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EDITOR'S LETTER



BOOK of CHIC

changing times. That's why the spotlight this time is on preserving ancient values and courting sustainability. Our theme navigates the journey that Indian fashion is making, reviving traditional splendour through the prism of modernity. But we also have heady tips on how you can survive the pressures of a big celebration with some effective asanas.

We pay homage to everything vintage as heady monochromes and iconoclastic concepts spill the magic in this issue. As marriages are an ode to customs, we haven't forgotten the power of turmeric, its significance in binding the ceremonies together, being the initiator. Shooting in the bylanes of the Chandni Chowk spice market, we intermingled two parallel lines—couture with age-old mores.

When we talk about understanding luxury and all its trappings, who could be better than Sonam Kapoor? The mega star recently turned 34, a red carpet natural, who never tries too hard and always manages to dazzle, with a little help from the fashionista sister Rhea. For us, she came alive as a bride once again and made sure everything was Le Smoking, with a dollop of sequins and made sure the stones were really rolling!

DHRUV GURWARA

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



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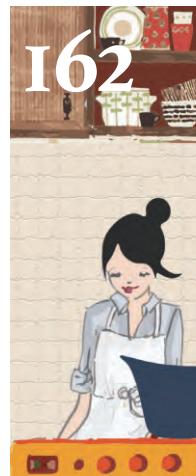
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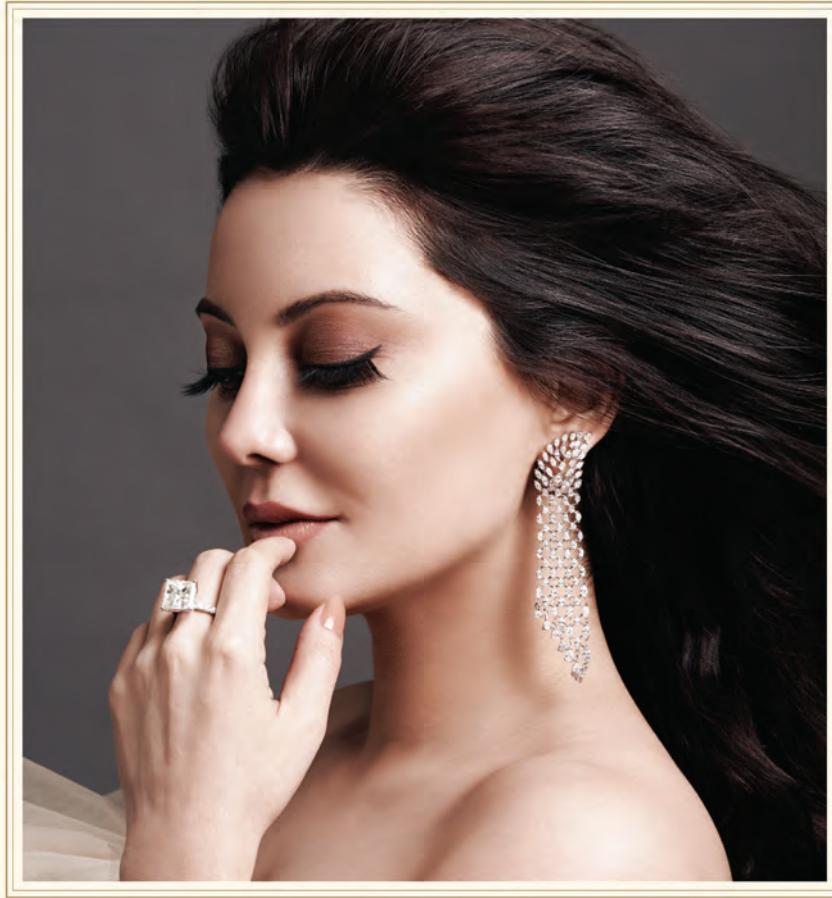


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Published by Sandeep Gurwara on behalf of Services International,

B 9, A Block, Local Shopping Complex, Ring Road, Naraina Vihar, Delhi 110028, India.

Printed at Thompson Press India Limited , 18/35 Milestone Delhi-Mathura Road, Faridabad 121007, Haryana.

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Asmita Aggarwal has been traversing through the wilderness called fashion for the last 26 years. She teaches fashion communication at Pearl Academy, and fashion journalism at NIFT (Delhi). She works as a consultant with the Fashion Design Council of India, and was the former editor of *L'Officiel*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Patriot*, *HT City*, and *Asian Age*.



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With 22 years of experience in the magazine business, she started off as a production coordinator for shoots. She believes work and growth are synonymous and has previously worked in *Cosmopolitan*, and *Better Homes and Gardens* magazines, amongst many others.



DIYA MATHUR
CHIEF ILLUSTRATOR

Her interest in fashion and love for design is what fascinates this Pearl Academy student to explore all the avenues of fashion communication. Her constant urge to create is what made her the illustrator of this magazine.



SADHVI ARORA
WRITER

Sadhvi Arora, 21, is curious to know the dynamics of what goes on behind the scenes of fashion. She is a Pearl Academy student, studying fashion media communication and enthusiastic to explore various strands of art and design through her writing.



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SNIPPET

MIND'S MIRROR

The heritage jewellery house of RANIWALA 1881, offers a gamut of multi-coloured gems, embodying elegance and vibrance, for the modern bride-to-be who values the traditional, along with an eye for innovation

Text SADHVI ARORA



GLEAMING GEMS

A pair of dazzling elongated earrings crafted with sculpted and geometrical shapes with a striking interplay of colours, highlighting each detail, exudes modern eccentricity.



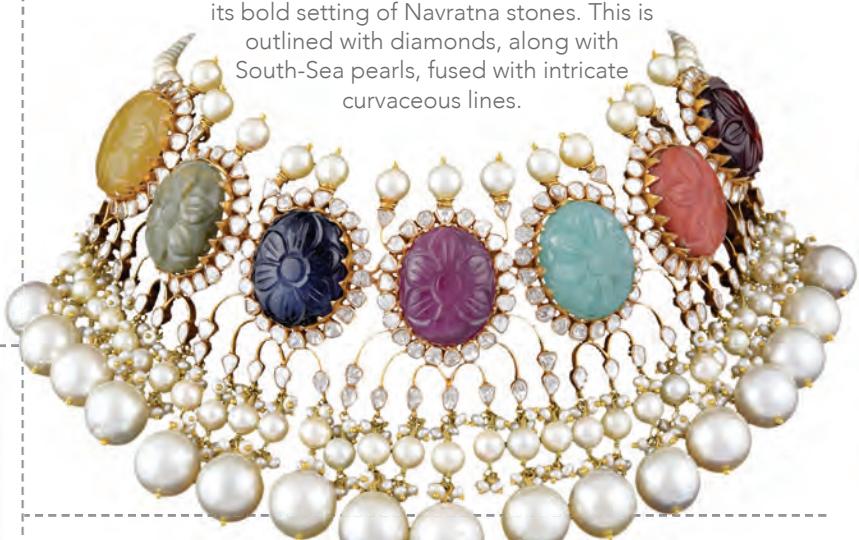
GOLDEN GRANDEUR

An 18k gold bangle is accentuated with a pattern of variegated mounted bijouterie and uncut diamonds. A fusion of vintage glamour and contemporary sensibility will serve as an armour for the W-day.



DAINTY DREAM

The artistic assemblage of floral motifs in polki, Japanese Keshi pearls and emeralds, epitomises understated elegance. The matha-patti encompasses a crescent moon, lending it a luxuriant and simplistic touch. The intrinsic neutral appeal makes it an ideal choice for your wedding ensemble of any style.



TIMELESS TREASURE The scintillating choker is perfect to make a statement with its bold setting of Navratna stones. This is outlined with diamonds, along with South-Sea pearls, fused with intricate curvaceous lines.



FLOWER POWER

The grandeur of luminous baubles is infused in a chunky ring with a circular placement of red coral, emerald, ruby, sapphire, pearl and diamond, adding a dramatic touch.



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SNIPPET



PATTERNED POCKETS

Classic couture meets functionality in the whole new avatar of pocketed *lehengas*. Promising a traditional yet comfortable experience, designers amalgamate utility with luxe.

Pocket Full of Roses

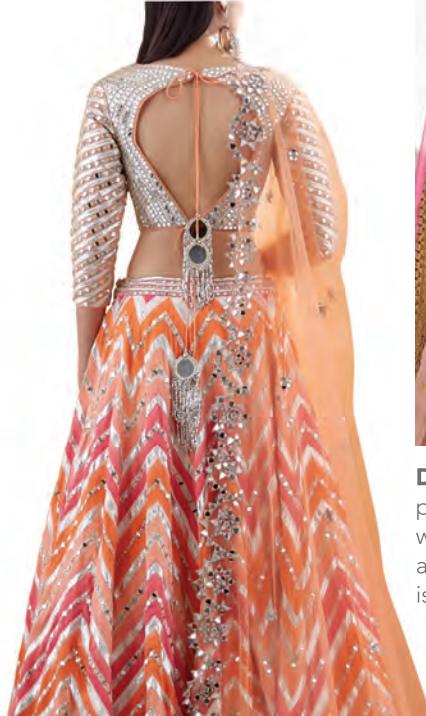
This summer, these five bridal trends offer practical and fun alternatives

Text DIYA MATHUR
and SADHVI ARORA

ELONGATED PEPLUMS Easy-breezy embellished peplum blouse in a blazer form is perfect for making a statement, as you swirl around with no stress of carrying a dupatta.

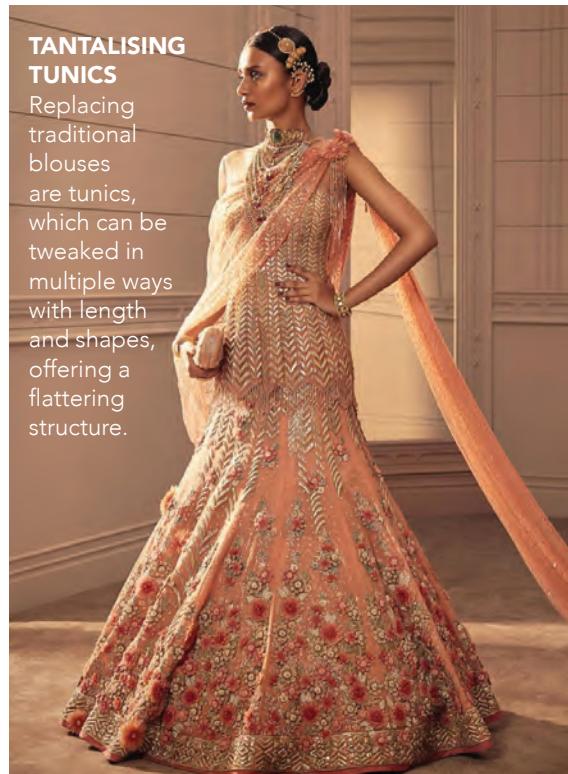


ALLURING BACKS The focus has deviated to the back of the blouses with a play on mirror frames. Interesting patterns and proportions accentuate it with delicate embellishments.



TANTALISING TUNICS

Replacing traditional blouses are tunics, which can be tweaked in multiple ways with length and shapes, offering a flattering structure.



DOUBLE FLARE A composition of prints and embroideries put together with two *dupattas*—one used as a veil and the other overlaid on the blouse, is reminiscent of the *odhini*.

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SIX YARDS OF STYLE

Known for pushing the boundaries, QBIK offers five modern renderings of the traditional sari in the form of embellished blouses, corset belts and feathered pallas—that resonate with old-world charm, and new-age glamour

Text DIYA MATHUR



▲ RISE AND SHINE

Taking it to the next level is this unconventional pairing—a metallic flowy *palla* in metallic georgette paired with a classic *gharara* in georgette dobby. Set on the brocade blouse are various metallic sequins, droplets and stones in dazzling clusters along the neckline.



▼ EASY-BREEZY

This stitched piece ditches the tediousness of draping. Washed in hues of blush, the fluid metallic georgette sari extends into a *palla* in ostrich feather georgette—draped over a printed blouse. The blouse, is a canvas for Swarovski, and *cutdana* in botanical forms.



▼ PRETTY IN PASTEL A

A powder-blue chiffon sari is draped around a printed blouse and straight pants—both crafted from raw silk. The finishing touch is a corset belt, embroidered with *cutdana* and coral beads adding to the glamorous affair. The dainty look defines sophistication.

▼ GO GREEN

A contemporary take on the classic sari ensemble is this sea green crêpe sari gown, paired with a draped skirt that extends into a sequinned net *palla*. A velvet and lycra corset, embellished with floral net, *cutdana* and gold beads is the holding force of this extravagant affair.



▲ OMBRE WITH A TWIST

A base of shaded sequins, beads, miniature floral motifs made of leather sequins and pearl droplets, form the foundation of a bodice—that is further lined with a high-neck blouse made of crushed cotton. Balancing the glitz is a lightly feathered *palla*, a fish-cut ombre skirt, with a signature belt.



the khajuraho cache

Inspired from the Khajuraho temples and monuments, this collection is a tribute to the symbolism and expressiveness of the ancient Indian art - the era that had the vision to sculpt something that has been a testament to beauty for ages. The period that was also an apogee of erotic art has inspired us to create beautiful motifs with intricate carving.



SNIPPET

BEAM OF BAGS

LOVE TO BAG is a delightful abode of finely handcrafted accessories, deftly fabricated with Indian craftsmanship to jazz-up your ethnic sartorial choices

Text SADHVI ARORA

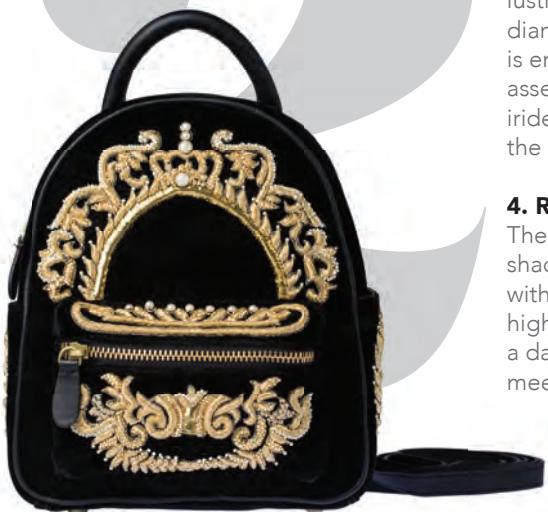


1. GALACTIC GLORE Gilded potli looks divine with accents of white and copper embellished with tiny iterations of beads, finished with playful tassels, radiating impeccable sheen. A timeless and classic piece to complement Indian traditional wear.

2. STRONG & STURDY Hand embroidered zardosi and pearls form a solid pattern on a majestic velvet black bag lined with pure leather trims enriched with heavy patterns on side pockets. Take this ethnic utilitarian bag to a destination wedding to make a statement.

3. SEALED IN YOUR NAME A soft grey monogram clutch can be embossed with your initials, lending it a personal touch. The lustrous pearls and delicate diamantes on the satin canvas is enhanced by meticulously assembled frosty beads, and iridescent crystals scalloped at the bottom.

4. ROOMY AND UNFUSSY The metallic tiered fanny pack in shades of nude in suede velvet with satin lining is bedecked with high-quality Japanese beads, and a dangle of sparkly pellets. Space meets glamour in this one!



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| TISHA SAKSENA | SACHIN VAISH

Illustration DIYA MATHUR

FASHION

Geometrical motifs are interspersed with florals to create timeless pieces





Couturier with Conscience



*As his label turns 10 this year,
designer RAHUL MISHRA
demystifies the new-age bride
and dwells on his own personal
growth as a maverick*

Text MANISH M

Reconciling couture with cause and rooting relentlessly for slow, handcrafted design have been the core values of atelier Rahul Mishra. The International Woolmark Prize winner has always underscored the fact how the craft of millions of Indian artisans is undervalued, which results in them migrating to big cities to work in conditions which are far from favourable. His design house has been at the forefront of setting up embroidery centres in villages across India. Not many understand that one machine embroidery replaces eight artisans. Hence, Mishra has made a conscious effort to realise his *savoir-faire* only through hand embroidery techniques, thereby empowering our artisans.

And the result is nothing short of an OMG-inducing epiphany. One has to be really stone-hearted to not fall in love with his hand-embroidered blouses tailored with scalloped edges and jackets featuring hand-cut panels resembling *jharokhas* of ancient Mughal windows and hand-embroidered honeycomb *bandi* jackets. His artisanal saris realised partly in crepe and partly in silver tissue and generously scattered with *resham* bouquets are truly a couture junkie's dream buys. Combining the three Cs—concept, craftsmanship and cause, like a potent cocktail—Rahul has carved his own niche in a style landscape, synonymous with seen-that-before designs.

Currently, the toast of Paris Cou-

ture Week, Mishra still harbours a child-like enthusiasm to explore and expound the rarefied world of haute couture. In a scenario, when most bridal design houses are unapologetically celebrating the 'more is more' philosophy, Rahul has stayed true to his metier, rooting for pieces which are light, functional, wearable and radiate an ageless appeal.

While his contemporaries are referencing vintage regalia and creating looks inspired by India's rich heritage, Mishra believes in offering

of thoughts through the transformative power of his creations.

If 10 years ago, *lehangas* were being bought on the basis of how much they weighed, today designers across the board have embraced lightness and a sense of freewheeling weightlessness. And Rahul has always managed to make a commendable mark, thanks to his push on organza-based pieces, which have been flying off the racks. However, at the start of his career when he had made a couple of organza jackets, they found very few takers.

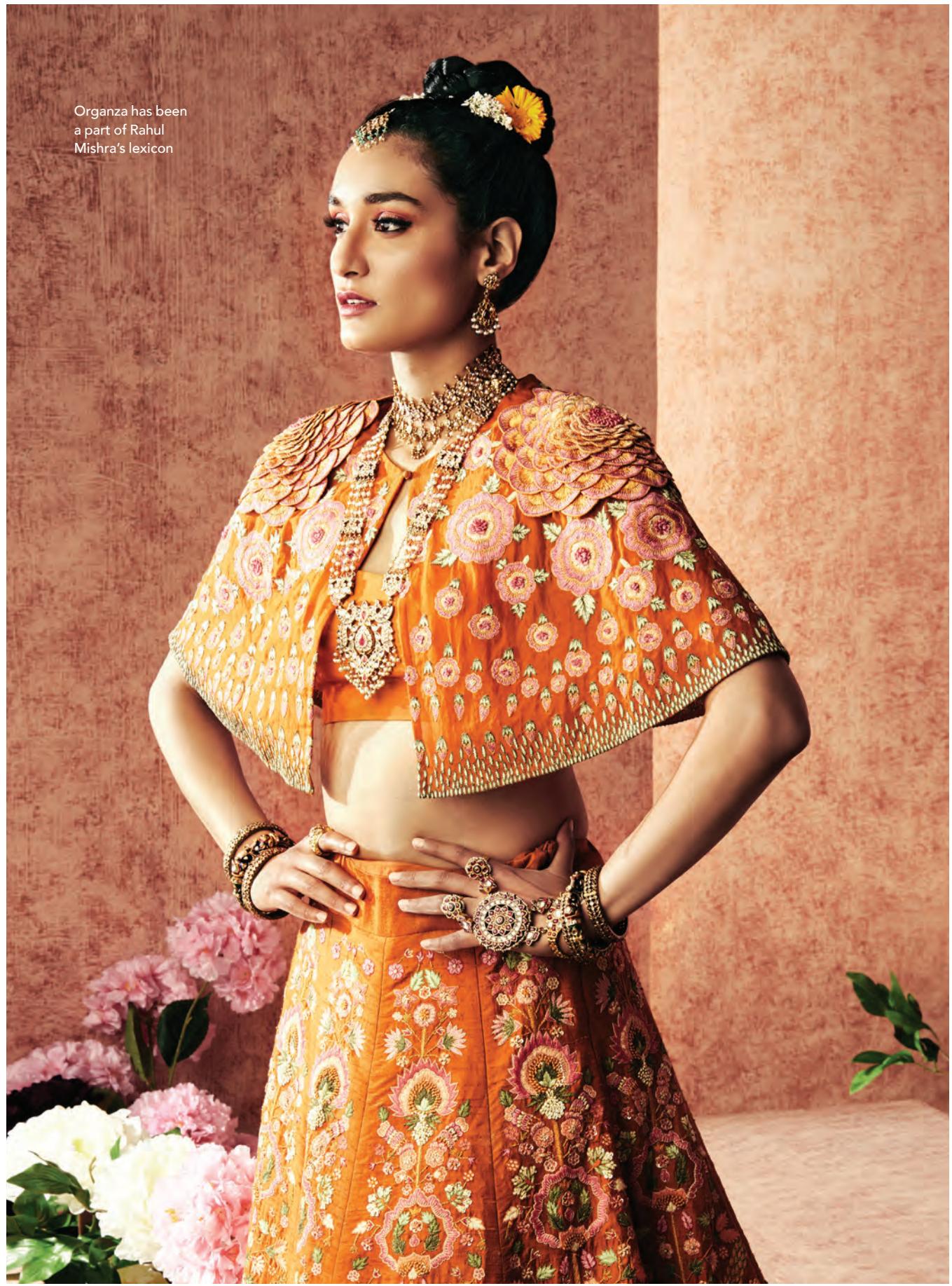
"If business management, engineering and medicine sustain life then poetry, art and beauty, are some things we live for."

creations, which are seasonless, contemporary, yet rooted in the past! "For me, the ultimate luxury is time. The timelessness of the garment makes the wearer keep falling in love with it. Something classic and luxurious. Something which outlives seasons and trends," he says.

