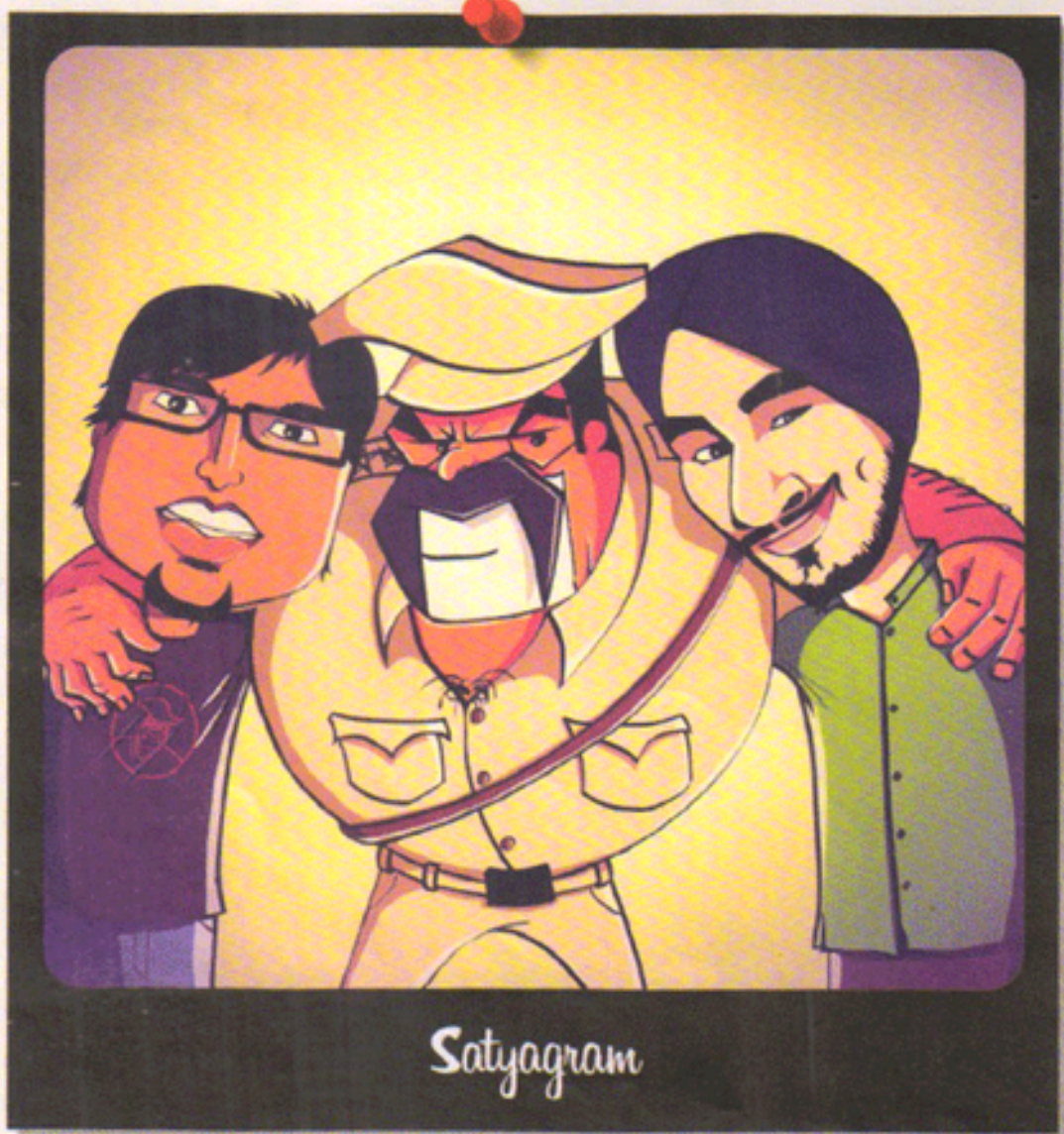


BEHIND THE BARS WITH SATYA POLICE

AN INTERROGATION OF MOHIT SRIVASTAV AND GAGANDEEP KOCHAR



Satya Police: Satyavrat Bhargava is a renowned and beloved police man, who has dedicated every inch of his body to serving the nation with truth and justice. The man literally has a white shadow and is armed with a boomerang. His life is

documented by a news channel, live in action, while he saves the world in the most unconventional ways. However, our hero finds himself in distress when a plot against him, transfers him to a city that has lost all hope for sanity and justice.

