

Promoting Slow Fashion and Rescuing Strays—the life of Anusha Mehta, founder of Nush Thrifts and The Modern Mowgli.



IN FRAME: ANUSHA MEHTA, IN A THRIFTED OUTFIT.
Photo Credit: Nush Thrifts.

In India, the Instagram thrift scene is thriving with more and more new sellers setting up shop. In the buyer segment, it is finding resonance among students and those who are just starting out their careers.

One such thrift store was started by 21-year-old Anusha Mehta in the month of July, 2019. “‘Nush Thrifts’ is basically just ‘Anusha Thrifts’ but shorter, I really really liked the name so I kept it,” Anusha laughs, her eyes crinkling. Her hair ends at her shoulders, framing her face, and her eyes, lined with kohl complimenting the blue kurti she chose to wear. Sipping a black coffee from time to time, she pauses a short while before answering each question. “You sure I can have coffee, na?” she asks, I smile and nod. She continues.

“I just wanted to fix my broken iPhone. My bhaiya [older brother] had gifted it to me and I, it just means a lot to me. I wanted it fixed but didn’t want to ask my parents for any more money than they already give me. So, I decided to sell some of the clothes I don’t wear instead,” Anusha expresses, when asked how ‘Nush Thrifts’ came into existence. “I was almost sure that none of my clothes would sell, but 4 days after posting a couple of items, I made my first sell.”

“How do you source your items?”

“I initially tried to sell the clothes I no longer fit into, and no longer wore. After they got sold, I was convinced that I could manage to find more items that people wore. The key here is to pick up unique and one-of-a-kind pieces that you know your audience will buy. I have now partnered up with a bunch of vendors that come to me first so that I can handpick and sell these items. There are also some markets in Delhi that I go for sourcing. They now recognize me and my style and sometimes save clothes for me to come and select.”



Upon asking where these proceeds go to, Anusha opens up about another endeavour of hers, an NGO called ‘The Modern Mowgli’. “When followers and engagement started to increase, I realized that I could use this money for a greater good. So, I decided to help [partner with] my sister Anushka’s NGO, which is now both of ours.” She also adds that ‘The Modern Mowgli’ is an NGO where they try to rescue an array of critters and rehome them.

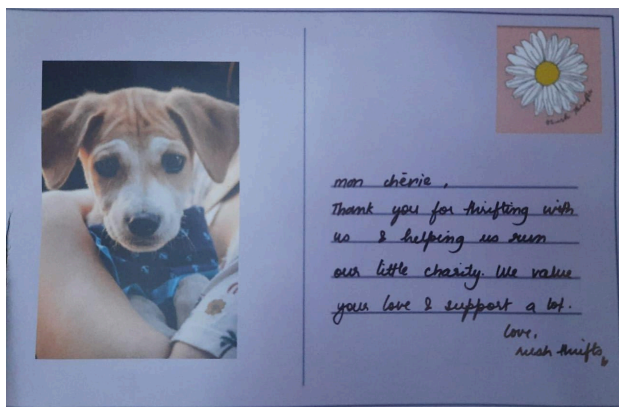
IN FRAME: ANUSHA FEEDING A STRAY DOG

Photo Credit: The Modern Mowgli

“What does the process look like after someone purchases an item from ‘Nush Thrifts’?”

“We have partnered with a private courier for customers that require faster shipping. Otherwise, we use India Ship, which works best honestly. I believe that people who are support thrifting are looking for a sustainable option, so our packaging reflects that as well. We use packages made out of recycled fabrics to pack our items, and every buyer receives a handwritten note, with a picture of some of the dogs we have rescued. The only plastic we use is packaging tape.”

IN FRAME: A NOTE FROM ‘NUSH THRIFTS’ FOR THEIR BUYERS.



Anusha also opens up about how her 'drops' are scheduled, and what goes behind each 'drop'. "A drop in the thrifting community is essentially when we post a bunch of curated stuff, and before a drop is scheduled I have to make sure all these things are under control—checking the quality of each item, washing and ironing it, measurements of each product I'm selling along with at least 4 to 5 shots of the item with multiple angles. The buyer would ideally like to see the whole product in pictures before giving you, their buck." She chimes. "When I just started, they were just pictures of the product, but I have now realized that people buy a lot faster when they see you try it on, ironic, no?"

She also talks about how both her businesses have become entwined, and how they go hand in hand. "I can't go to sleep," she says, "until I know all my dogs, cats, and other animals are fed, and all my orders for the day are packed." She pauses and adds, smiling with a glint of pride in her eyes, "We have raised more than 13 lakh rupees overall for supporting and helping the strays we find... sometimes we find them in very bad condition and they usually always need a couple of hospital stays and a few vaccine shots. One of our dogs, Tofu, needed a complete amputation of the right leg. The money we raise helps us feed them as well as take care of the hospital stays. Sometimes that money isn't enough, so we cash in some of our own."

"How do you help the rescued strays find people who will adopt them?"

"We usually put it up on our social media handles, give the name [Anusha and Anushka usually name the strays], age, health condition, breed if any, and how many shots it has had. Most of the time, thankfully, we have found them their 'pawrents,'" Anusha giggles. "Otherwise, we just keep them as fosters. I have 32 dogs now." She admits, and I find my eyes widen almost immediately. "We even had Dolly Singh reach out to us for adopting a dog once! I was thrilled!" She exclaims, palms on either side of her cheeks.



IN FRAME: DOLLY SINGH WITH HER DOG, PHOEBE.

Photo Credit: The Modern Mowgli.

Along with studying for her Bachelor's Degree in Sociology and Entrepreneurship, Anusha still manages to juggle her studies and her two ventures. "It feels like two full time jobs, actually. But it has become a part of me. Meeting and feeding the dogs, posing in front of the mirror for 3 hours together before a drop, and weekly visits to the hospital and post office. I can't image my life without all this hustle-bustle."

"We try to make whatever we give the dogs; it consists of a little bit of rice that is mixed with water, and a little bit of salt, with tiny bits of meat and dog food rarely... The motive is to keep them full, not give them gourmet dishes like some pet parents. Dogs appreciate the bare minimum you know?"

In Frame: A collage of pictures where Anusha and Anushka have gone to feed the strays along with volunteers. Top right picture is of Tofu getting his leg amputated. Photo Credit: The Modern Mowgli.



Anusha believes that thrifting is the future, and says that all the Instagram stores are living proof of it. She states that the simple acknowledgement of the difference between fast and slow fashion is what could get a person into thrifting, and also claims that this belief is why she still manages to stay relevant. She's also very confident that she'll meet her next fundraising goal of 6lakhs, which is already halfway met.

Anusha Mehta—rescuer, fosterer, master 'thrifter' and curator, only ready to take on more challenges, with a 'greater than life' attitude!