What makes Rahul's unique thought process an oxygenating air of thoughtful luxury is his human-centric, slow approach to design. "Over production and an aggressive business approach harms the planet, besides killing creativity. Also, it ends up ruining the resources of the planet," adds the Kanpur boy, who has always been able to lucidly convey his stream

"Today's brides buy pieces because it's made of super lightweight organza. There was a time, when Indian brides-to-be wore someone else's choices. It was more about how my mother-in-law is going to perceive me. Today's bride is well-travelled. She's someone, who's perhaps either studied design or marketing and most importantly, she knows what she wants. Today her family is going along with her choices and in fact, she's making choices for them too. "I think a large part of the credit should go to the consumer too, who's ready to adapt and experiment. My learning becomes more enriched when I meet young brides and grooms. They

Organza has been
a part of Rahul
Mishra's lexicon



FASHION

Soft hues evoke a
sense of elegance
and simplicity



look for new artworks, unexpected colour combos and 3D embroidery techniques. I'm proud to share what we show on the runway goes as it is, for selling too. In fact, our clients buy head-to-toe ensembles as they are," he says with a twinkle in his eye.

One couldn't help, but ask him if there's any garment or piece of jewellery, which defines his own heritage. "In the Indian context, it has to be the sari. When I am weaving a sari, it's like an empty six-meter long canvas. When you do nothing to change its form, there's so much which can be done to make a *palla* look different or one could play around with the pleats or alter its fall. That's the reason why the sari has always stayed so relevant. It's got the strongest past, present and future," he adds.

So which is that one most desired bridal look he's ever designed? "We did it last season, a Pichwai-inspired *lehenga* and we sold many pieces of it. It was a big rage. The 3D top and its unique depiction of the ecosystem, flowers floating on the lake made it truly a masterpiece to be treasured," says he.

Even though he's dressed the who's who of the business and Bollywood galaxies, he rarely flashes his clients' images on his Instagram page. One's keen to know if he's had a muse over the years or who's the quintessential RM woman. "She's not just the daughter of someone, who's well-known and rich. She's educated, travelled abroad and decides what she wants in her life. Most brides I meet personally are like that. She's hardly influenced by any-

one, but she loves herself. She's the biggest star; she's my muse also. At the same time, she's never weighed down by other people's expectations. She's a researcher, but she's not a loyalist. You give her something genuine and she'll treasure it forever. She understands design and has a great appreciation for the arts and crafts," he shares.

Rahul's unique way of storytelling and his ability to convey a soulful anthropological subtext with his mood board season after season, makes him the talking point in India and also globally. "My design process is a little distorted (laughs). It's often artistic, not necessarily limited to the human form. I'd be lying if I say that there's nothing like a muse because it's an obsessive vision of certain ideas—that inspiration board, which gives you that high. When you're creating something like that, you couldn't think of anyone else. I get possessed with an idea," he says.

Having proved his mettle at the hallowed Paris Couture Week for 10 seasons now, the Istituto Marangoni alumnus' incredible global exposure has helped him recontextualise Indian couture. Fashion observers would recall, Rahul started his career with Chanderi and single-handedly revolutionised it. "You have to find new experiences. My Kerala collection at the Gen-next show was all about pure handloom usage and that was the biggest USP. Now handloom hasn't remained a talking point too much. It's great to reinvent and satisfy your inner artist and that's something which is going on with me. As I com-

plete 10 years, I want to do something new. In a decade's time, you develop a strong sense of identity, but you might also end up becoming a slave to your own techniques. I need to explore like a child. For instance, my daughter Aarna, who explores everything, often asks me, 'who's on the phone?' There's so much learning I get from her. I want to create amazing outfits, which I want people to remember. If business management, engineering and medicine sustain life, then poetry, art and beauty are some things we live for," he confesses. Being the emissary of Indian textiles, it's worth asking him, if people should stick to traditional looms or go to a designer brand, while shopping for the most important day in their lives. "It is all about their choice. There's nothing wrong in striking a balance—when you go to a designer, you go for a signature motif or pattern and even a weaver is offering you craftsmanship," he says, in all honesty.

With his contemporaries venturing into designing weddings, has the thought occurred to him? Pat comes the reply, "Design-wise, I don't want to shy away from anything. I don't want to stick to just clothing, but I don't know how and when. Recently I did an art installation with Chivas."

Like they say, never say never. After completing many glorious years in fashion, Rahul Mishra is still keen on letting his flag fly high and not let anything come in the way of his creative fantasies. And the fashion world whisperers are watching him with baited breath. ■



“For me, the ultimate luxury is time. The timelessness of the garment makes the wearer keep falling in love with it. ”

Flowy pink gowns make for an ethereal and serene sight



Gowning Glory

VINETI BOLAKI'S aesthetic remains feminine, with effortless being the buzzword

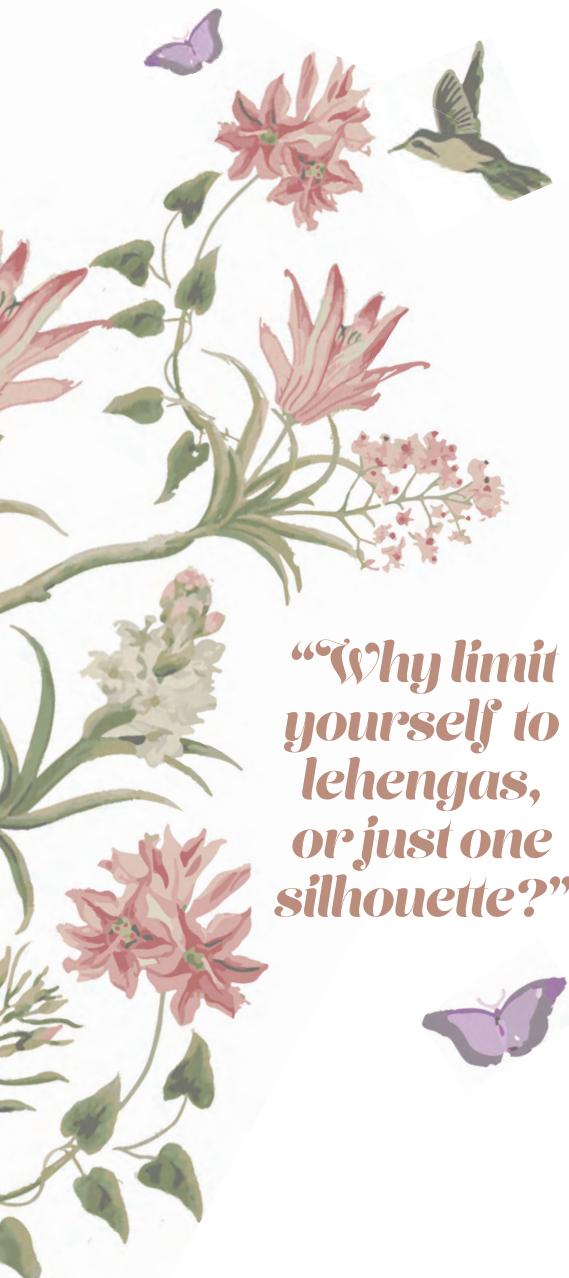
Text SADHVI ARORA Illustration DIYA MATHUR

The putting together of arts, designs, and imagination results in creativity that fashion designers are endowed with. It's the uniqueness of the handling of this process that makes the designer stand out in the field. One such style guru, who exemplifies this creative process is Vineti Bolaki, 34, from Hyderabad, who excels in evening wear.

Her approach to designing stems from a sense of curiosity and wonder and the way she perceives her surroundings. She explains, "Italy is one of the most love-soaked places I've ever visited. I went alone; the city enthralled me. The idea is to just be able to see beauty in everything." Stimulation flows from her pure and simplistic, yet soulful way of life.

When asked which destination would describe her brand best, she quickly answered, "Florence!" She adds, "I'm fluid with my work. There are times when I don't take out a collection in the summer. Then, I sometimes launch three collections per year. It depends on where I am, how inspired I am, what is my state of





mind.” Her intuitiveness and the eye for all things subtle and soft is what makes her label distinct as compared with the ones, who are moving ahead with no perceptible philosophy, or any remarkable feature that helps their brand stand out.

Almost 10 years ago, she graduated from the University of Wollongong in Dubai, with a degree in B.Com. She began as a fashion stylist after her graduation and worked as a freelancer. Most unhesitatingly she admits opportunities were scarce and recognition for her in the field of fashion

was rather bleak, when she began. She had a lot of time at hand during that period and started designing clothes for herself and friends, who appreciated her work.

Consequent to her opinion that there were not many impressive options available in the country, her desire for perfection and timeless classics led her to learn in-depth about different skills, about various designing techniques, thereby slowly bringing into shape the ‘designer’ in her. Bolaki never thought she’d make a career of it and be part of this “chaotic world”. However, she reminisces her childhood and says, “I was always fond of clothes and putting looks together.”

Her grandmother was instrumental in initiating her interest in fashion. She was fascinated by the clothes her grandmother got from America when she was younger. Gradually her creative freedom became unbridled, thereby transcending materialistic life and traversing into simplicity in her thought, work, and design.

Travelling is a fundamental source of her creativity and it is in transit that her mind is at its receptive and productive best. It is in her wandering state that her inspiration translates imagination into the language of design. It is for this reason, she is never in a hurry to fit in an idea or philosophy, which might not suit her taste. She says, “I let inspiration come to me. It is about that one piece that strikes a chord and the entire collection falls into place.” Talking about one of her collections, she adds, “My experience of deep-sea diving in the underrated and relatively unexplored Philippines was nothing short of surreal. Being with nature and witnessing such ethereal creations evokes one’s senses completely. I was drawn to corals, their colours and hues. I came back fully charged and launched a collection.”

It was almost like a reflection of what she believes in and her idea of femininity. She says, “One could be in



the most structured garment yet look so soft. So, it has nothing to do with clothes, but the energy one radiates. It is a part of one’s own distinct aura.” Her recent collection, ‘A Symphony of Dreams’, features evening gowns, floor-touching skirts, one-shoulder blouses, and midi dresses in pastel tones, which look fresh off the fairy tale ride. The fluid silhouettes, colour palette and tenuous embroideries, all work together to create the perfect harmony and balance. “My design sensibility comes from romance,” she smiles.

She has been consistent with her style of sketches, which lend an unyielding identity spread through her collection. Her utilisation of beads, cut glass, threads, pearls, silver and gold embroideries, iterations of leaf motifs on fabrics, including French tulle, georgette, chiffon, accentuates and enhances the elegance and grace of the wearer. Her ensembles have the competence to instantly aggrandise the personality of the one wearing it, without adding any weight or discomfort.

“Initially, I didn’t mean to attract brides. It happened organically and soon we were catering to them,” she admits. Her designs might not fit the traditional consort of Indian weddings. However, of late, there is a huge demand and recognition of comfortable evening wear as the new wave of brides for whom comfort and looking their best are synonymous. “Brides are evolving. That’s why we use the hashtag ‘Modern Bride’ on our social media because a modern bride needs variation. She also wants to own a part of life, which is not culturally Indian.”

She believes, at a time, when West and East both borrow from each other to enhance and integrate values and aesthetics entailing innovations, the lines will only get further blurred in the future. “Why limit yourself to *lehengas*, or just one silhouette?” concludes Bolaki. ■

“Why limit yourself to lehengas, or just one silhouette?”

FASHION

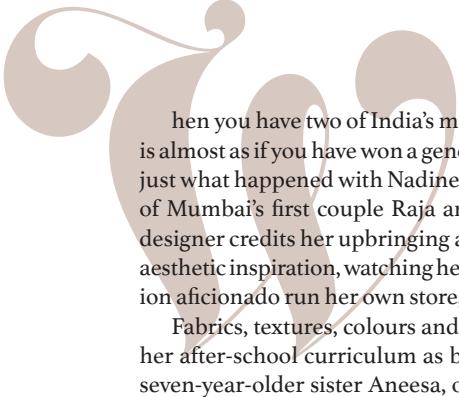
Handful of Stars

*NADINE DHODY is giving
brides elegant, hand embroidered,
whispy offerings, mirroring
veritable luxury*

Text ASMITA AGGARWAL



Captivating interaction
of shimmer and sinuous
embroideries immersed
in pastels

hen you have two of India's most stylish parents, it is almost as if you have won a genetic lottery and that's just what happened with Nadine, the lovely daughter of Mumbai's first couple Raja and Rita Dhody! The designer credits her upbringing as a biggest source of aesthetic inspiration, watching her mother Rita, a fashion aficionado run her own store, Vivarta, in Colaba.

Fabrics, textures, colours and treatments, became her after-school curriculum as both Nadine and her seven-year-older sister Aneesa, observed how an ensemble transforms from a sketch to reality. "My mom moved on to making embroideries for European labels, but the seed was sown. I knew fashion was where my heart is, even though I didn't really quite understand what made it sing—styling or designing," smiles Nadine, who also worked with the Murjani Group (handling Gucci).

This confusion took her to England's London College of Fashion, where she honed her skills and came back to help her mom, in 2011, assisting in backend operations and almost organically started making clothes for herself that won appreciation from family and friends, as well as inundated her with garment requests. Year 2014, was a defining moment, when Nadine launched her brand; she is now a proud owner of her own store. Interestingly, Zuhair Murad and Lebanese guru Elie Saab, have been her inspirations and the biggest lesson came during her own wedding. "Most of what I saw was heavy, weighty *lehengas* that made it almost impossible to walk and enjoy your life's most cherished moments. So I knew I would offer effortless clothing that was light and frothy," she says.

Three dimensional florals, mirror work, beads and

sequins form a big part of her burgeoning business and what's endearing is, she has maintained brand continuation from the time she started, to the present. "Modern, Indian wear, which appeals to a new-age bride is my target. I see young, cool, hip celebs like Alia Bhatt as a perfect ambassador of what my brand exemplifies," she confesses.

Old is really the new, new, Nadine believes, even though the internet is flushed with sites that offer you fashion tips and blatant copies, she firmly reiterates investing in the right pieces is the key to good dressing. "I still wear my mom's hand-me-downs, which have withstood the test of time, something like a delicate lace sari," she says.

Hues play a huge role in the design thinking process and for Nadine, the lessons she learnt in LCF hold true. Colour can enhance an outfit and if it is not done correctly it can destroy the balance. "I have always loved lighter tones, almost muted ones. But you'd be surprised to know that

"The need of the hour is innovation and most are moving away from predictability."

reds have been my signature in its various moods, so much so that it is my bestseller, along with plums," she confides. This year, she is using fresher tones like mints and peaches, minus the washed out effects to give her *lehengas*, saris and *kurtas* a new dimension. "Brides today adapt and evolve, so cropped tops, blousons, ruffles and frills have replaced the traditional *choli*, making it sometimes lengthier. The need of the hour is innovation and most are moving away from predictability," she confirms. Adding, the *dupatta* too, is slowly fading into oblivion with most women preferring a drape or cape instead.

As hand embroidery forms the pivot of Nadine's work, she keeps the necklines clean, and silhouettes classic, so as to make sure the ensemble doesn't look over-the-top.

Evening wear glamour is
encapsulated in sequins
and pastels



Hand embroidery
is the hallmark of
the label





“I still wear my mom’s hand-me-downs, which have withstood the test of time.”

“Both my parents are kind of larger-than-life. They have lived fashion, so we were exposed to a wide spectrum of things growing up and they have been my design school, more than anyone else,” she says.

Not looking at brand extensions, as she still wants to give herself time to grow, listening to her mom’s seasoned advice to “take it slow and this is not a race”, Nadine has followed it. “I have never done any paid PR. Everything has taken time to shape up to build my identity, and I am in no hurry to reach the finish line,” she explains.

Social media has been her soulmate from the time she started, to now when she is a new mother, everything is managed by her. Almost 50 per cent of her clientele is not Mumbai-based, but actually from all over the world, who have contacted her, thanks to the Insta account. “We, without being physically present customise the entire outfit and take a feedback, answer queries and courier it to all parts of the world. Insta has helped me grow my business enormously,” she adds. The plan is now to open stores in Delhi and at least two more domestically, to reach a wider audience within the country. Nadine also wants to do trunk shows. “Bollywood is one factor that many designers rely on, as a celeb can get you a lot of traction. I wouldn’t say it is not important, but it has never been my driving force. Now I have my sister Aneesa, who will be helping me take the leap of faith and do marketing with her events firm,” she says. The sisters are in the same space, yet their trajectories are unique, and with a new store, sales become an important part of the business that Nadine believes every entrepreneur must do herself.

“I was working till the last month of my pregnancy and must confess, my brand reflects the spirit of what I would like to wear. It will never have pieces that I feel disconnected with, unless it is a bride’s personal decision that we make something special for her. Even my mom wears my clothes, so I know I am on the right track,” she says.

A “110 per cent” involved in the production, Nadine follows her mother’s diktats to the T, “fashion may look glamorous, but it is a lot of hard work” and “you can’t depend on anyone else to know numbers, so learn them as fast as you can”. “When I started I didn’t know the nuances, but today I am fully involved with each and every step and that has been the most challenging as well as invigorating part for me,” she concludes. ■

#IDoItMyWay



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Hustle. Play.
Dream. Thrive
My Way



JEWELS OF JAIPUR

Handcrafted Jewellery for Millennial Brides

/jewelsofjaipur

FASHION

Coloured Feelings

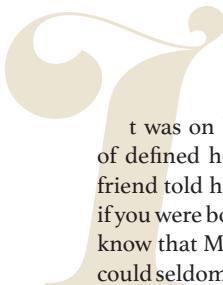
Young, articulate and forward thinking, SHUBHIKA DAVDA is serenading the bride with flexibility, buoyancy and of course, pockets!

Text ASMITA AGGARWAL

Rann of Kutch serves as
the perfect backdrop for
Davda's latest line



“I am a Cancerian and I am a different person every day, so I make clothes I can connect with, wear, and if need be, alter, to add comfort and functionality.”



t was on her playlist and it kind of defined her mood, plus her best friend told her it was just right. And if you were born in the 80s you would know that Madonna, the songstress, could seldom be wrong. So *Papa Don't Preach*, her chart-topping number, became Shubhika Davda's brand name and the careless abandon that the Italian pop queen possessed reflected in the spirit of the eponymous label.

Interestingly, the girl, who inherited the entrepreneurial edge from her businessman father and homemaker mom, forayed in the big, bad world of ensembles with India's answer to a high-street label in 2011, promoted with flash mobs. But the onslaught of international ones threatened her survival, so she changed tracks and moved on to Indian wear with bridal being the fulcrum, in 2013.

Shubhika credits her success to her “hero”, her father, who offered unfettered support, financial advice and structural prowess to not just her, but also two other sisters, in a family dominated by women. “I was in college and after classes I would look after my store in Vashi, called Firefly. My dad always encouraged me even when

I was in the final year of my BMM and aspired to study in England's London College of Fashion, which I eventually did, for a year,” she admits.