In 2012, Comic Con India started the CCI Awards for the excellence in comics and graphic medium in India. At the same time a special grant was allocated for the up & coming comics & graphic novel creators, for which entries were called upon from all across the country. And after a stiff competition, we finally had the first ever winners of the Independent Grant for Best Unpublished Work - Satya Police by Mohit Shrivastav & Gagandeep Kochar. ICJ corners the duo in this issue to find the answers to who Satya is, where does he come from & what is his story...

Tell us a little bit about your backgrounds.

Mohit: Till the moment I cleared my 12th standard exams from science as my primary subject from Lucknow, I had no clue what to take up as my career. Lot of times I would sketch superheroes in my examination papers and classwork books. Probably these indicated that, its time to take away all the notebooks and give me a sketchbook. I graduated in Animation Design from MIT's Institute of Design, Pune and have been working since a year now. I am fond of telling stories and sketching out concepts for comic strips, characters and animation movies.

Gagandeep: My interest in art started at a very early age. I grew up in Ludhiana (Punjab). As a kid I was into sketching, painting, sports, Disney movies, cartoon network, hindi movies and a bit of hollywood at times. I had some great time in school making caricatures of my teachers and this one time

I got slapped for the same. After High school I went to MIT institute of Design, Pune for Animation film Design course in 2006. Where I met some really talented people who have inspired and motivated me.

How did the idea of doing a graphic novel, Satya Police, come to you?

Mohit: I had wanted to create my own graphic novel since the time I was in fifth standard. But I never knew if I had the required skills. Once, I was heading back to home after a tedious regular office day, when I wished I had some super powers to assist me in facing my daily life challenges. But sadly super powers are fantasy. Well, the idea was invented then and there. There's one power, that exists in reality and every individual can hold it, use it. The power of 'Truth'. It did sound vague and funny at the same time. I finished the script for first five pages and shared it with my partner and close friend, Gagandeep. He loved it and we together developed it. At this point I realized I may not have the required skills but I have the power of Truth guiding me and we started working on it

Was there any special reason to make the hero of your novel a police inspector? Was there any particular inspiration?

Mohit: Police appears when the hero in the movie has already rendered the bad guys, unconscious. This is the image we want to change. People have all sorts of opinions for the system and how it works. We want all to believe in our saviors. The graphic novel 'Satya Police' not only entertains you with its double

layer of humor, but also aims at establishing faith on police services. Nothing is invented without an inspiration. I wouldn't say something particularly inspired me but few of the events and experiences from my own life did, play a part.

Gagandeep: Our aim is to create something that inspires good.

Did you expect anything before sending out your project for the Comic Con India grant?

Mohit: Absolutely nothing. Initially we did not think we'll be able to stand anywhere in this category. We had decided to send 1st page of our comic for a different competition taking place in the 2nd Annual Indian Comic Con. But, when there were less than 5 days left to the deadline of submission for the Comic Con India Grant category, we suddenly decided to go for it. We realized that Comic Con India had got a massive response for this category. Till the moment Satya Police won the Grant, I was nervous, hoping but not sure. But Gagandeep was somehow pretty confident about it. You should ask him what was his secret.

Gagandeep: This is our first time making a comic. We were really happy to finish 5 pages in 5 days for the entry and we were quite confident about it.

Which were the comics you followed as a kid?

Mohit: I was never too particular with my choice for comic books. I was basically interested in colored frames with speech bubbles. I clearly remember, my first comic book was a Raj Comic issue called

'Nagina ka Jaal'. It was the time, when I did not even know how to read. Later, I started reading Diamond comics, Amar Chitra Katha, Raj Comics, Tinkle, Asterix and Obelix, Detective Comics and Marvel Comics.

Gagandeep:

I haven't really followed comics as a kid besides few from Batman and Superman, But I do now. I was glued to Disney movies and cartoon network all the time when I was a kid. My favorites are Captain Planet, Power Puff Girls, Tales Spin, Popoye, Dexter, Aladdin...and the list goes on.

Among present day comic book writers & artists, whose works do you follow & why?

Mohit: Among writers I am fond of fearless writing style of Frank Miller and plots developed by Jeph Loeb and Damon Lindelof. Other than that Geoff Johns's Blackest Night from Detective comics and Suhas Sundar's Odayan were excellent pieces of writing. Among artists I admire Esad Ribic for Marvel's Loki series and Jim Lee for Batman's Hush. I also love the artwork for Daksh done by Biboswan Bose and Neeraj Menon. There are a lot of other names like Leinil Francis Yu, but I am afraid we can't cover all of them here. Also, I want to specially mention and congratulate Libera Artisti's entire team for their work Auto Pilot Graphic Novel. Story telling as well as the artwork, both were very inspiring.

