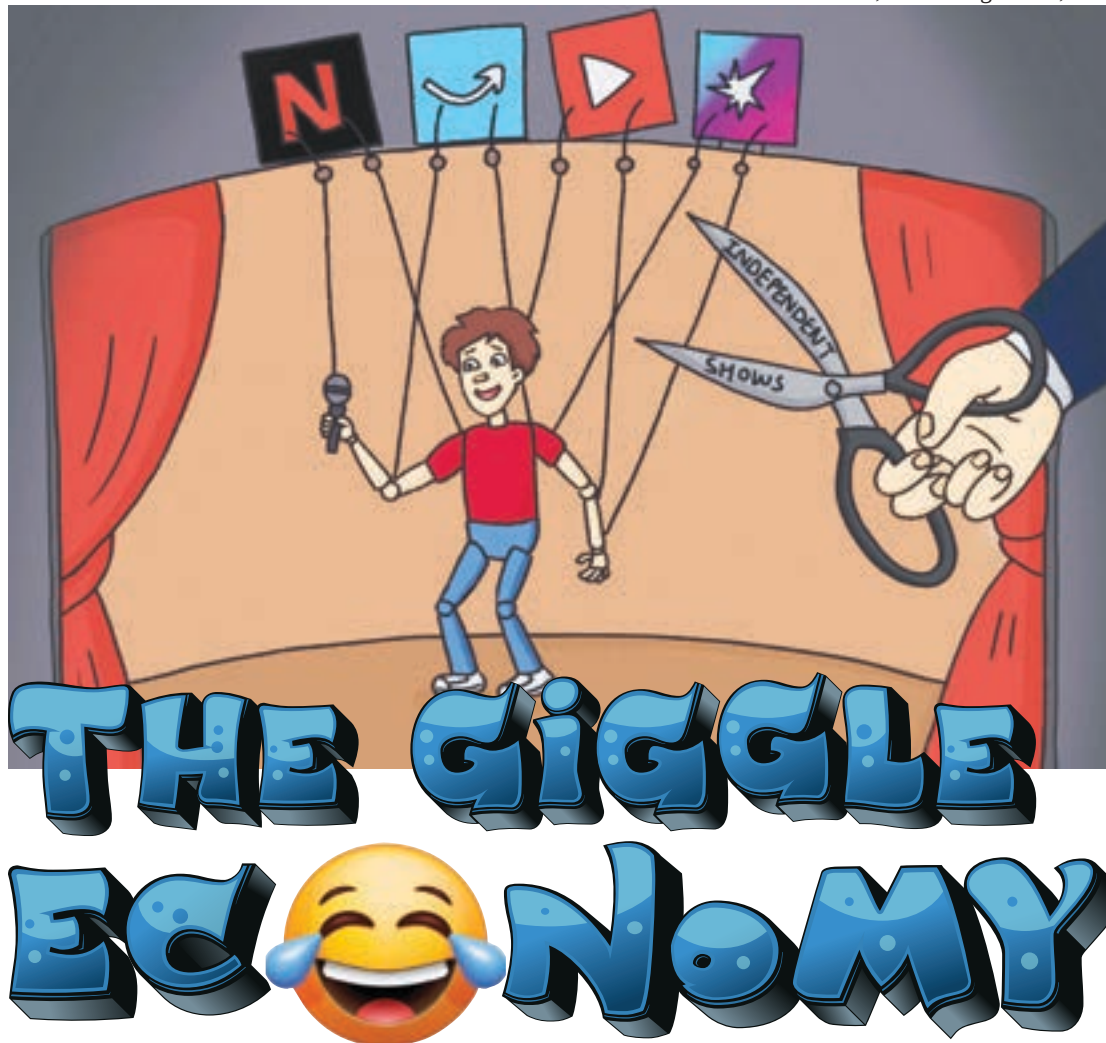
Results as on Sept 19, 2026

Coming Next

World Heart Day special

Stand-up Goes From Being A Side Hustle To A Serious Business

Illustration: Manasvi Sharma, AIS Gurugram 46, XI J



with deals ranging from 5-20 crore INR per show. YouTube, on the other hand, has emerged as the great equaliser, allowing comics to bypass the traditional market gatekeepers entirely. Spotify has entered the mix, too, with podcasts like Kenny Sebastian's Simple Ken drawing millions of listeners.