London exposed a young mind to various styles, cultures and ethos, which was effectively etched in her memory from street style, tube fashion to the retail boom; everything sharpened her sensibilities. She came back to launch her brand with a distinct ideology of mix and match, offering separates. The debut constituted fun saris, patchwork and colour blocking, as “being flexible” became her mantra.

Raised in a family of free thinking individuals in New Mumbai, an hour away from the city, it was the simple life and absolute disregard to status and money, which made Shubhika a confident businesswoman. Her father a self-made man now runs two schools, one in UAE and another in New Mumbai and also deals with automobiles. He gave Shubhika the wings to fly, whether it was choice of name for the label, which he believed “resonated with young people”, or dealing with the highs and lows of business. Her mother, on the other hand, is a spiritual speaker with the organisation, ‘Science of Spirituality’, travelling all over the country to spread this message of peace.

Shubhika being the only one who chose fashion, believes her brand is about exploration, from 3D printing

to looking at new ways of embellishments. She abandons old techniques like zardosi and uses more metallics, even bangles, to add undeniable charm to an otherwise predictable outfit. References can be anything from *Little Mermaid* to *Alice in Wonderland* and even the *Burning Man*, but what's interesting is there is always storytelling, which probably comes from her experience studying Mass Media and contributing to the newspaper *DNA* in Mumbai. “We talk about a girl, her journey and personality, her thoughts which become the leitmotif of the collection around which, we weave a memorable tale,” she explains.

Brides today, she confesses really don't need advice. They know what they want and this is not coloured by either their mother-in-law or mother. They make independent choices. “Thankfully, they are not Bollywood celeb obsessed, making them open to fabric explorations, surface ornamentation, but I am a young person's brand and I want to give them that freedom of choice. You can pick up whatever you want and team it with a different *lehenga* or *choli*,” she adds.

Shubhika is able to understand this, thanks to a “strong but gentle mom” and two very different thinking sisters, who co-exist in the same house. “I like the brightest colours and my older sister is vegan and anti-leather, while my younger sister



Patterned bomber
with heavy metallic
embellishments make a
statement

FASHION



Vibrant and dramatic
3-D embroideries on a
tomato red jumpsuit



Desert, sun, bright
hues and a lot of
panache make
Davda a clear winner

is corporate type classy; so each one is an individual first and has unique needs. Thus, I am exposed to a wide spectrum of dressers and opinions,” she smiles.

For her latest line she is inspired by *Burning Man*—a festival in Nevada, which is a tribute to anti-consumerism, begun 33 years ago, as an initiative by Larry Harvey and Jerry James, in a bid to encourage creativity in California. This innate and refreshing ideology is mirrored in the myriad elements in her line, from hand painted *lehengas* done by a Mithila-based artist, to sunglasses and bags again hand painted, as well as sheer offerings, with a campaign shot in the Rann of Kutch, a salt marsh in the Thar desert with the glittering sun casting an exuberant shadow on her vibrant outpourings. You can see a mélange of cutwork flowers, vivacious colours and of course her two constants—pockets and belts. “I hate carrying bags, so I feel pockets are a saviour. You can feel your phone and

lipstick, which is what you need on a night out! When you put your hands in your pockets you will feel a bit more confident,” she grins. Belts, on the other hand, she believes accentuate the luscious hips, and high-waisted ones

“I hate carrying bags, so I feel pockets are a saviour.”

add a lengthier dimension to the human form. “I am a Cancerian and I am a different person every day, so I make clothes I can connect with, wear, and if need be, alter, to add comfort and functionality. That’s why all my *lehengas* have pockets,” she explains.

This year, she collaborated with headgear maverick Param Sahib, (a mentee of Manish Arora), who she worked with when she began designing, and created a rainbow of hues. “I believe customisation is the key in a volatile market like ours. Therefore, we have started ‘My Story’, an effort to give customers what they desire. They can give us elements they would like included on their shoes and we will add those ingeniously,” she confirms.

The future is one which is dotted with several inventive plans for Shubhika. Her store is designed by her interior designer sister, who made couches fashioned out of bathtubs and wall art which announce, “You make me feel like dancing”. “I would like to make wall art with embroideries, and foray the home segment. Installations are so exciting, like the one we did for Pernia’s Pop Up shop inspired by the tea party in *Alice in Wonderland*. I would like to do more like these which give me a wider playing field of creativity,” she concludes. ■



Atlas of Prints

The label ANUSHREE has a gamut of prints, from abstract geometrical patterns to pixelated bouquets, conflated artistically to weave a new story

Text SADHVI ARORA Illustration DIYA MATHUR



Ikkat forms the basis of her new line, intermingled with florals

The busy fuss and frenzy of the ‘city of dreams’ has a friendly demeanour to it. Businesses ranging from big multinational chains to the high budget films, go about their workings much in the manner of co-existence, albeit in a spirit that is competitive to the hilt. Like all other trade and business, fashion and culture too, have the fervour and zeal that match the overall scamper of life in Mumbai.

It is only natural, therefore, for the brands in the city to constantly vie with each other to cater to the ever-growing and changing needs of the city, where transition is a habit.

While it may be easy to get sunk out of sight in the bustle of the fashion market of Mumbai, kudos to the label ‘Anushree’, founded and headed by a 27-year-old enthusiastic and curious designer, to be able to rise neck-high amidst big brands that have a tendency to demolish and conquer anything and everything that dares to exist.

Anushree Brahmbhatt Parekh, the designer, and owner of label ‘Anushree’, is not looking for any kind of ‘perfect’ coherence in her designing. “What is different in my designing is the arrangement and amalgamation of disparate prints assembled with the importance of maintaining the subtle-

ty and air of lightness in the clothing,” she explains.

Her mother guided her all the way into settling and defining her own identity from the get-go in Mumbai. She runs a boutique called, Bharti’s in Lokhandwala, Mumbai.

Anushree spent her early years at her mother’s shop, gaining knowledge and enhancing her skills by testing the functional usability of the clothes and constantly churning of the axioms of designs, to establish her own sensibility. “I have always been around tasteful



clothes," says Anushree.

She adds, "My experience over the years at my mother's store inculcated a good taste and marketing sense in me. Today, I do not have a PR or social media team. I do everything on my own, touch wood." Out of sheer conviction to pursue this field of art, she got enrolled in fashion design at Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackeray Women's University (SNDT) College in Mumbai. After her graduation in 2015, she launched her label

within four months and completed a short intensive advanced course in designing at the London College of Fashion, UK. "I never interned under any designer, which I feel is good because it made me organically develop my own distinct style and patterns."

When asked whether she knew designing was her primary disposition and was going to be her ultimate preoccupation, the millennial was quick to answer, "I always knew that I had to do something different. I didn't want to stick to the already existing techniques and typical embroidered clothes."

She started exploring festive and occasion wear, but with a contemporary touch of minimalism, reiterating her belief that Indian clothes don't necessarily have to be heavy and that the element of textile can be used to make their personality stand out.

Over the years, her collections have been dominated by a mix of palazzos, lehangas, maxis, blouses, floor-touching capes, embroidered blazers, offering variations in shapes and lengths with an emphasis to create, either a bohemian or Indie look.

"I am passionate about developing my own textiles, fabrics, and embroideries. I give my designs and ideas to the weavers and in the process whenever a customer buys a piece from me, she would be assured of a certain uniqueness. It is because the process from the very beginning takes place in-house and is not available anywhere in the market," she says.

Her recent spring-summer '19 collection, 'Summer of Wander', revolves around Ikkat, featuring kurtis,

dupattas, Anarkalis, suits, maxi dresses with colour blocking, highlighted with hand-printed geometric motifs, stripes, and florals. "It is an easy-breezy collection with details of cowrie shells and coins, which is Indie and can be packed to be worn at a beachside in Miami," she admits. Her designs incorporate a juxtaposition of multiple motifs in vibrant hues which elevate her flowy silhouettes.

At a time, when the boundaries of Indian handloom is being pushed by offering a multitude of comfortable alternatives to other artificial weaves, she ensures her participation promoting Indian textiles and artisans. Her fabric composition comprises 95 percent silk consummated with Chanderi, organza, or Benarasi. Parekh's unflinching work ethic of acknowledging and collaborating with local artisans and constantly creating contemporary designs using traditional weaves is what makes her dexterity valuable.

On that note, she shared an instance when she was working with a weaver in Bhujodi in Kutch. She picked up a few samples from him and tweaked it with a new personality and tone by infusing her aesthetics which was later worn by actresses like Aditi Rao Hydari and Priyanka Chopra. The weaver then started weaving the reinterpreted fabric.

The difference being served at Anushree's label, is in the fabric—its texture and print; in the design, its shaping, layering and draping; in the conceptualising, or its originality and innovations. All these are enough to travel to any length for, as this is unique in many ways. ■



ANUSHREE'S JOURNEY A Fashion Design graduate from SNDT College, Mumbai. She launched her eponymous label in 2015.





H

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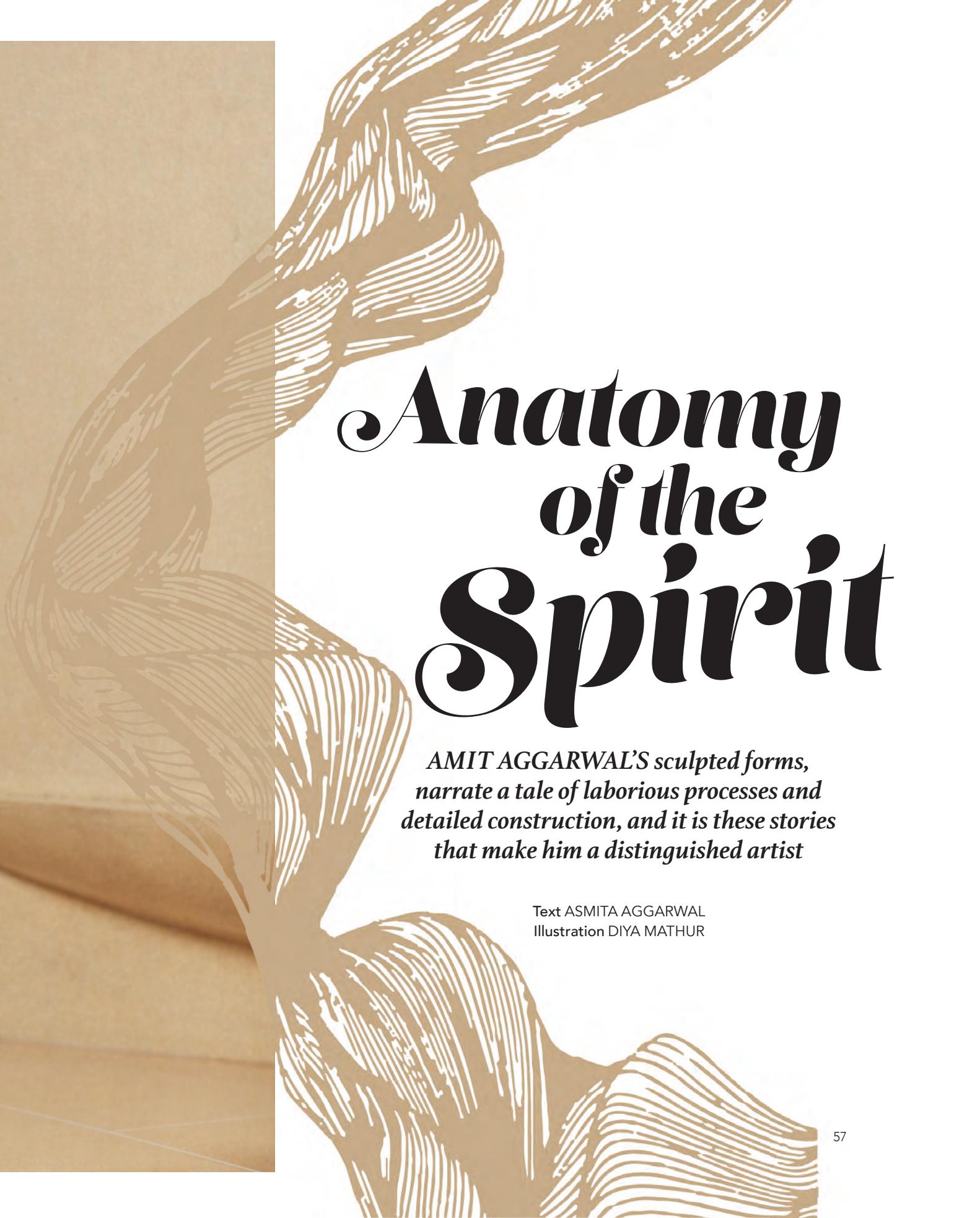
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FASHION



Metallic tone of
the evening gown
embedded with floral
motifs embodies pizazz



Anatomy of the Spirit

AMIT AGGARWAL'S sculpted forms, narrate a tale of laborious processes and detailed construction, and it is these stories that make him a distinguished artist

Text ASMITA AGGARWAL
Illustration DIYA MATHUR

FASHION



A blush pink silhouette
is adorned with abstract
designs, emanating
modernity



CHe has everything that makes him a quintessential Mumbai boy—patience, grace and of course, agility to take a brand from ground zero to the pinnacle. That's what makes Amit Aggarwal unique in more ways than one. Raised in a family that was more academic than industrial, his engineer father instilled in him a sense of purpose, which is why he came to study at NIFT, Delhi, when he was 19, and never returned to Mumbai.

From German philosopher Ernst Haeckel's natural forms to adapting sustainability in the true sense

Though Amit is a man of many talents, he does AM.IT, which possesses a crazy street-style template, fun and irreverent with an underlined playfulness and focus on constant experimentation. Then quite the contrast is his bridal/couture line, which is more thoughtful, a risqué product as there is more investment in it. A devotee of late Tunisian style maverick and 80s blizzard, Azzedine Alaïa, Amit grew up loving his sense of proportions and sculpting around the body, as well as his absolute distaste for trends and doing four collections a year. “I jumped off the

“Honestly, everything begins from an unknown idea and the total abstraction gives it ambiguity.”

of the word, he has used all the tools available—recycle, upcycle, sequin waste, polythene bags to *gamchhas* and even *bindi* sheets to create textures without the help of traditional embellishments. That's why his ensembles are far from heavy zardosi, *aari* or thread work, a predictable mould for most Indian couturiers.

But that's not all. Trained under the master himself, Tarun Tahiliani, the king of drapes, Amit developed an eye for contemporarisation. That's why his projects and interventions with Patola, Ikat, Benarasi and Phulkari are rebelliously new-age, yet embody a distinct persona. His permutations and combinations transcend the convention. “I've never had a five-year plan. I just enjoy the process of making clothes and leave the rest to customer satisfaction,” he adds.

hamster wheel a long time ago. I like to work at my own pace. I look at not the shape of a woman, but her personality. That's what I dress, even though all our pieces are custom-built just for you, as per your specifications, hugging each curve as you wear it,” he says.

There is a feeling of speciality, when it is made for you, even though this art is slowly dwindling in times of a prêt takeover. The beauty of his sometimes serpentine ensembles tell a different tale, where the guru doesn't initiate with a typical motif or travel story to an exotic foreign destination or dreamy deserts, but rather, a totally out-of-the-box space—skeletal forms of organic matter, organisms or plants, inspired by detailed diagrams that describe their movements. “There is no linearity to the

FASHION

An amalgamation
of silver linears and
exquisite patterns





“I have girls, who go with just heavy earrings or a delicate diamond choker. The shine has to be your face, not your neck.”

embellishments. Rather, they are 3D, and sometimes a curvature becomes angular. Honestly, everything begins from an unknown idea and the total abstraction gives it ambiguity,” he confides.

For malleability and structure everyone has their favourites, Amit too, works extensively with Chanderi and hand woven organza, which has an in-built diaphanous feel. What makes it special is the duality it offers, fragility with solidity as he combines this with the patterns of Ikat, to create a definitive mood-board. What’s interesting is that Amit likes to attempt formidable segments, like menswear which became “challenging yet pleasing”. He launched it last year, with a touch of androgyny and an angular aesthetic. “I really wanted to blur the line between menswear and women’s wear, which is the future of clothing, and I think I am inching towards it,” he adds.

What he truly savours is bridal, as his ideology remains dressing someone, who is in touch with her inner being minus the pressures of the material world, as a person and also professionally. Women, he has discovered want to be themselves, and the outfit should blend in, not stick out. Many thinking individuals are warriors of sorts, and can’t be told what they need. “I enjoy interacting with enlightened souls and if you look, women have taken on unexpected professions, which give them the freedom and will to experiment. They respect tradition, yet want to have their say in what they wear on their D-Day,” he explains.

A wedding is a dream, a celebration, and he strongly believes it is not a life-altering moment as it is made out to be. Rather, a bride grows from there. She gets a partner to help her build a future together. So he never uses the uncomfortable can-can for volume or girth, never goes over-the-top, believes you don’t have to look opulent or caked up. Rather,

you should feel light-hearted; your *lehenga* must be frothy, and jewellery minimal. “The first thing I ask is what kind of jewellery the bride will wear and then we start with the outfit. I have girls, who go with just heavy earrings or a delicate diamond choker. The shine has to be your face, not your neck, I always advise them,” he confesses.

As most of his ensembles are metallic, he does decide what will look appropriate based on skin tones, so a vermillion, crimson and cyan needs to be tested before it is bought. “I like to dress women who care about what they are wearing, what it is made of and what’s the inspiration, and why the designer is creating it. There has to be a back story,” he explains.

If you look at the brand’s Instagram page you can see how he narrates the entire process of crafting the outfit—information a lot of brands don’t provide—also making him vulnerable to plagiarism. “It is important for me that the bride understands the techniques and not just how an ensemble looks visually, as we attach a feeling with each piece,” he says. That’s why how you feel when you wear it, becomes important, not just how it sculpts your form.

From two to 50 people running a business, Amit’s brand has grown by leaps and bounds and even though he wants to diversify, it won’t be with accessories, but rather homes. Architecture has been an important part of his life and clothing, and if he gets a good partner, a collaborative effort may result in effective building design. “What instills happiness in me as I grow older, considering I have done many experiments from my first initiative ‘Morphe’ to now, sis dressing intelligent people and understanding the inner workings of an ensemble, which no one can see, but only experience. This is what I wish to continue, while keeping my business small, exclusive and ingenious,” he concludes. ■

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FASHION

Stitch of Time

TISHA SAKSENA'S label is a blend of handcrafted luxury and sartorial choices imprinted in the beauty of the written word

Text SADHVI ARORA

Literature is motivating. It is inspiring. It is a thought-provoking process and may affect someone who has followed writings, either as an academic pursuit or scholastically, in a variety of ways. It influences the style of such individuals no matter what their professional calling may be.

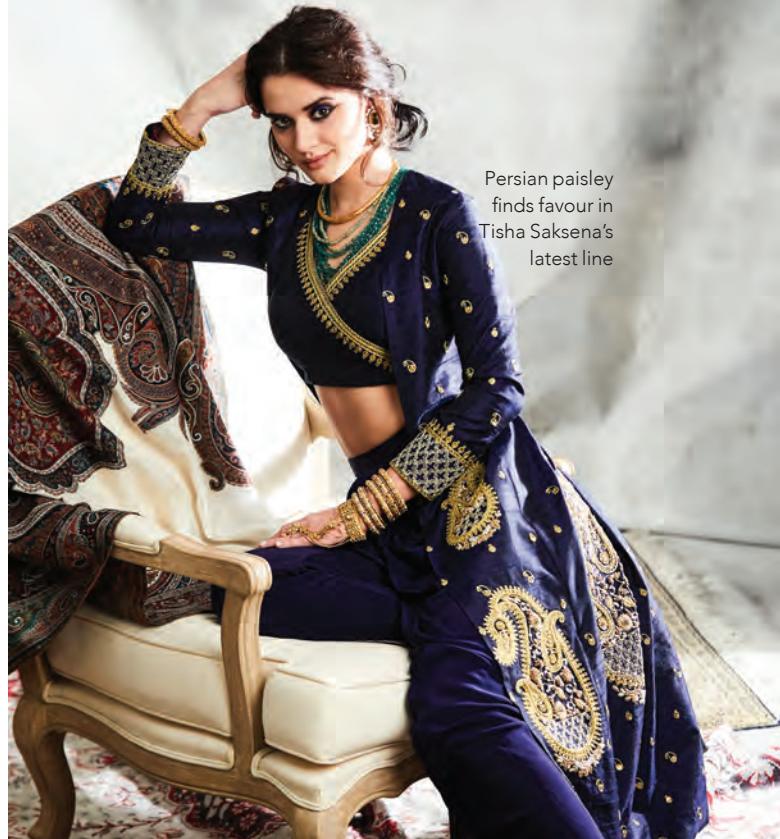
One such person, who is influenced by the elements of literary texts is Tisha Saksena. Her love for the written word, story-telling, and textiles, steered her design sensibilities and manifested itself into her label—Tisha—which was launched in September 2012. She opened her flagship store in Meherchand Market, in the capital, in July 2014.