Gagandeep: I am big fan of Frank miller and Stan lee, they are great storytellers and artists. I really like frank millers "300" graphic novel for it's inspiring story and art style.

Is Satya Police like any other cop chasing the bad guys & saving the city, or is there something different?

Mohit: Let me tell you three facts about our hero, Satyavrat Bhargava.

1. He is laced with the ultimate power of truth. That is why his shadow also has become white, literally.

2. He has a small temple inside his house. He prays, worships and offers sweets and flowers to the God in that temple. This much is quite ordinary but what you don't know is that, in place of the God's statue in the temple, there's a picture of Mother Teresa.

3. Satyavrat carries a gun holster everywhere he goes. But it doesn't have a gun. Instead, it has a boomerang. In the words of Satya sir himself- "Baarood jeb me nahi, jism me hona chahiye!" The list is endless but lets just settle for these three facts for now. I believe this answers you well.

Gagandeep: Well he is kicking a lot a *\$% in the comic, and he is a lot different from a regular cop. Grab a copy to find out more.

How do you generally team up to develop the plot? Tell us a little bit about your brainstorming sessions.

Mohit: We finish office work early. Go to undiscovered coffee places in the city, discuss our concepts at odd hours and make sure we are not loud. We then formulate a list of situations, gags and plots and select the best of them and work upon them. We always take one very

important precaution during these sessions. We make sure we are surrounded with lots of food. No food, no session.

Gagandeep: Before developing the plot specially for the first volume we gave ourselves approximately a month time to brainstorm on the ideas and concepts for Satya. We would get ideas at very unexpected situations for example at traffic lights, office meetings, inside elevators, etc. After a month we discussed all our written concepts and developed the plot. And whatever sounds interesting and convincing we go with that.

Is Satya Police just a one-off graphic novel or are you planning to make it a series?

Mohit: Its definitely a series. Satya Police is not just a story, its a legend. Just one book is too small to cover the adventures and challenges in Satyavrat Bhargava's life. Reader's will enjoy the journey as much as how the legend ends.

Gagandeep: Yes making it into a series is the plan of action and I am dying to see people's reaction on the first issue.

Other than Satya Police, what other ideas are you two working on?

Mohit: As a mutual agreement, we have decided we will not get distracted by other projects for now and give full concentration and dedication to Satya Police series. Otherwise, we have a few ideas, not only in the comic medium, but also in animation. Lets hope we slowly improve, learn and implement all.

Gagandeep: Its only satya for now.

We will never believe that it has been a pretty smooth ride for you two so far. So tell us frankly about the clash of opinions you had while developing the concept? How did you resolve the differences?

Mohit: Miraculously, we rarely clash at opinions. Its because, before we start our project, we decide who will take the final calls on what aspects of the project. Then we fill in our opinions and trust each other with the work one is responsible for and the decisions he takes.

Gagandeep: Our first priority has always been a good script. So whoever among two of us comes up with a good idea, we finalize that. We both understand our roles very well, if there are any clash of opinions or anything we try to resolve it in manner for what is best for the comic. I would give our team four and a half star.

So your book is currently under production ... are you nervous thinking about the reaction of the readers?

Mohit: Fingers Crossed. I am scared. I have become religious all of a sudden. I pray regularly these days. Its our first Graphic Novel. We are still learning, implementing and exploring. Lets just hope our efforts please the readers. We definitely have high hopes.

Gagandeep: There is nothing to be nervous about and I am really looking forward to everyone's reaction. We haven't restricted ourselves on readers age group as there is something for every one of us.

If your graphic novel gets picked up by Bollywood producers to be made into a film, who would you want to play the role of Satyavrat Bhargava in the film & why?

Mohit: Well, lets see. We need a guy with 5 inch long front teeth, red skin and white shadow, who never smiles. If we have the best make up and CG artists, may be Nana Patekar, provided that Patekar Sir agrees to join a gym and increase his chest size incredibly. Sometimes when I am sketching the comic frames, Satyavrat's attitude reminds me of him. Except for the fact that Satyavrat talks much less than the typical character of Nana Patekar in movies.

Gagandeep: The question is already making me feel like a movie star and Satya as a movie will be incredible. I would love to play as Satya but only if people can digest my acting skills. Also gyming and maintaing my teeth will become my first priority. In that case I think it will be tough.

I think John Abraham will be best for this role.