DIY your own stand-up

For decades, the path to comedy success was linear: get discovered by a club, work your way through open mics, grab attention of an agent who finds you funny, and eventually land a TV deal if your north lunar node aligns with Jupiter in your 10th house. These days, comedians are booking their own tours, and selling tickets directly through BookMyShow and social media. They're filming their own specials, with YouTube ad revenue, sponsorships, and fan memberships making self-produced features profitable. Over the years, comics Sharon Verma, Prashasti Singh, and Shane Gillis have shown that DIY route works as a pathway to success, proving that the stage is wherever you build it.

Found in translation

For years, English was the default language of Indian stand-up. But, with the changing media landscape, comedians in Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, and Punjabi are filling local auditoriums and headlining tours across the US, the UK, Canada, and Australia. Aashish Solanki's PUNJABI TOUR sold out shows in London, Dubai, and Toronto, with crowds singing along to his 'saanu kehndi si'. Tamil comedian Karthik Kumar regularly performs to stadiums in Singapore and Malaysia, where the diaspora shows up in droves. Moreover, YouTube and Amazon Prime now offer auto-generated captions, making regional comedy more globally accessible.

The mic may still be the same, but the business around it has changed completely. Today, a comic can sell out a tour, land a streaming deal, and monetise millions of views. The joke, it seems, has finally become a serious business. **GT**

Parneka Chowdhry
AIS Gurugram 46, XII J

Once upon a time, making a living as a stand-up comic meant stuffing oneself into a cramped car to drive to a dingy café, hoping the coffee shop's owner would pay you a few hundred rupees in exchange for a twenty-minute run of jokes. The audience? More often than not, limited to the other comics waiting for their turn and the lone café-goer. But today, stand-up comedy has shed its humble, sad-café origins to become a rapidly rising trade.

The comedy boom

Not so long ago, pursuing comedy was simply a side hustle. In the West, around the turn of the 20th century, performers like Steve Martin, Richard Pryor, and Robin Williams started drawing crowds with their unique personalities. Then, programmes like The Tonight Show and SNL gave comics

a national platform. Despite a history of staged comedy acts from the 16th and 17th centuries, modern stand-up in India was pretty late to the jig. In the late 1990s, Johnny Lever gained footing with his hilarious impersonations such as that of Michael Jackson. But it was only in early 2000s when India saw its very first successful stand-up comedy show. The Great Indian Laughter Challenge turned Sunil Pal, Ahsan Qureshi, and Raju Shrivastava into overnight stars. Today, the genre has become such a crowd favourite that The Great Indian Kapil Show regularly lands at No 1 on Netflix's India charts.

Laughing to the bank

The modern comic's income looks nothing like it did a decade ago. India's stand-up comedy industry is now estimated to generate around 1,500 crore INR annually, having grown tenfold since 2018. Top comedians now earn 10 to 25 crore INR per year from ticket sales

and brand endorsements. Ticket prices have somersaulted from 300 INR to 3,000 INR on an average. Social media has emerged as a lucrative second stage. Samay Raina reportedly receives offers of 75 lakhs INR for a single branded Instagram Reel, while viral reports claim that Netflix paid about 15-20 crore INR for the latest season of India's Got Latent. And this is not counting the profits from the bonus content on YouTube, a hybrid model of multiple revenue streams. Abhishek Upmanyu and Anubhav Singh Bassi are next up on the leaderboard at 22 lakh INR per reel. Behind the scenes, even the editors and managers now make up to three crore INR annually.

Stream it till you make it

Streaming platforms have fundamentally rewired how comedy reaches audiences, and how comedians get paid. Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and SonyLIV are competing for exclusive specials,