“I think of clothes and designs as a discipline where words are your fabrics and punctuations are your finishing,” says the designer. Just as her stories are rich in imagination so are her designs, with the exuberance of being creatively non-restrictive.

Her journey is defined by reading through the pages of history, and of the path-breaking expeditions as well as her personal odyssey to different countries, thereby finding art, crafts, and textiles of India. “We apply the craft of impetus in story-telling to the design, which holds the story in terms of—sometimes a pattern that may have a historical origin, or retrospectively ethnic. For example, one of our collections called ‘White Mughals’ was influenced by the romances in a book based around the late 18th century, highlighting the cross-mingling between European colonisers and Mughal royalty. The collection of garments is a result of an amalgamation of European as well as Indian inputs,” says Saksena.

She graduated in English (Hons.) from Lady Shri Ram College, Delhi University, and simultaneously took evening classes in fashion designing from the National Institute of Fashion Technology, New Delhi. Her passion for fashion ignited over this period of time, leading her to join the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising, (FIDM) Los Angeles, to hone her skills, in 2007.

Since the inception of the label, Saksena knew her penchant for handloom would be the USP of her label. The label



Persian paisley finds favour in Tisha Saksena's latest line

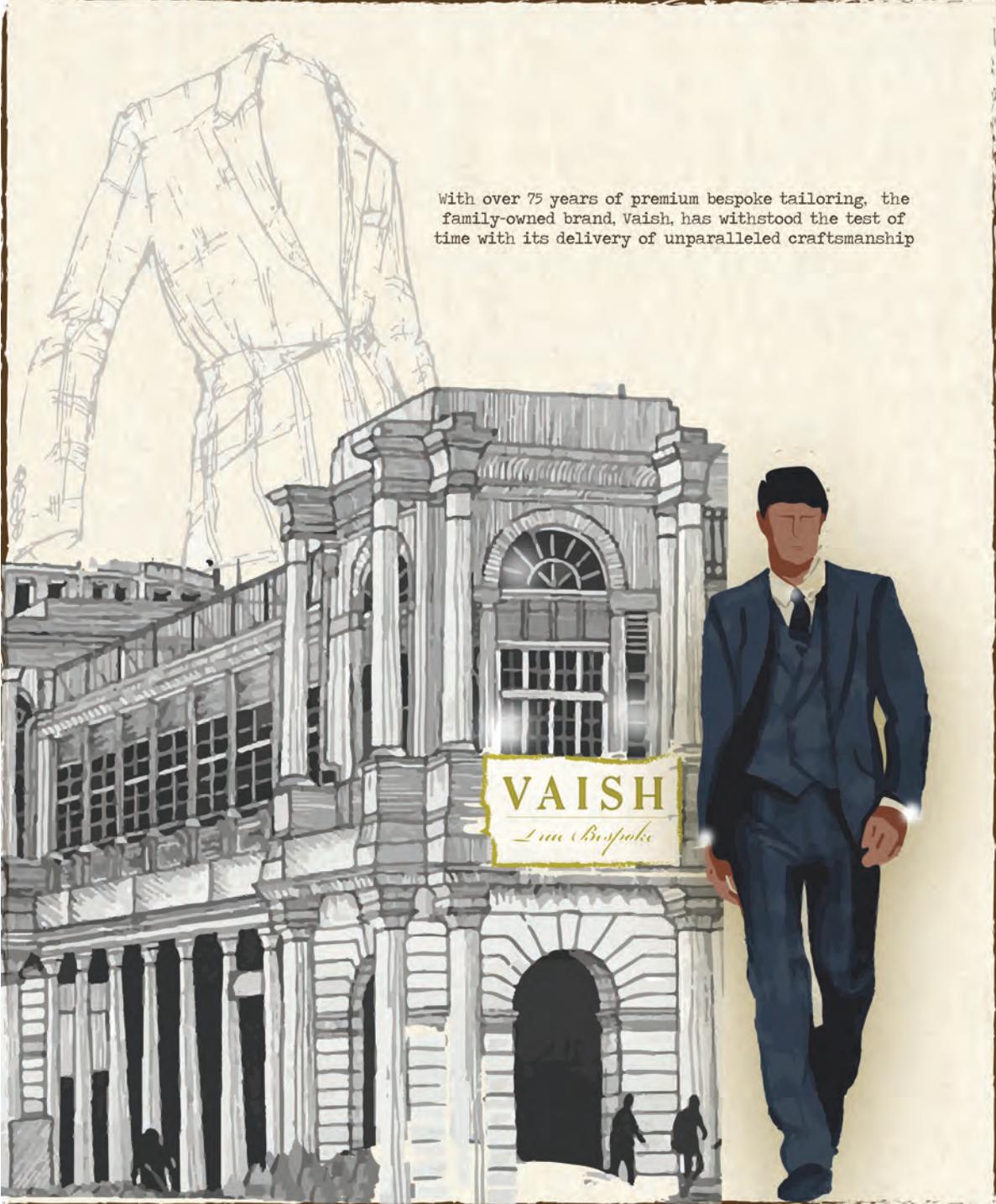
engages only in ‘hand-done’ embroideries, stitching, draping and finishing, in all their garments which are meticulously executed on the inside as well as outside. “Eighty percent of the fabric we work with, is handloom,” says Saksena, who values local artisans’ work and incorporates it in her collections mostly by tweaking it with her own traditional yet modernistic style.

“Most of the drapes are done by hand, including finishes, tassels and everything else you see. There is no machine involved, except for sewing the garment,” explains Saksena. Her recent collection, “Kairi” is inspired by a Persian paisley motif brought in by Mughals to India, bearing a striking and vivacious palette of ensembles suited for all your pre-wedding requisitions. The label uses a wide array of fabrics, mostly sourced by weavers from across the country, including Matka silk, mashru fabric, Bandhani, organza, raw, and cotton silk. Drapes, dhoti pants, blazers, shararas, tunics, silk dresses, capes, lehengas are offered by the brand in contemporary shapes which are encrusted with bold and artistic embroideries.

Tisha’s eponymous label excels in handcrafted ensembles with indigenous crafts and fabric, reviving the pride of old forgotten forms and textiles, synthesising them with exemplary tailoring, relevant for women today. ■



TISHA'S JOURNEY studied at NIFT, Delhi, and later went on to perfect her skills at FIDM, Los Angeles.



With over 75 years of premium bespoke tailoring, the family-owned brand, Vaish, has withstood the test of time with its delivery of unparalleled craftsmanship

Men in Black

The house of VAISH has charmed from Maharani Gayatri Devi to Maharaja of Patiala

Text SADHVI ARORA Illustration DIYA MATHUR

1940's

was that time in Delhi where a lot was forming and—reforming. From the ageing Chandni Chowk, which till then was the hub that addressed all that was desirable in that age of transition, the limelight had begun to shift to a new centre that came up in central Delhi. This new centre was the Connaught Place, built in 1933, and was named after the Duke of Connaught. This new marketplace was meant to serve the aristocratic.

At that time, India was ruled by the British and World War II was impacting almost all lifestyles, where, one way to be elite meant to be dressed tastefully and exquisitely, Connaught Place was trying to make itself the answer to the desire of the crème de la crème society.

Apart from the British bureaucracy, there was a large presence of British Army officers, who became big clients, shopping at Connaught Place. Much of their demand was to be met here, so due to the far-sightedness of Mr. O.P. Vaish, the answer was a bespoke tailoring company, in 1940, with an unwavering goal to deliver excellence. This company exclusively caters to menswear.

Mr Sachin Vaish, 45, the third generation promoter, delights in the details of his work and can recall his early memory at the age of seven, when the business mantra, "Time to sell, no time to buy", was chanted everyday by his dedicated grandfather, O.P. Vaish, who created this 79-year-old empire, relentlessly pushing his passion for excellence, every day, except Sundays. Weekends, the three generations sat together flipping through the fabrics and materials to underline the importance of what was the emphasis of the company.

It is safe to say, Sachin had subconsciously nurtured his childhood curiosity of designing, which is now channeled into the strength and heritage of the house of Vaish. He completed his undergraduate in Commerce from Delhi University and masters in Design and Technology from Pearl Academy,

Delhi. His area of expertise grew when he worked at a garment export company in the capital and with regular visits to Savile Row.

"With no compromise in quality and fit, the quantum emphasis is only on the customer," says Vaish. He explains, "There is a medley of influences which has created our unique style. For us, being bespoke tailors, meant we create the garment after meeting the client, based on his personality, age and profession, with over 5,000 to 8,000 designs to choose from. This is the fundamental difference between a designer and a bespoke tailor's work. We don't push a pre-made style to the client."

Since the beginning, the family has only been associated with the best of everything in the business. The founder of the company was trained at the prestigious, Tailor and Cutter Academy in London. Both O.P. Vaish and Ashok Vaish, worked at Savile Row, London, who later handed down their knowledge and skills to Sachin. According to him, "Nothing can substitute time and experience."

"We are very focussed on using natural fabrics," says Sachin. The brand offers both traditional and contemporary ensembles, majorly made with natural fabrics including wool, cashmere, cotton, linen, silk in addition to high-quality cuff-links, handkerchiefs pocket squares and ties.

As shocking as it sounds, it's true that Vaish doesn't have a buttonholing machine. You know it's truly bespoke when a detail as minute as this is meticulously sourced and hand-made. Mother-of-pearl, wood, and coconut are some of the materials used to provide finesse. The success was unstoppable since the inception of the store when the clientele included, apart from the British officers, aristocracies, Princes of India like Maharaja of Patiala, and Jaipur, and government officials. They made an exception by designing horse riding breeches for Maharani Gayatri Devi. When the store was visited by maharajas or nawabs, the Vaish house used to get informed and made arrangements to suit the taste and style of the clients, which led to shutting down the shop for the general public and rolling a carpet from the entrance till the street, for a grand welcome.

The true essence of the brand lies in these four qualities—bespoke, luxury (in its true sense), quality and artisanal. All work in synchronisation to create a long-lasting impeccable garment with utmost importance given to the relationship with the client. The discrete eye for detail and a monumental personal care for each separate client is the hallmark of Vaish. ■



SACHIN'S JOURNEY

His extensive experience in the field of design and business and teachings from his father has helped him hone the skills to carry forward the legacy. The design house stands strong with its exquisite and top-notch designs for menswear ranging from classic to traditional wear. Vaish offers not just bespoke, but also personalised services that add a unique touch to each hand-crafted story.



Top, Pooja Shroff; Sharara, Ritika Mirchandani; Jewellery, Isharya



Tur maverick

The sacred turmeric purifies, heals, facilitates rituals and integrates the threads of history and modernity into sartorial weaves. Matching the bright hues of the colour are traditional attires of draped saris, ghararas, dhoti-pants embellished with gilded embroideries. Its translation as a powerful statement by Indian designers lends a bold character to the composition of kundan, emeralds, gold, pearls, and diamonds. The diaphanous silhouettes depict the vastness of its influence, vividly occupied in our culture.

Styling and Art direction TANISHQ MALHOTRA

Concept ASMITA AGGARWAL

Photography ANUBHAV SOOD

FASHION



Blouse, Akanksha
Gajria; Jewellery,
Purab Paschim



Top and Palazzos, Ridhi
Mehra; Jewellery,
Goenka India

FASHION





Blouse and Dhoti-pants, Papa
Don't Preach by Shubhika;
Jewellery, Jewels of Jaipur

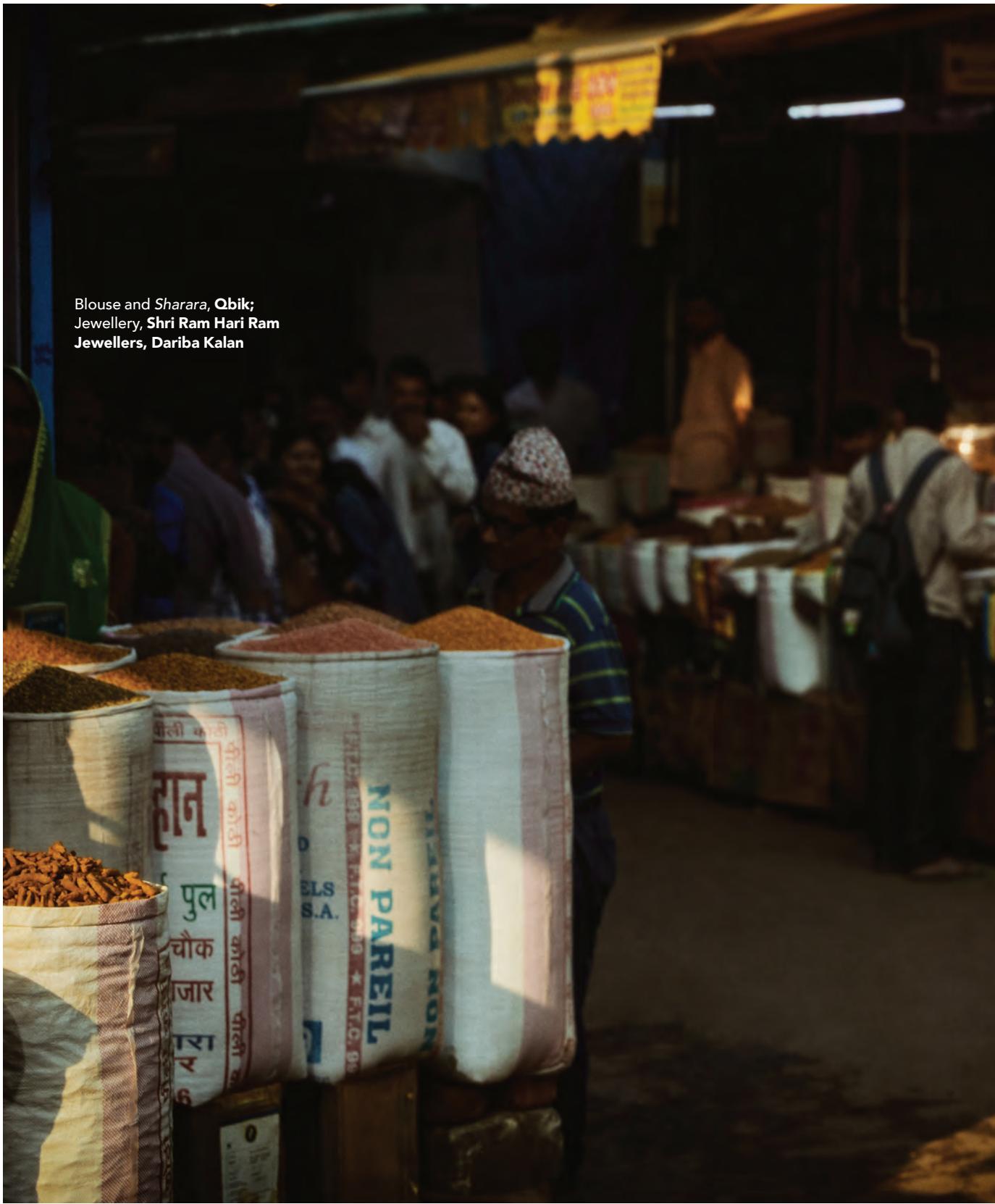


Gown, Jade by Monica and
Karishma; Cape, Samant Chauhan;
Jewellery, Shri Ram Hari Ram
Jewellers, Dariba Kalan



FASHION

Blouse and Sharara, Qbik;
Jewellery, Shri Ram Hari Ram
Jewellers, Dariba Kalan







Gown, Jade by Monica and Karishma; Jewellery, Shri Ram Hari Ram Jewellers, Dariba Kalan; Heels, Stylist's own



Draped Jumpsuit, Tarun
Tahiliani; Jewellery,
Raniwala 1881

Model: **Radhika Bopaiyah**

Model Agency: **Inega**

Hair and Make-up: **Geet Sukhani**

Assisted By: **Diya Mathur and Sadhvi Arora**





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LUXURY

MANUSHI SINGH | YASH AGARWAL | NITIN
GOENKA | SABA KAPOOR | PRERNA AND
DRISHTI KHURANA | DHRUV GURWARA
| NITIN GILARA | RITIKA BHASIN GUPTA

Illustration DIYA MATHUR



(A)Scent of a Woman

Mom Sunita is her ideal and before fashion's proverbial bug bit her, SONAM KAPOOR wanted to be a librarian, as books are her fountainhead, but the actress—known for snazzy red carpet looks—wants to play believable, real characters who tug at your heart strings, like her next Zoya Factor. She tells us how father Anil Kapoor sharpened her acting prowess and why husband Anand, remains a 'sounding board'.

Text ASMITA AGGARWAL
Photography ARJUN MARK
Styling and Creative Direction MOHIT RAI



Blouse, Lehenga and
Blazer, **Amit Aggarwal**;
Jewellery, **Rare Heritage**,
A Mehta Emporium
Initiative

You were recently seen at the Cannes Film Festival in an extravagant white blazer with pants. How was your experience different this time?

Every visit to Cannes for me is unique and special because it celebrates everything I'm passionate about—art, fashion and cinema. The French Riviera just gets better every year and the atmosphere is always so electric.

How do you and your sister, Rhea Kapoor blend in your work and style ideologies, leading to some of the most experimental looks offered by the industry?

Honestly, we don't put a lot of thought into the looks and don't put pressure on ourselves. Fashion is something both Rhea and I love. It comes naturally to us and we completely enjoy it. My looks have a lot of me in it, but also a lot of her. It reflects and celebrates our state of mind.

You have been a part of movies with unconventional roles which are challenging the norms, like Padman, Veere di Wedding, and recently released Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Laga. What drives your creativity?

I've always wanted to be part of cinema that makes a difference, that breaks stereotypes and that has something to say. It's a conscious effort to identify stories that deserve to be told.

We saw the on screen chemistry of father daughter in Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Laga. Anil Kapoor has been in showbiz since years; what was the best part of collaborating?

I'm lucky to be Anil Kapoor's daughter. He's an inspiration not just to me, but to all the generations that have come after him. His energy is infectious and his passion and drive towards work is something we learn from him every

day. It took a special film like *Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Laga* to bring us together and it was an honour to play his daughter on-screen.

You have been vocal about your opinions on media platforms. Section 377 was scrapped last year and the film was based on the subject of homosexuality. What is your opinion on it?

Even if the film changed the life of just one person, that is enough for me. That is the kind of effect I want to have when I make a choice and play a lesbian character.

Padman was released last year with Akshay Kumar, which had an important message of promoting the use of sanitary pads in rural areas and on the other hand, Veere di Wedding, broke all the preconceived notions by portraying women in a strong light. Your films seem to have an underlying social context which is relevant today. What are some elements you look for, in a script?

I think, it's important to make such films, even if they don't make the big numbers at the box-office. I have a safety net, coming from a family where I don't have to fend for myself to such an extent. I honestly feel that when you come from that place of privilege, or you achieve something in life where you can make hard choices, then you should make brave and responsible choices.

Being in the limelight, celebrities often become the target of trolls on social media platforms. How do you steer away from the negativity?

I take it with a pinch of salt. Everyone's entitled to an opinion; so am I. It's only fair to allow people to voice that opinion. Yes, it can get really nasty sometimes, but I try to focus on the positives.

Apart from working with Bollywood megastars, you have performed with some fine actors, including Rajkummar Rao, Ayushmann Khurrana and Saurad Khan. How has it shaped your acting skills?

Honestly, the biggest draw for me has been the script and story. I want to try it all and I don't base my judgements on the co-star. Of course, they are all very talented and it's been a pleasure working with them.

Veere di Wedding featured Kareena Kapoor Khan, Swara Bhaskar and Shikha Talsania and was co-produced by your sister, Rhea Kapoor. How was it like to work with a powerhouse of talented women in the industry?

Kareena, Swara, Shikha and I had such a great time working on this film, to add to that we had Rhea producing it. It was empowering to not just make the film, but witness the kind of love and acceptance the film received. It also broke a norm, becoming the first film to be headlined by female leads minus a big A-list male star. It was a game changer of its time.

Neerja, a thriller based on a real life incident received the best film award. How hard was it to immerse in a role demanding a new reality altogether?

The challenge here wasn't just the role, but to do Neerja Bhanot's memory and her family proud. I tried my best to portray her in the most sensitive manner and the fact that we revived the memory of this unsung hero was what made me happiest.

Which are some style icons from classic cinema that inspire you?

There have been so many style icons who've inspired me...from Marlene Dietrich, Audrey Hepburn, Grace Kelly to Madhubala.



Blouse, Lehenga and Dupatta,
Papa Don't Preach by Shubhika;
Juttis, **5 Elements** by Radhika
Gupta; Jewellery, **Jewels of Jaipur**



Blouse, Lehenga
and Dupatta, **Ritika**
Mirchandani; Jewellery,
Raniwala 1881





Blouse, Lehenga and Dupatta,
Anamika Khanna; Jewellery,
Hazaarilal by Sandeep
Narang, GK-1

*“I do believe that the art
of reading is getting lost in
the world of digitalisation
and no one has the patience
to open a book and read
anymore.”*



Sari and Blouse, **Rahul Mishra**; Jewellery,
Goenka India



“Everyone has the right to decide what kind of bride they want to be and what they choose to wear for that special occasion.”

One element which has been constant in your career is your distinct and individualistic sense of style. How has the Kapoor entourage influenced your choices?

I hail from a family with all strong, individualistic minds...there's no formula here and we were always encouraged as children to pursue our passions and follow our dreams. That's something that reflects in my sense of style. It's very me and it's what I'm thinking and feeling.

Managing personal and professional life amidst the glitz and glamour of acting, attending film festivals and making special appearances can be burdensome. What is your Zen formula?

When you decide to be a movie star that's what you sign up for. However, I've been very lucky to be surrounded by people who are constantly encouraging and supporting me. Whether it's my family, my husband or my in-laws, I just feel very grateful. **You got married to Anand Ahuja last year, how do you incorporate each other's advice in the workspace**

and work around hectic schedules involving different time zones?

That's the thing about love...you just make it work. We've managed to find a beautiful balance. He's someone I look up to and is a sounding board so I do go to him for advice, or if I need to discuss something I'm unsure of. Despite the crazy schedule, everyday has been phenomenal.

Weddings can be stressful sometimes for the bride to be. What is your advice for them?

It's supposed to be a happy occasion, but ends up being stressful for many. My advice would be to enjoy every moment and take things as they come.

Sending out digital invites for your wedding, gave out an important message of sustainability. How do you think the Indian fashion sphere is adapting to it?

I think the fashion segment is really evolving and embracing sustainability and social awareness like never before.

Indian brides are opting for

contemporary silhouettes for occasions, in comparison to the rather ostentatious ensembles. What can they imbibe from the traditional ways to infuse into today's zeitgeist, to stay in touch with their roots?

Everyone has the right to decide what kind of bride they want to be, and what they choose to wear for that special occasion. The easiest manner to infuse something traditional would be a fun henna design, Indian jewellery and accessories, traditional colours in a contemporary silhouette.

What are some traits and advice you have acquired and follow ardently, from your mother, Sunita Kapoor?

My mother Sunita is the ideal I look up to. Our love for fashion (Rhea & I) stemmed from her. She's always carried herself with grace and poise and is everyone's go-to. I watched her handle the finances at home and that's something I've learnt from her.

What was your first encounter with movies and fashion that made you sure of this path?

I always wanted to do something

“I think the fashion segment is really evolving and embracing sustainability and social awareness like never before.”

creative but getting into films was not something I had planned. According to my father and people who knew me really well, there was always an actor in me. It does take a lot of effort, time and a football team size entourage, to make actors look the way we do. But I've made peace with it and embraced it. I've also learnt to deal with the pressure and enjoy the ride.

You debuted with *Saaurariya*, directed by the multi-hyphenate, Sanjay Leela Bhansali, in 2007. How was it starting out with the trailblazing director?

It was honestly a dream to make my debut in a Sanjay Leela Bhansali movie. I've also assisted him on the sets so that made me a little more comfortable while working on the film. It was a dream launch and will always be a special film to me.

With digitalisation, somewhere the art of reading is getting lost, you started a thread with the #WeekendReadingWithSonam on social media platforms. What made you initiate it?

I once wanted to be a librarian, just so that I could be around books. I do believe that the art of reading is getting lost in the world of digitalisation and no one has the patience to open a book and read anymore. I read on aircrafts, before going to bed, in between takes. Instead of being on my phone, I read and the reason I initiated this on social media is to encourage the habit in others as well.

Being a trendsetter in every facet, from going ahead with progressive scripts to a cutting-edge template of style, if you could go back in time to set a trend for the future, what would it be?

Making education cool...making reading cool...making social awareness cool.

A poster for your next film, *Zoya Factor*, has been released starring Sanjay Kapoor, and Dulquer Salmaan, based on a novel by Anuja Chauhan. What are you looking forward to in the next release?

I think it's important for me to play characters who are normal. That's

what I loved about Zoya—she is very normal and average. I am really looking forward to it. ■

INSTANT CRUSH

➲ **FAVOURITE FASHION ERA:** I love the fashion between the '50s-'80s. I love vintage fashion.

➲ **YOUR GO-TO DESTINATION:** London...it's my second home.

➲ **MOST-LIKED NOVEL:** A coffee table book of Henri Cartier-Bresson, one of my favourite photographers. I really like that book—signed by him, so it's precious to me.

➲ **ONE ADVICE FOR MILLENNIALS:** Be yourself. There's no one better.

➲ **THE ULTIMATE BRIDAL ACCESSORY:** Your 1,000 watt smile.

Tunic and *Lehenga*, Tarun Tahiliani; Juttis, 5 Elements by Radhika Gupta; Jewellery, Shri Ram Hari Ram Jewellers, Dariba Kalan



Hair & Make-up: **Namrata Soni**; Art Direction and Set Direction: **Gopalika Virmani**



Trousseau essentials

Burmese Rubies and Diamonds collection





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Time warped Trio

*Closing in on their fifth year of
dominating the bridal market,
MANUSHI SINGH of Rare
Heritage elaborates on the brand's
endeavour towards conquering
all aspects of glitz—jewellery,
accessories and couture—to create
the ultimate retail space*

Text DIYA MATHUR

Artisanal setting of
diamonds is finely
detailed with brilliance



LUXURY

Q: You were a student of medicine and come from a business family. How did you end up in the competitive world of glamour?

A: As a child, witnessing my mother's involvement in the jewellery industry exposed me, and further triggered a nascent fascination with jewels and gems. Besides the environment that nurtured me, it was also my nature that was inclined towards creative thinking and glamour. As a child, I remember taking an initiative in dressing during the holiday season—a true testament to my obsession with couture, in its most innocent form. At the brink of having to make a career call, I chose medicine and acquired a BDS and MBA in healthcare—not yet aware of what would eventually be my calling. What followed, was a complete shift in fields—which led me from health

fine jewellery, as it was known for its mastery in diamond cuts. While this could've been a challenge, it instead happened to be an advantage—as it led to an in-depth SWOT analysis of what the client wanted, and could buy. Our greatest learning was the skewed ratio between a high presence of buyers to a low availability of products. Varun and Nakshatra Mehta and I joined forces to bridge the gap between aspirations and availability through a medium that we coined as Rare Heritage—the ultimate go-to place for new-age brides, who demand a balance of aesthetics and traditional craftsmanship.

Q: The trend of personalisation and customisation was envisaged by the company when it started. What stemmed the idea and how is it delivered to the customers?

customise couture pieces, and bridal looks to fit the heirloom, instead of it being the other way around. Deconstructed pieces also enable them the freedom to layer and customise as per the occasion. We understand that while we do offer judicious price points, a piece of jewellery is after all, an investment—so we hope to make it as suitable to our clients' likings, be it in terms of price points, or aesthetic preferences. While this process is an emotional one, it's also important to be practical about budgets.

Q: Elaborate on the design philosophy of your brand.

A: Our USP is unparalleled variety—that includes diamonds, uncut stones, and collections crafted from gold. Our upcoming collection, 'Tarifa', will be a bold showcase of larger uncuts,

“Working with age-old crafts and modernising is the thread, that ties the functionings of this brand together.”

finance to evolving Rare Heritage in 2013, with my partners, Varun Mehta and Nakshatra Mehta.

Q: What were some educational/professional milestones in your life? How did your background guide you in forming this empire?

A: Choosing dentistry came from my incessant need to take on challenges, a trait that continues to reflect through the Rare Heritage ethos. On a client visit to Nakshatra Mehta, and the fourth generation of the century-old jewellery empire, Mehta Emporium—mutual respect and ambitions led us to launch a new entity altogether. This body offered couture and precious gems—which paved the way for a new avenue completely, different from the Mehta Emporium, offered

A: Research and development of and for our customer, has always been the essence of this brand. When we started, it was SWOT analysis, a study of the finances and a thorough understanding of demand, supply and the market that gave us a starting point. It is this same regard for what the client wants in today's day, that reflects in our design thinking. We believe in satisfying the modern brides' need for direction in a gamut of possibilities, without compromising on the defining touch of individuality—and what better than to do it with personalisations and customisations? We empower the bride to own the piece she wears, to the extent that it resonates with her personality. Similarly, we appreciate heirlooms passed on for generations—which is why we offer our services to

such as tourmalines, multicoloured briolettes and sapphires, all studded with shaped solitaires in classic settings. Vintage settings of variegated stones, gold foliage and organic influences will make an appearance in the form of statement pieces. 'Tarifa' will be a mere reflection of our love for experimentation, that has been central to every collection. 'Reign of Gaia' was an ode to Mother Earth, with its avant-garde motifs on celestial space settings. Similarly, we took inspiration from Maharani Gayatri Devi's adoration for pearls and solitaires and interpreted it with a twist. The Queen's collection transformed brooches into cuffs and tiaras into necklaces. Sparkling diamonds, gleaming sapphires, raw stones and even corals and Russian emeralds are



Layered glistening
stones make for a
picture-perfect frame



“Research and development of and for our customer, has always been the essence of this brand.”

some such stones sprinkled through various collections—giving gold a contemporary spin, with a special focus on customisation. We work towards developing products that are light and flexible, and this has led to us moving away from old techniques and hinges that are no longer functional. Similarly, our ensembles look at making outfits for cocktails, *sangeets*, and receptions instead of just bridal pieces for the W-day, a trademark service being zari saris on order. So, working with age-old crafts and modernising is the thread that ties the functioning of this brand together.

Q: What should we look forward to from Rare Heritage's upcoming collection?

A: Our latest jewellery collection, 'Tarifa', takes forward artistic expression in more ways than one. It incorporates eras of decadent art history and its relevance as a potent medium of storytelling. The collection uses nuances of colour, to create bold and audacious pieces with gold, diamonds, sapphires, emeralds, rubies, and tanzanite. 'Tarifa' pays homage to iconic art movement in the



L to R: Varun Mehta, Manushi Singh and Nakshatra Mehta

form of functional jewellery. Baroque vintage glamour is celebrated in the form of gold and emerald designs that are reminiscent of the grandeur of the Victorian era.

Art Deco makes an appearance in the form of geometrical pieces redolent of the modernist movement that spanned between the 20s and 30s. Pop art is brought to life by layering colours and ombre—a nod to the experimental nature of art and its counterparts.

The use of colour creates an air of liveliness, showcasing a vivacious mélange of unique styles, including a flamboyant array of bridal chokers and stunning earrings to majestic *matha-pattis*, bracelets, and cocktail rings. It allows our brides to hand pick the story they want to tell and make it their own.

Q: Five years into the business, what have been some of your greatest learnings?

A: Closing in on the fifth year of our brand, it is important to delve into

the depths of time to understand Rare Heritage's inspirations—which go well and beyond a mere five years. We began our journey with the hope of inculcating modernity to what had been the parent company's (Mehta Emporium Jeweller) century-long affair with diamonds and traditional design. While taking cues from the past and creating for the future, we also found utmost importance in preserving artisan communities of the present. This need to generate opportunities and revive crafts, pushed us into expanding our range beyond just jewellery, and in the form of couture clothing. The central idea is to up the game for millennial brides, and quench their thirst for pieces that are modern, without compromising on the meaningful. A manifestation of this has been our extensive use of zardosi, zari, and *resham*, which has been a recurring element in our couture collections—techniques we are focusing on to generate job opportunities. ■

Using variegated gems,
Agarwal's creations are
reflective of raw decadence



No Stone Unturned

Carrying forward a century-old legacy is YASH AGARWAL, who pushes the boundaries of Indian jewellery design by creating ornaments using unfiled gems

Text DIYA MATHUR

Besides a glittering 100-year-old jewellery empire, what has been passed on for generations within the Birdhichand Ghanshyamdas family is an impeccable eye for detail. It was this intricacy and opportunity, that fuelled Birdhichand, who was the caretaker of Maharaja Ram Singh of Jaipur's state jewellery at the time, into dreaming of a brand of his own. Four generations later, the same detail-oriented thought lies in Yash Agarwal's DNA—who applies his learnings from working with legendary brands like Harry Winston and Tiffany & Co. to the philosophy of a family brand,

Birdhichand Ghanshyamdas, through his role as a creative director.

A formal training in manufacturing, gemstone identification and diamond grading paired with a natural flair to design, equips Agarwal to push Indian jewellery beyond its limited borders, into a global market. "We are, without a speck of doubt, winning hearts internationally. This is because our aesthetics are timeless, and ideologies ever-changing," says Yash. Fusing traditional elements with contemporary thought is what makes this brand and its creations adored globally.

As creative director, his vision transcends gold and bold jewellery and instead, dabbles with artistic concepts using *kundan Meenakari* as the brand's recurring leitmotif. "Today's independent and individualistic woman demands thinking silhouettes in the form of versatile pieces," he elaborates. So, his response to evolving markets and changing lifestyles is in the form of ingenious creations, such as earrings, bracelets and detachable necklaces. These pieces allow the wearer an unexpected freedom to experiment with precious baubles. He identifies the fun in layering—think a vibrant stack of mismatched bangles and bracelets, teamed with a playful *haath-phool*.

Agarwal's fascination with everything, from dust to gold, is what guides him down entirely different avenues of inspiration with each collection. His deep-seated love for the past, and eye for the future reflects in the brand's design trajectory, that is, handcrafting and re-interpreting century-old tradition into original statements. Signature collections include "Hunar", "Adrishya", "Aranya", "Aks", "Amer", "Adaa" and "Delhi Durbar", each of which have an emotional point of conception and elaborate process—from ideation to careful craftsmanship.

One such invention is "Amer", the result of a year-long research that translated the nuances of Indian architecture into jewellery. "This project remains close to my heart, as my home-state laid the groundwork for its development. "Amer" also presented the challenge of expressing years of architecture and potent culture through jewellery, which was like my canvas," he says. The result was spectacular. Within the dimensions of an earring—featuring uncut diamonds on golden arches that mimicked the sculptural wonder of Rajasthani architecture, at the edge of which sat rubies in the form of pigeons.

The label's most recent collection, "Delhi Durbar" pushed the boundaries of jewellery design in the form of sparkling bijouterie. Its use of specially cut and procured gemstones like Mughal-carved rubies, classic rose-cut, and old European-cut diamonds, pink sapphires, polkis and natural pearls—has made the collection reminiscent of royal opulence. "A simple paisley motif in itself is dissected, explored and heightened to an interesting new look," he says.

Despite an incessant need to push the boundaries, Yash



respects a stone for its raw appeal—an element that he finds best remained untouched. "We respect a stone for its natural appearance, and stay away from treatments that fabricate them into false representations. We specialise in precious materials and rare gemstones like diamonds, sapphires, rubies and emeralds. If there is a design the gem needs to fit, we hand cut them, treating each treasure with the respect it deserves," he says. The heritage house sticks to its roots while constantly creating innovative compositions.

What defines a Birdhichand piece however, is a genius balance between an unapologetic use of colour with minimal designs. "When I began my journey at Birdhichand in 2005, the jewellery space was stagnant in terms of experimentation. I wanted to break this mundane atmosphere with a splash of colour and thinking shapes," he adds. So, Yash did just that by adding colour through the use of age-old techniques, tinted stones and polki—the designer established a strong identity.

A journey that started with their first store at Johri Bazaar, Jaipur, has now found itself prime space at the centre of the capital and countrywide recognition. While this might be an achievement in itself, Agarwal has plans of his own—that are unconcerned by what others in the same space are doing. "There are no competitors in this industry. The idea is to stay true to one's own method," he concludes. With this in mind, Agarwal continues to explore exquisite stones instead of exploiting them, and dares to create simplistic pieces in a glitz and glamour-obsessed world. ■



YASH'S JOURNEY Jaipur-based expertise in gemology lends the designer's artistic visions an edge in technical execution.

LUXURY

Alchemy of Desire

*Weightless, superlative quality,
and a whole lot of passion, make
NITIN GOENKA a front-runner
in the exclusive diamond trade*

Text ASMITA AGGARWAL

Illustration DIYA MATHUR

7

he skylines, the monochromes, sights and sounds of the Big Apple, where Nitin Goenka studied and resided for many years, have found a blueprint in his vivid imagination where inanimate objects of luxury swim in his fervent subconscious. Such is the power of jewellery. It is all-consuming and somewhere very intimate, so it needs to be able to make the wearer sparkle.

It is with this philosophy that Goenka embarked on his journey, while launching his brand 'Goenka India', early this year. By appointment only, it doesn't believe in the brick and mortar formula of posh addresses, but does put customisation on top of the list.

And this brand doesn't sell the 'educated' diamonds by categorising them as 'white' and 'off white'. Rather, it is VVS and VS with absolute cut, clarity and rarer scales, making his clientele really exclusive; limited to those who value quality over quantity. Pink, yellow, blue, his stones are just like his doctrine—reticent, but offer a 100 per cent buyback satisfaction. That's why the identity has been well-established, and from the Sultan of Brunei to royal families in the Middle East have been his loyal clientele for two decades. "The diamond trade is going through a tough phase due to the recent developments, but these shiny stones are a girl's best friend and that remains a constant," he smiles.

New-age women have changed their choices in keeping with "insta-universities" daily upload. He believes now it is all about one statement piece, a stylish solitaire, long, classy evening wear earrings and they come fully informed about the price and size. "We offer everything with a certificate, so there is value to what you buy and no ambiguity," he admits.

This wealth of experience comes from Goenka working in the family business since the age of 15, and after 23 years in it, he understands from how to cut, grade and lay out the stones, the entire backend. Jaipur being a hub of the jewellery business became his seat of learning from a young age, specially Johri Bazar, till education took him to America. "I wanted to come back to my roots and give an interesting mix of East meets West in jewellery, only to a



"I wanted to come back to my roots and give an interesting mix of East meets West in jewellery."



LUXURY

“
Styling is de rigueur now, and the rules that were set by earlier jewellery makers are being passionately broken.
”





discerning audience,” he says. His superlative mastery over the craft is so pronounced that he can match stones based on size, depth, clarity and colour, all the parameters in one set so the entire piece’s value only increases with time, making it an ideal investment, not a whimsical buy.

Making sure that each customer goes back satisfied, they fit even a ₹1 crore piece in ₹50 lakhs, keeping your budget in mind without compromising on what you aspired to have liked and couldn’t acquire. “We do perfect fits, so we make it as per your neck measurements, so neither does it hang loose nor does it stifle you,” he confesses.

There are three lines Goenka India offers: modern that comes from Nitin’s global experience, which has the traditional fusing with the *jaali* work spine of the pieces he handcrafts, showing Jaipur’s rich heritage and mastery. Next is developing a line of *polkis*, with recut stones, unique designs, making it fully original in its presentation with a few Victorian influences blended in, to accentuate their appeal.

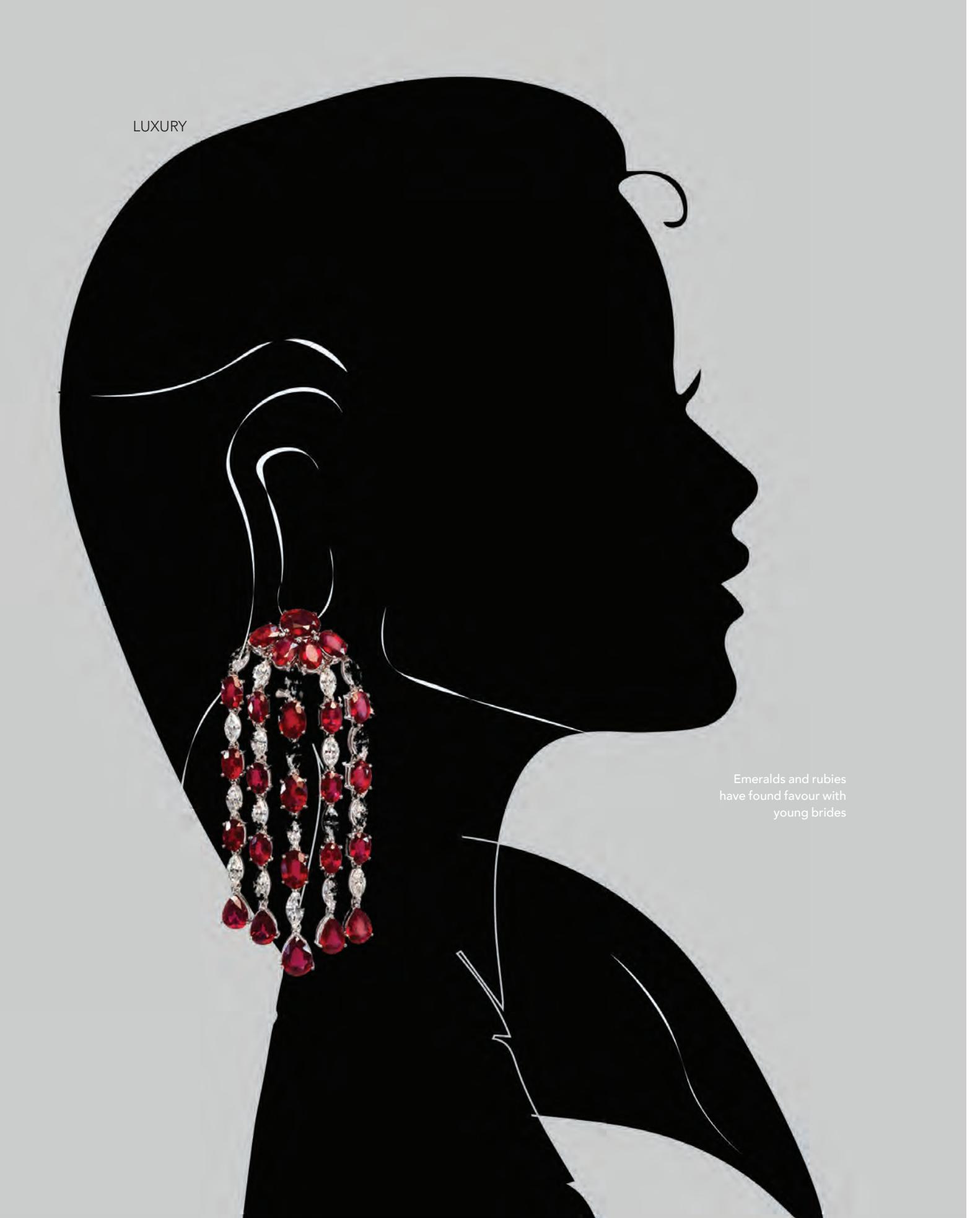
What’s interesting is their prêt line, that doesn’t make a dent in your pocket yet gives you a range of evening glamour, priced affordably, and is fun to wear. Goenka’s wife and a London School of Economics graduate Dhriti, is the quiet force behind him, who navigates the brand’s ethos through her astute understanding of what women desire, yet she does this from the shadows, despite being the more articulate of the duo.

Goenka, started in NY with designing small collections for stores like Saks Fifth Avenue, and then moved in with the big league of princes and sheikhs, their families, who were vacationing in the Caribbean, or jet setting around the world. Some of them would order cuff links of 10 carat solitaires, pristine finish, from him, while others would like a personalised service rather than buying off the shelf. That’s one of the reasons why Goenka wants to open a VIP lounge or even offer home visits to see and understand what the client desires and give him just that without compromise, and not waste energy on a fancy retail outlet.

NITIN'S JOURNEY started in Jaipur. Then it traversed to America, where he sold a million dreams with baubles.



LUXURY



Emeralds and rubies
have found favour with
young brides



“We don’t want to make 100 forgettable pieces; rather, we concentrate on one that makes your heart smile, boosts your confidence.”

“What’s new now are emeralds and everyone is loving them, and yes, the over-the-top variety, most luxurious ones with deep Columbian flavour,” he says. He believes, it is not just the main wedding set the bride concentrates on, but also the *matha pattis*, *haath-phool* and *naths*, that must be in tandem with the rest, and almost complementary.

“Styling is de rigueur now, and the rules that were set by earlier jewellery makers are being passionately broken. You mix white with yellow gold and the earrings and necklace needn’t match, making odds look fantastic as they clash,” he confirms. Small is out, so those who bought five tiny sets for a brunch have now abandoned that, making way for one large ‘wow’ set.

Hoping to not make a Bollywood-centric brand—rather a thinking, intelligent one—Goenka does agree, Sonam Kapoor would work as their brand ambassador in keeping with how seamlessly she is able to straddle both worlds making her a global citizen. She, he says is effortlessly graceful and understands the intangible nuances of the style walk. Internationally, if somebody embodies the spirit of the brand it has to be songstress Celine Dion—unfettered talent and a confirmed powerhouse, another face that resonates with him. “She is smart, modern, fashion-forward, yet upholds values of character and sincerity; that’s our woman,” he says.

What peeves him is that most people don’t understand ready-made jewellery may not look good on them; the size may be too long and the earrings just don’t fit right. Right size makes a huge difference in the overall look and every jeweller like him must ensure that. In India, you can get away with this, but international, informed clients that he is used to catering won’t tolerate this aberration. In America, five people did what here 50 do, he admits.

Weightless and perfect to look at, all of Goenka’s offerings just don’t feel either heavy or uncomfortable. This is his biggest achievement, that it is easy and you can wear it all night without breaking into a sweat. “We don’t want to make 100 forgettable pieces; rather, we concentrate on one that makes your heart smile, boosts your confidence and really is timeless,” he concludes. ■





In the words of French interior designer, Andrée Putman, "For a house to be successful, the objects in it must communicate with one another, respond to and balance one another."

Amidst a multitude of interior designers and furniture makers in the country, what makes a super-packed creative house stand out in the middle of chaos? It is their idiosyncratic sense of style and methodology, experimentalism, integrative thinking and a long relationship with their customers.

It can be hard to position yourself in the market, which already has a lot to offer but Nivasa Contemporary stands strong and exclusive, occupying 12,000 sq. ft. in Sultanpur, Delhi, following the steps of its 24-year-old parental company, Nivasa.

Nivasa Contemporary is spearheaded by the charismatic and skillful, Saba Kapoor, 27, who is not afraid to push the boundaries and redefine the periphery of designing with her new-fangled sense of style and dedication. Her brand blends art, tech-

nology, designing, and functionality with her judicious understanding of customers to create a perfect admix that balances art, aesthetics, scientific know-how, technological innovations and the practicality of a home.

The building blocks of her profession were in tune with hers since an early age, with multiple visits to her father's factory. She completed her undergraduate in Business Administration from the University of Bath in 2015. In 2013, she attended Summer School Of Interior Design and Furniture Design

in the UK, and interned at BoConcept in New York in 2014. She pursued interior designing at Parsons, New York, for her post-graduation in 2015. "When I started doing contemporary furniture here, all our carpenters and *karigars* used a certain way of carving and glazing. Initially, they were hesitant and resistant to my ideas and the design philosophy seemed alien to them. They lacked faith in innovations. But when the products were shaped and moulded to life, they understood," says Kapoor.

Her horizon of learning is not conditioned. Her will to keep moving forward and striving for unparalleled quality has helped her establish this brand, which is only two years old. She says, "Working in different environments helps you take on challenges and learn. I imbibe, analyse and learn from different people and places, which when combined with my ideas, gives birth to a new identity and style for me."

Nivasa offers a contemporary range of furniture for any and all requisitions of the customer, through personalised expertise in interior designing. It extends an enormous service of customising products with their minimal and cutting-edge innovations embedded with functionality and sophistication. Their experiential store has different sections of bedrooms, dining rooms, living area—each lending an independent ambience with different finishes and materials, but all characterised into a sense of tranquility with a high dose of luxury.

"I think my learning has been a union of what goes around internationally and in India. The sensibilities of

"The form should enhance the products; it shouldn't take away from the function."



my products is more straight line and contemporary, reflective of what's happening globally in terms of design, but I have used a lot of Indian techniques and methods. My furniture has a lot of carvings, but it is not done in a quintessential way. It is more geometrical with details of patterns and lines," she adds.

The eclectic combination of understated, earthy and pastel colours with structural shapes and patterns, clean and sharp lines intricate carvings and a strong presence of symmetry and equilibrium, follow the design principles of balance and harmony. Each product has a language and tone of its

own, unique to the personality of the product, which would adorn a corner, lending a character where it is placed. Nivasa Contemporary has an array of fabrics and materials, like linen, cotton, polyester, leather, counting to more than a 1,000 kinds and a variety of finishes, including gloss, matte, rav, often synthesized with each other, attributing to their quest for constantly delivering something fresh and innovative.

Functionality has always been of primary importance for the designer. Kapoor elaborates, "For me, function comes first and form is secondary. The form should enhance the products; it shouldn't take away from the function."

Her strongest support that helped her position herself firmly on the mantle of professional excellence are her parents, who started Nivasa and guided her on each and every step of the way with their expertise, experience and insight. She relished complete freedom to explore and traverse within the field of designing.

She is unafraid to take risks and her inspirations seem to come from the daily workings of her life. She might look at a dress and turn it into an exquisite table! She believes, the preference and choice of each customer has to be taken into consideration, without which no matter how great the designs may be, there will be no takers. Kapoor says, "Progress and innovation are all about the customer and that is the beauty of the relationship you form with the customer and their satisfaction." ■



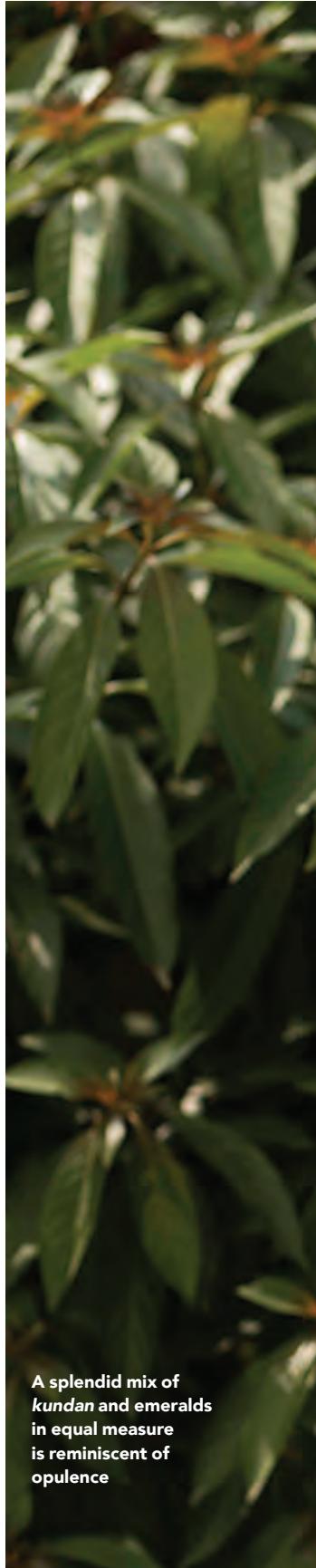
SABA KAPOOR'S interiors are pragmatic, innovative and progressive.

LUXURY

Queen of Diamonds

PRERNA AND DRISHTI KHURANA—the two driving forces behind Khurana Jewellery House, share their unbridled passion for haute joaillerie and reflect on new bridal trends

Text MANISH M



A splendid mix of kundan and emeralds in equal measure is reminiscent of opulence



LUXURY



An amalgamation of lustrous,
jewels with scintillating rubies is
fit for the contemporary bride

Established in 1951, Khurana Jewellery House has been the synonym for cutting-edge designs, craftsmanship and timelessness in the bridal luxury galaxy. *Bridal Asia Magazine* caught up with the house's director Prerna Khurana, who has envisaged, conceptualised and designed this sparkling metaphor for exquisite jewellery. "Having worked for almost two decades at Khurana Jewellery House, the brand has now become my place of worship," quips the lady, who pursued a Grading Diploma from IGI, Mumbai, before joining the business in 2003.

She believes as a team they push themselves to make KJH the biggest retail jeweller in India. "A part of our dream came true when Khurana Jewellery House was announced as the biggest retail store in Punjab, but the journey didn't end there. We not only have an entire nation to reach out to, but we are also foraying international markets. My dream is for KJH to be the brand, every woman relies on for her jewellery needs for any occasion. In the ever-changing Indian economy, it's imperative for a brand like KJH to expand beyond foreseeable horizons and our dream is to achieve that," she shares.

Her daughter-in-law Drishti Khurana joined the business in 2017, and works as a Marketing Evangelist. A GIA Diamond grading diploma holder, she too, was always driven by the passion for the arts and convinced that her future lay beyond books. "Over the years, I have been awarded over 20 honours for excellence in the field of academics, theatre and art illustration. In 2016, when I got married, while pursuing the diploma, I witnessed a huge gap in the demand and distribution of gemstone jewellery. This is what induced me to combine my business acumen with the acquired 'jewellery making and grading' knowledge to help KJH innovate. With an aim to restore the lost charm of jewellery adorned by Nawabs and Mughals, I try to provide modern women with jewels that can be worn on the red carpet as well as with casual work clothes," she shares.

The exclusive jewellery designs with unmatched artisanship make Khuranas one of the key players in the bridal luxury market. Each jewellery piece is a beacon of authen-

ticity, reflective of the brand's intrinsic philosophy and great heritage of trust since its inception. So what drew her towards haute joaillerie? "As they say, married Indian women and jewellery have always formed a great bond. When I got hitched, my path to self-discovery coincided with that of my husband's and this happy coincidence helped me discover my fascination for gemstones. Hence, I pursued a diploma in diamond grading from GIA and then there was no looking back," she recalls, with great pride.

Prerna remembers her paternal grandmother's *raani haar* with a matching *passa* she wore for family functions. "A piece that's really special to me is my maternal grandmother's *kundan Navratana haar*, which was gifted to me on my wedding as a family heirloom," she shares, reflecting on her earliest memory of falling in love with jewellery.

Her favourite gemstone is emerald, which she defines as the "Stone of Successful Love". "Emerald holds a strong astrological significance as well. It's also the stone of the royals. Green creates contrast and looks absolutely gorgeous. It stands out with whatever colour you're wearing and enhances the detailing of the jewellery design," she avers.

Having grown up soaking in the beautiful designs around her, one's keen to ask her about her favourite era in jewellery history. "One influence that has stood out, and has had a deep impact on the Indian jewellery space is that of the Mughal era. There is no doubt that *jadau* pieces form one of the major examples of high skilled craftsmanship that was brought into India by the Mughals. Their designs, motifs, symbols, stone work and colours till date, influence the jewellery industry," she says.

Khurana strongly believes that old is the reason why she's creating the new and when we ask her to elaborate, she throws us off-kilter with her unique take.

"New inspiration borrowed from the old traditional designs has many interpretations like—the new colour combinations keeping in mind, traditional aesthetics, new techniques of making light-weight pieces, innovations of designs by creating a fusion between gold and jade.



“Following the trend is one thing, but one should be a risk-taker and plan to style one's look differently and with confidence.”

“Your jewellery should make your entire vision come together and not just be a piece of accessory.”

Diamonds and gemstones are making Indian jewellery develop vigorously without losing the rich culture and heritage,” she observes.

Over the years, along with the bridal market, the jewellery market has also drastically changed and design houses have trained their attention to the millennial and Gen-Z brides. “The new-age brides are modern-day millennials with their soul set in traditions. They don’t want to compromise on their big day and desire jewellery which is traditional, funky and over-the-top. There is serious innovation in Indian jewellery styles with these new-age brides. They truly understand jewellery is not only for the bridal look; it also glorifies the entire personality of the bride. Whereas, incidentally, bridesmaids want lavish flattering accessories like oversized *maang tikka*, *haath phool*, *passa*, nose ring, etc. which are a must to spot them as bridesmaids,” she says.

The iconic house of KJH has shown the ability to come up with diverse and individualistic collections—each one more epochal than the other. With offerings titled “Nizam”, “Devanshi” and “Inaya”—this house has stunningly celebrated India’s vivid diversity while staying true to their core values and insignias. “We all know, India has been home to generations of royalty, who exemplify rare beauty. The ‘Nizam’ collection is inspired by elegance and unspoken grace that is characteristic of royalty. Everything, from the culture and values to customs, rituals and traditions, is special in India the ‘Land of Gods’ which is our inspiration behind the ‘Devanshi’ collection. Indian culture has never been rigid; rather it imbibes the attributes of various other cultures and comes out as a contemporary and acceptable tradition representing a modern-day woman, which is our inspiration behind ‘Inaya’,” she shares.

Quite often, brides compromise on comfort on the most significant day in their life and one also observes a tendency to follow trends blindly. Prerna offers a pragmatic solution to complementing one’s jewellery with the bridal ensemble. “Firstly, a bride’s comfort is the most important factor when it comes to bridal shopping. I’d suggest one should choose one’s bridal set before the outfit as your jewellery is going to definitely cost a lot more than a *lehenga*. With such a heavy investment piece, you shouldn’t have to compromise because of it having to match your already chosen outfit. So select jewellery designs, styles

that appeal to you the most. So many brides think—‘Oh my *lehenga* is pink; let me wear rubies’. While that looks nice enough, there is nothing more striking than emeralds with a pink outfit. The green really pops against the pink and distinguishes itself. Similarly, rubies look great with a green outfit, an all-white ensemble or even a yellow piece! If your outfit is in a pastel hue, stick to colourless stones and pearls. If your ensemble is a riot of colours—then embrace pearls. Also, the style of outfit matters—are you going for a modern or a vintage look? Your jewellery should make your entire vision come together and not just be a piece of accessory,” she says.

In the run up to the wedding day, brides often end up making some *faux pas* during their shopping. Having observed and interacted with brides, bridesmaids and their families for years, Prerna’s advice is about valuing comfort and confidence over anything else. “A common mistake which brides usually make is when they enslave themselves to a trend. If you’re not comfortable in what you have purchased, it’s not worth it at all. One should never buy something they’re not easy in. Your confidence is the most important thing. And this, comes with comfort. Following the trend is one thing, but one should be a risk-taker and plan to style one’s look differently and with confidence,” she says.

Also, the never-seen-before popularity of destination weddings has impacted jewellery trends. “Weddings and jewellery trends go hand-in-hand. Destination weddings have helped jewellery designs evolve and use innovative ideas like creating reversible and detachable designs for easy wearability and multiple looks of jewellery,” she quips.

With summer weddings round the corner, we ask Prerna to spell out the key wedding jewellery trends. “Gemstones dominated polki sets are trending this wedding season. The pastel *Meenakari* merged with gold and *polki* will be a hot pick for summer brides. And stacking up the cuffs and bangles in different sizes, shapes and colours that complement each other, will truly be followed. This summer, brides need a choker with precious gemstones stones, layered neckpieces with *Meenakari* and lots of pearls and gemstones, oversized *nath* and *matha patti*, *tikka* with *passa*, (if you’re not opting for *matha patti*) have a handbag and smile on your face.” Spoken like a true connoisseur! ■

Pastel hues paired
with gold embodies
unrestricted charm





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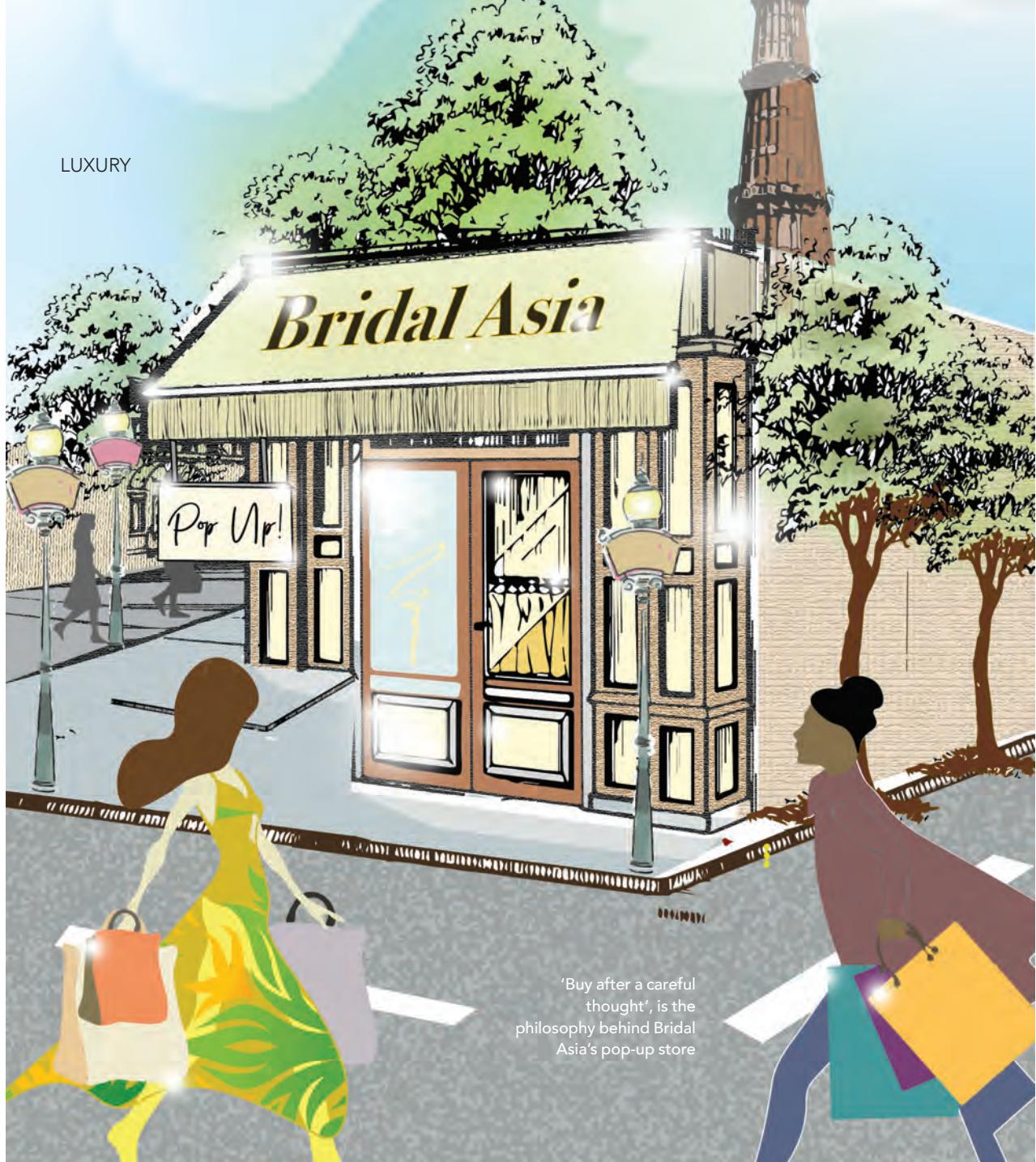
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LUXURY



'Buy after a careful thought', is the philosophy behind Bridal Asia's pop-up store

Luxe Point

BRIDAL ASIA is offering unadulterated glamour at the Kila, Mehrauli, with an array of exuberant options to wow brides-to-be

Text SADHVI ARORA Illustration DIYA MATHUR

“The store will lend time, quality and variations, to the brides to contemplate the right choice before taking the plunge into an expensive buy.”

This wedding season, brides and her bridesmaids can fully surrender to a one-stop luxury bridal pop-up store, meticulously curated by *Bridal Asia* bringing to you top style gurus of the country.

The chief marketing officer of *Bridal Asia*, Dhruv Gurwara, tells us why the *Bridal Asia Pop-up Store* at the Kila is an answer to all your bridal dreams. “Brides need time and want the best for their W-day. The luxury pop-up store carefully caters to everything, from accessories to wedding card invitations. The multipurpose store will lend time, quality and variations, to the brides to contemplate the right choice before taking the plunge into an expensive buy. They might stumble on something which they really like, but would still want to ponder over it and even take a second look at it. The duration will give them time and space to make the desired choice from among the assemblage of select designers,” he explains.

The luxury pop-up store is offering an aggrandized edition of a bridal bonanza running for over four months, from 15th October’19 to 15th February’20, at Kila, Mehrauli, spanning 1,000 square feet, post the three-day *Bridal Asia* exhibition from 5th October’19 to 7th October’19, at Hotel Ashok, Chanakyapuri.

The decision making for all that relates to the W-day, is cherished and valued for a lifetime, but it invariably is strenuous and hard for a bride, who has her plans well-researched. Dhruv elaborates, “A modern and fashion-forward bride values individuality and is particular about what she wants. To her, the comfort of right decision making and being happy about her purchases is of utmost importance. She’s more aware and values the importance of quality, craftsmanship and artistry, than a mere tag of a ‘designer’. Gone are the days when a bride had to limit herself to a few designers. An array of fresh and exquisite ensembles will be available at the store to experiment with.”

This destination will cater to a ‘qualitative everything’ that which would be bridal, encompassing all the functions—*mehendi*, cocktail, *sangeet*, wedding, reception and much more. The artistry and mastery of the elusive designers from across the country will be presented at the exhibition, which is bringing a fountain of ideas fulfilling your needs for not only occasion wear, but also promising exclusivity, which will be hard to find on such a large scale. The luxurious milieu of the store will offer a plethora of things to plan the entire wedding for the bride.

With a history of 20 years of arranging extravagant exhibitions in Delhi, catering to the exuberant desires for the wedding from all that is required prior and post the celebration, no stone is left unturned in assembling the most talented and one-of-a-kind designers available in the country at the shop. Dhruv says, “There are times when buyers don’t have access to designers, as they are not readily available. However, the store will keep you in touch with the designers, covering each segment of the wedding, with their latest offerings.”

Enjoy every moment as you browse through several alternatives from top-end designers over a course of four months. The pop-up will be a hub for the bridal entourage, offering a unique experience. The proverbial ‘under one roof’ situation of the store will include an array of jewellery options, footwear, clutches, hair accessories, *pottis*, rings, *maang tikka*s, bracelets, brooches, nose rings, as well as ensembles. Along with the alluring adornments, you can also flip through a multitude of wedding cards, choosing the ideal shape, size, pattern, or simply customise the announcement with something that suits your personality. Get it ordered, packed and stamped in your name!

Each corner of the store will wow you with high doses of glitz to make your occasion unforgettable. The pop-up packs a punch and is a means for those who value money, quality, heritage, and exclusivity. ■



On Sheryl: Sari, Arpita Mehta;
Jewellery, Goenka India

Poetry in Motion

In keeping with the shifting sands of time and tide, GOENKA INDIA transforms humble stones into wondrous epic sparklers, displaying its artistry over form and pattern.

Handcrafting masterpieces that evoke femininity and cultural ethos, they give each piece a distinct identity, with conventional savior-faire. These iconic jewels will be luscious heirlooms as they mirror the grandeur of time as it stood still, with whimsical and colour-drenched offerings.

Photography
ANUBHAV SOOD

Styling MOHIT RAI

LUXURY

On Sheryl: Draped Sari, **Tisha by Tisha Saksena;** Jewellery, **Goenka India**





On Kanishtha: Blouse
and Lehenga, **Anamika**
Khanna; Jewellery,
Goenka India



On Kanishtha: Blouse
and Lehenga, **Anamika**
Khanna; Jewellery,
Goenka India

On Sheryl: Blouse and
Lehenga, **Falguni Shane**
Peacock; Jewellery, **Goenka**
India





On Kanishtha: Sari and Blouse, **Ohfab**; Jewellery, **Goenka India**

On Kanishtha: Blouse,
Lehenga, and Dupatta
Falguni Shane Peacock;
Jewellery, **Goenka India**



LUXURY



On Sheryl: Blouse and Lehenga,
Falguni Shane Peacock;
Jewellery, **Goenka India**



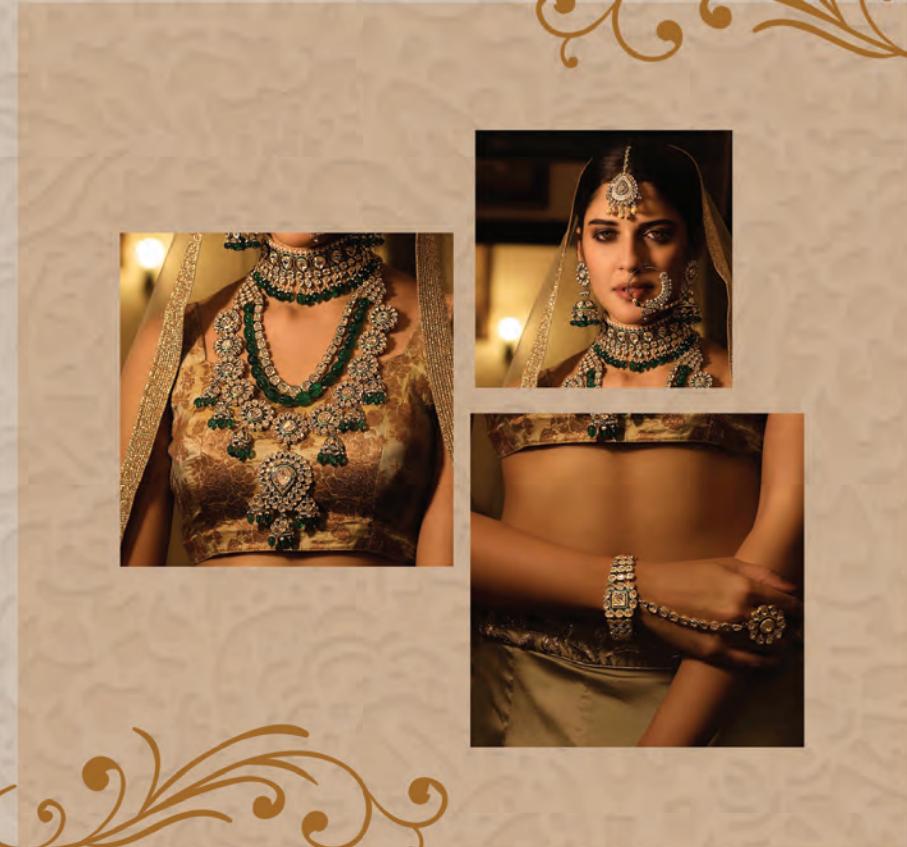
A woman is elegantly dressed in a traditional Indian saree, featuring a rich maroon base with a subtle gold and silver striped pattern. She is adorned with elaborate gold jewelry, including a multi-layered necklace with a large central pendant, a nose ring, and multiple rings and bangles on her wrists and fingers. Her dark hair is styled up, and she is looking directly at the camera with a soft expression. The background is a warm, dimly lit interior space with wooden paneling.

On Kanishtha: Sari
and Blouse, **Ofab**;
Jewellery, **Goenka India**

Model: **Sheryl Bennett** and
Kanishtha Dhankhar;
Hair and Make-up: **Pallavi Devika**

A close-up photograph of a woman's face and upper body. She has dark hair and is looking slightly to her left. She is wearing a red sari with intricate gold embroidery on the border and blouse. She is adorned with elaborate diamond jewelry, including a large, multi-layered diamond necklace, a pair of long, dangling diamond earrings, several diamond bangles on her right wrist, and a large diamond ring on her right hand. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the sparkle of the diamonds against her skin and the red fabric.

On Sheryl: Sari, Arpita Mehta; Jewellery, Goenka India



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LUXURY





A Real Gem

*100 years of unparalleled
brilliance has made
RAMBHAJO'S kundan
most sought after, as they
craft unforgettable stories
in pure grandeur*

Kundan-polkis remain
the brand's flagship as
they complete 100 years

Text ASMITA AGGARWAL



Rambhajo was the moniker given to his great grandfather Shri Kishan Gilara, in 1921, when the brand started operations in the Pink City, seeing his devotion to Lord Ram, and today Rambhajo is undoubtedly, one of the most coveted jewellery houses in the country.

Behind every successful story there is always an interesting twist, and Rambhajo has one too. Known for its wholesale manufacturing and producing *kundan-polkis* for almost 100 years, the fourth generation led by the articulate Nitin, decided to not only get into direct dealings with the consumer, but also restore lost faith in the craft, along with his family.

"Many people didn't want to buy *kundan*, as they believed the returns won't be favourable, but I wanted to change that, one stone at a time," he says. After doing B. Com from Jaipur

and an MBA from Poddar University, he joined the family business with a keen eye on expansion, which led him to the city of dreams and the commercial hub, Mumbai. "I felt it was the right time to start operations from there. I was just 24, and had a big responsibility on my shoulders. I had to make a mark and keep the family flag flying high. We have a wide base in the city and managed to make inroads with repeat customers. Today, we have three retail outlets, Jodhpur, Mumbai and of course, our headquarters, Jaipur," he admits.

Once Nitin regained the complete faith of his loyal buyers, he decided to start work on elevating the design prowess of *kundan*. But he was clear that unlike many in the trade, he will charge for the precious raw materials, not designing, as that comes with the

package and brand's identity.

Understanding the intricacies of the trade and taught by the best, being the eldest son of the family, since he was seven years old, he was hand held by his great grandfather. He trained him from cutting, ranking coloured stones, to checking the final product, and also developing an eye for detail. "He would take me around the factory, and frankly, he was my university in the art of jewellery-making," he confesses.

Being a man with artistic tastes, Nitin decided to not limit the designing to just one corner—Jaipur—but take it across several states. So he fused Hyderabadi with Mughal aesthetic, or South Indian Temple touches with Rajput styling and created a heady cocktail. Few know that *kundan* means pure gold in which uncut diamonds are then set, and like a true 'sunar', he believes what matters the most for any good jeweller is selling an investment, not a dream. "We have people whose great grandfathers came to us and now new additions to the family come and shop with us. As value-for-money is

**“Our
jewellery has
an old-world
charm, a
vintage feel
and we still
hand craft
everything.”**

An exquisite
composition of emeralds
and gold rooted in
tradition



LUXURY





Jewellery is all about trust; once your customer understands that, each piece becomes special

the mantra, jewellery can't be sold just as a fashionable ornament; it must be linked to a memory or blessing, what we call 'shubh', and that's what makes it special," he confirms.

Confirming that for almost 400 years *kundan* has been worn by royal families all over the country, he doesn't want to change that technique or the process, but maybe modernise it in keeping with a younger bride's desires. "Our jewellery has an old-world charm, a vintage feel and we still handcraft everything, making the process laborious and intricate, but also discerning and timeless," he confirms adding, diamonds are a new addition to the Indian landscape.

Times have changed, even in the way families buy, and Nitin admits, earlier his grandfather used to tell them stories of how the elders in the family would buy jewellery for the entire house without any interference. "Now the final call is of the bride, no matter where she is staying or studying. Until she gets what she likes, nothing will be approved," he laughs.

He artfully narrates a story of how a new-age bride came to him, and said all she wants to wear on her big day is a *passa* and earrings. "I and her family both were shocked and then she took out this Mughal painting and told all of us that, this is how she hopes to look; minimal but powerful. So there is no one client and no one trend. I can tell you, it depends on individual tastes; also the personality of the bride and her thinking. Many girls may find this hard to believe or accept, as not wearing a big necklace is a given, but there are always exceptions to this rule," he says.

What works in jewellery now is effective styling and how people are



"Expertise to craft is one thing; trust is something we have learnt to value more."

being able to put the pieces together, like Kolkata's wonder boy Sabyasachi Mukherjee does, in an organic way that even disparate looks fall seamlessly together. "Jewellery is a decoration; it enhances your beauty, and now we have seen that the jewellery the bride wears, its motifs, are added on to the groom's *sherwani* to make a kind of bonding between the two in a subtle, almost invisible manner," he says, adding that he never personally wears any jewels.

The brand which upholds Indian-ness with pride never uses a European face. Rather, 'Dream Girl' Hema Malini they find to be apt as a celeb, who could carry off their bold pieces with confidence. Even *Devdas* star and BJP member Kirron Kher who wears jewellery beautifully with her brocade saris is a perfect example of a Rambhajo woman. A petite star would never do justice to the heritage and nostalgia the brand brings along with it as it is statement-y and *khandani*. "Expertise to craft is one thing; trust is something we have learnt to value more, as that's what keeps you afloat and also sets you apart from others in the trade," he concludes. ■

LUXURY

Vintage Vantage

RITIKA BHASIN GUPTA gives a new lease of life to vintage jewellery with her unconventional, impeccable and modernistic intervention

Text SADHVI ARORA



Creating wonders
out of an ancient
aesthetic

What does one do with ornaments that may be of the forgotten era, in terms of appeal and functionality? The answer lies with the trailblazing jewellery designer, Ritika Bhasin Gupta. She is bringing forth a fresh wave of designs by re-engineering and re-working valuable artisanal assets. She recovers all that is lost in glory of the past, only to lend it a new spin for the relevance of today.

“We analyse the additions and subtractions of gems and decide what will suit the product best.”

Her craftsmanship and skills can change the combination of different shapes, styles, and sizes of any treasure given to her, veering away from the traditional comfort of compositions. “Some jewellers try to play it safe by not meddling with old jewels, whereas, I feel the assembling should be aesthetically pleasing to the eyes, adding value to the piece, and buying will automatically follow,” she adds.

Just as fast as how clothing preferences change, people now aspire for

variation in adornments too. These alterations may seem hard to access. She elaborates, "Our clothes are not very Indian-looking these days. There's a shift from traditional to contemporary style. It would be in order for artistry of bijouterie to keep up with the dynamic environment too." That's the underlying feature of Ritika's brand of work. "People are becoming price-conscious. My role comes in when they want to possess something completely new by not having to spend too much extra," she adds.

Her journey in the field of design began when she opened the eponymous clothing label after completing fashion design from NIFT, Delhi, in 2000. "At that time, I thought fashion was getting saturated with so many people hopping on to the bandwagon. I wanted to work at a niche concept, so I started customising. This served as a game changing idea for me," she confesses.

She further elaborates, when she was getting married, there weren't many options available in the market, that matched her sensibilities. So she took the challenge herself and started tweaking personal collections to match her modernised taste. Stamps of approval poured in when she exhibited her work for the first time, giving her a sense of confidence to take the idea forward. She tapped this 'new demand' in the market with a desire to do something out-of-the-box. Thus, the catchphrase 'Reinventing fine jewellery' for her brand started in 2015, in South Extension, New Delhi.

"Initially, some people hesitated in handing over their gold, being skeptical about what would happen to it. But gradually, the idea gained favour. Confidence took over and they understood my methodology of not melting the ancestral gems, but revamping it, and aggrandising the worth," she confirms.

Her exquisite and cutting-edge arrangements are an amalgamation



of disparate and high-quality stones put together in an unpredictable manner, lending an avant-garde assemblage honing both ethnicity and modernity with every detail accentuated. She says, "Every piece is distinct and has its own language. We analyse the additions and subtractions of gem-

stones and decide what will suit the product best." Her approach changes with every client, depending on their personalities, likes and preferences. "I do a simplistic or over-the-top setting depending on what they desire and try to make them feel comfortable by delivering a distinct style, complementing their personality," she adds.

Her process begins with a CAD sketch, which further gets developed into a mould, if required, to provide a visual insight. With every customer, there's original cultivation and redefinition of artistic bejewelled elegance. Ritika's emphasis is on adding value to existing sets and making the customers feel 'truly special'!

She is undaunted by any challenge of trinkets of the bygone era. With her acumen for re-modelling and re-facing old pieces, she can reconstruct bracelets, necklaces, chokers, earrings, *matha patti*, bangles, rings, brooches and much more, with a wide range of selections among precious stones like, rubies, sapphires, diamonds, South-Sea pearls, and yellow topaz. She executes it all—from transforming *raanihaars* into earrings to modifying a pendant into a statement ring, converting heavier adornments into bits of sleeker creations or visa-versa. "The idea is to make an old-fangled work look so pristine that people just feel like they bought something new with no tell-tale sign of it being redecorated," she adds.

For Ritika, the grand and opulent sets worn by kings and queens years ago, fires her inspiration. When talking about heirloom gems, everyone seems to have prized possessions they nurture with care and love. Ritika shares hers, "My grandmother had given a golden bangle on my wedding which I later enlivened with more jewels. A lot of people have asked me to do the same for them, but I don't want to replicate. It holds a special place in my heart." ■

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LIFESTYLE

SUPRIYA MALIK | NANKI SINGH |
NISHEETA LABROO | RASHIKA TODI |
SRISHTI GURWARA | SUKHMANI SARIN

Illustration DIYA MATHUR

Genie in a Bottle

Mother-daughter duo SEEMA ARORA AND SUPRIYA MALIK create new-age concoctions with ancient wisdom to give you smooth skin and lustrous tresses

Text ASMITA AGGARWAL Illustrations DIYA MATHUR

Effective pure and age-old remedies are adopted by Indulgeo Essentials to cure skin-related problems

The father of modern psychology Sigmund Freud had rightly assessed—we are a sum total of our childhood; that's why Supriya Malik, who clearly remembers her struggle with debilitating acne at the age of 15, says the condition made her tougher, as if preparing her for life

and its many surprises. The acne was so virulent she recalls, that she was embarrassed to venture out. To make this journey, easier was an indulgent mother, Seema Arora, who rather than resorting to hormonal pills as the doctor had repeatedly advised, gently suggested Ayurvedic concoctions. This gave birth to the Volcanic

night oil now Indulgeo Essentials' best selling product.

But wait, for there is a twist in the tale. Initially, her skin broke out even more when she used it and of course, she blamed her mom for not listening to the seasoned doctor. But in three months of regularly using it, the acne reduced and the skin became not just

“We are a ten-member ladies team, which runs this heady initiative and we take up clients as challenges.”

clear, but also regained its smoothness! Now spearmint (a panacea for balancing feminine problems) tea and coconut water, and lots more, are a part of Supriya's diet to keep the acne at bay.

“My mom had suffered from Alopecia, so rather than depending on modern medicine she studied Ayurveda for eight years and ancient techniques of healing to cure her tedious condition,” explains Malik. Managing two kids, being a single parent was tough for Seema, but her daughter admits she did this daunting task with great alacrity and grace. So from learning the tricks of naturopathy and essential oils from the famous French maverick Jennifer, also referred to as the “crazy hair lady”, Seema decided to treat her condition and saw miraculous results. “She reduced her cortisone injections and realised it was the paraben in the products that was creating havoc with her scalp. We all use shampoos, but never anything to clean and secure the scalp, so we also developed hair masks for this purpose,” she adds.

This discovery and recovery led Supriya to convince her mom to do this professionally after she asked on a Facebook page of ‘Gurgaon moms’ if anyone would like to use these oils and the answer was an emphatic “yes”. And what worked in their favour is the new-age women's will to



try natural alternatives, flower water, oils and making small, but impactful lifestyle changes minus any medications. “We never wanted to launch a brand, as we use no chemicals and add no preservatives and all our products are hand-made in a small unit we operate from our house in Gurgaon. So there is no shelf life, say maybe 14-16 months, maximum. We were unsure if consumers would be okay with this limited time period of use. But so many people came to my mom, asking her for solutions to skin and hair problems. Once cured, they would come back again with friends and family as she had built such a trusted circle that many wanted us to help those who didn't know about her gift,” says Malik, who is a Jesus and Mary College graduate.

Two years back, she took the plunge and went public with Indulgeo Essentials, with the ideology of “pampering yourself” boasting of 19 products in their repertoire, starting from ₹300 to maximum ₹2,300. Some of these effective therapies in a bottle also use

‘gold’, as Seema believes it is an excellent agent to tighten the skin.

The most common problems Seema addresses are acne-prone skin, which could be caused by dandruff, due to pollution, strong shampoos and faulty eating habits. “Sometimes, just plain apple cider vinegar solves a lot of these issues. Then we have women above 30 coming to us with early onset of pigmentation, which we treat with essential oils, the most effective being pure Argan oil from Morocco. Our grape seed oil is so unadulterated—absolutely no toxins—that women ask us if they can use it for cooking,” she smiles.

There is a reason why the West is moving towards medicine-free existence and adopting Indian practices as they are scientific and time-tested over generations. “We are a ten-member ladies team, which runs this heady initiative and we take up clients as challenges. When they come back grinning to us with sparkling skin, it feels like divine payback,” concludes Malik. ■



SUPRIYA'S JOURNEY A Jesus and Mary College graduate, she carries forward her mother's unhindered faith in natural remedies.

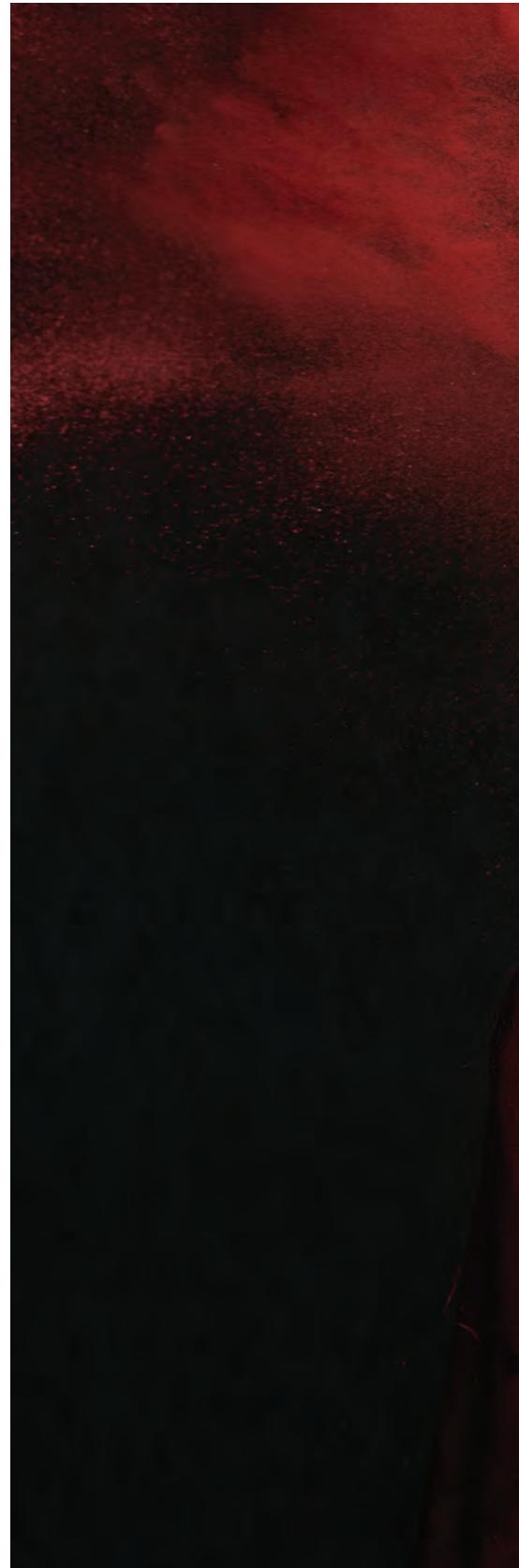


Treasure TROVE

The vintage grandeur of aurete earrings, antiquely carved rings, majestic naths, headdresses converges with the modernity of crystallised miniauderies, mounted diamond rings, lustrous danglers and crystallised choker. A splash of lush green, flaming orange, electric blue, rich red and deep purple binds the strong forces of time, keeping the ancient spirit alive. It voyages through the periphery of a bygone-era, transcending the quintessential, offering a nuptial between the past and present.

Photography
HORMIS ANTONY THARAKAN

Styling and Art Direction
GOPALIKA VIRMANI





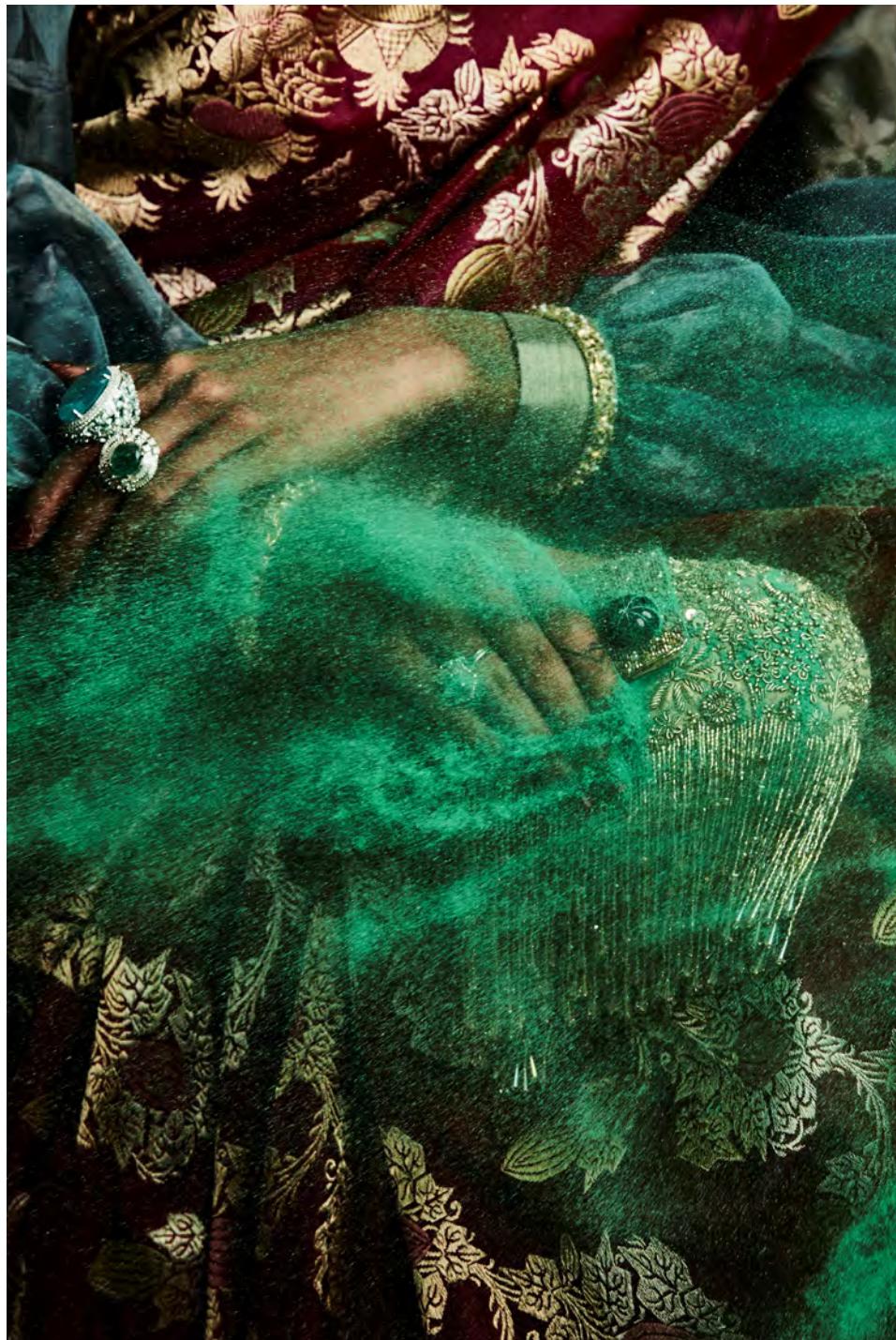
Top, Anamika
Khanna; Earrings,
Isharya



Blouse, Raw Mango; Earrings, Purab Paschim; Nath and Rings, Shri Ram Hari Ram
Jewellers, Dariba Kalan; Headdress, Shri Paramani Jewels



Shirt and Dress, Anamika Khanna; Earrings, House of Aynat; Clutch, The Right Sided



Sari, Ekaya; Blouse, Qbik; Clutch, The Right Sided; Rings, Shri Paramani Jewels, House of Aynat; Bangles, Shri Ram Hari Ram Jewellers, Dariba Kalan



Sari and Blazer, Ekaya; Earrings, Swarovski Confluence; Necklace, Minerali;
Bangles, Shri Ram Hari Ram Jewellers, Dariba Kalan

LIFESTYLE





Sari, Raw Mango; Earrings and Necklaces, Shri Paramani Jewels; Rings, Nath and Hand harness, Shri Ram Hari Ram Jewellers, Dariba Kalan; Headdress, Purab Paschim

Model: Sana Thampi; Model Agency, Feat.Artists
Hair and Make-up: Ashima Kapoor



The mother-daughter duo, of Project Co. are revamping spaces with green alternatives

From Seed to Plant

Conscience is more important than being conscious, is what Project Plant's creator NANKI SINGH believes can change the world

Text ASMITA AGGARWAL

Nobody would have thought that a political science graduate from Lady Shri Ram College after Modern School, Barakhamba, with dreams to change the world, would be remotely interested in the anatomy of plants. But serendipity always has a huge role to play in our lives and Nanki Singh realised this quite young. Only 27, with a head full of ideas and feet firmly planted on ground, she besides being a shining example of women entrepreneurs didn't want to walk in the shadows. She decided to take her mother Shabnam Singh's architecture and interior design company Project Co. a step forward and launch Project Plant.

But first let's start with the basics. Project Co. four

years back wanted to add something that resonated with what young people saw around them and hoped to make a change. So a journey, along with green decor and sustainable wedding, became their leitmotif and Project Plant, a vertical, became a natural offshoot. "It is not like a Khadi Gram Udyog type of alternative that makes green look boring. I'm sorry to say this, but it's the truth. Rather, we wanted to make 'green the new black', cool and luxurious, because in reality going organic is really expensive," she adds.

Nanki, being observant and compassionate, realised a lot of people were gifting flower boxes for weddings and sangeets, accompanying invitations, but these withered away painfully in almost 48 hours. She thought why not

plants, as gifts, expanding their sustainable database? Even if you see Virat Kohli and Anushka Sharma's wedding in Italy what came with their wedding card was a sapling, so potted plants became the companions replacing sweet and flower boxes assuring longevity and restoring natural cover even though it is in the confines of your drawing rooms. Nanki was actively involved in CSR projects for myriad companies, including Ernst & Young. Considering her background in political science, and with a mother, who was 20 years in the business of making houses beautiful, her career choice veered towards the latter, as it was linked to nostalgia, an inherent part of the human psyche. "After school, I remember mom used to pick us up and we would go fabric shopping or scout markets for interesting knick-knacks, and vintage furniture. The joie de vivre I experienced during those trips, remain etched in my memory," she recalls.

Seeing a marked change in the way millennials think and live, Nanki thought it was an opportune time to start giving back, also seeing how product packaging was changing and the whole emergence and adoption of bio-revelations. Plant deliveries are done right now in the capital only (24 hours) and Nanki tries to offer air purifying plants that look good and add value to their consumer's lives.

Earlier, many people didn't want cacti in their home, but then they started a Valentine's day campaign that somewhat said, "nothing better than a gift that grows on you?" Right! Terrariums anyone? Or Lotus planters...areca palms...plants that help you breathe clean which come with endearing personalised messages, making

the ideal gift that you can nurture and watch bloom. "We offer plants that love sunlight in keeping with Delhi's weather and they don't need a lot of water, such as non-thorny desert plants. The demand has been overwhelming and we also customise the planters so that you feel you got what you desired," she smiles.

Interestingly, a rather unexplored but emerging sector, Nanki has set her eyes on eco-weddings, a wonderful concept considering Indians really leave no stone unturned when it comes to the big, fat Indian wedding. But this time

she has taken the road less travelled, where conscience is more important than being conscious. "We do functions—could be a *mehendi* or a *sangeet* where we create green structures, from a bar to a facade...after all green was also the Pantone colour of the year. We also did a store for couturier Ghazal Gupta where we synergised green decor with her ensembles' philosophy," she explains.

Decor discussions are done

with utmost professionalism with a 3D model of the space management, adding elements like recycling and upcycling. "I saw my mother work hard, take no days off and create a company from scratch; it was an uphill task—she did it alone and with pride. She is my biggest inspiration, mentor and an exemplary CEO, who runs the company, managing 15 people. I hope to one day take a leap forward and create a definitive space for 'eco-chic' which is now the buzzword," she concludes. ■



"We wanted to make 'green the new black', cool and luxurious, because in reality going organic is really expensive."

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Scent-sational

Mother-daughter duo, LEENA AND NISHEETA LABROO create heavenly fragrances out of soy, instead of paraffin, that look as good as they smell

Text and Illustration DIYA MATHUR



Niana offers hand-crafted
candles made with an
innovative brew of
ingredients

In September 2010, an explosion of fragrant aromas perfumed Leena Labroo's kitchen, as she delicately sculpted soy wax into elegant candles. This passion for handmade goods paired with Labroo's mission towards sustainable alternatives in the home decor space, sparked the launch of Niana in 2011. Four years later, the same candles were being elaborately designed, crafted, packaged and labeled in a dedicated studio in Delhi, twice the size of the kitchen she began her journey in.

Nisheeta Labroo, a University of Pennsylvania graduate, joined her mother's vision in 2015. At the age of 27, after working with 'Accenture' and 'Save The Children', Nisheeta made the decision of lending her entrepreneurial assets to the family business. "This simple venture began within the four walls of our home kitchen, and is now a product retailing out of 35 stores across the country. Being a part of its evolution has been nothing short of magical," she says. So, with a combination of Leena's artistry and Nisheeta's marketing prowess, Niana has become a force to be reckoned with.

The key ingredient—soy—played a crucial role in making the brand stand out amidst a hoard of competitors. "Our point of differentiation has always been soy. We were one of the first to start a dialogue about the benefits of soy over paraffin—the former being the one that burns cleaner, without triggering allergies. This differentiation wasn't paid attention to years ago, but today, is one of the main reasons customers approach us," says Nisheeta. With the brand's affiliation to eco-friendly values, and an increasingly conscious market, Niana saw a growth in demand for products and services.

What kicked off as a range of soy candles has expanded to reed diffusers, room sprays and sachets. While basic scents storm the market in bulk, Niana focuses on offering a range of unique

aromas such as honeysuckle-jasmine and grapefruit-mangosteen. Ingenious creations include 'Smodor', cleverly named after its properties of reducing smoke odours, leaving behind sweet-smelling traces of soy. The product's range from ₹700 and above—price points that are justified by the product's durability and expert craftsmanship.

Over the years, the brand has maintained a fine balance between sustaining a simplistic brand ideology, while experimenting with ever-changing trends. "Niana's ability to remain relevant is attributed to our team's undying urge to innovate, create and find solutions. Working closely with pioneers in the field of fragrance, allows us to bring enriching experiences. An exclusive access to perfumers gives us insight into the latest trends and customer preferences, that in turn, leads us to create new fragrances that appeal to a wide selection of people," she says. Niana's Fine Fragrance home collection was one such project, that was developed in a collaborative effort between Niana and Givaudan, the world's leading fragrance and flavour company.

With utmost confidence in their craft, the brand now provides an opportunity to co-create, via their very



own bespoke services. "This venture allows our customers to personalise their product down to the very last detail—from fragrance, to packaging. Providing bespoke services is a step towards amalgamating our expertise with our clients' preferences, in terms of aesthetics, budget and any other specifications," she says. Some clients who have benefited from Niana's private labelling services are Kama Ayurveda, Vanaveda, Ananda Spa and Bombay Perfumery.

A soy wax base has moulded not only Niana's heavenly product, but with it, a simple brand ideology—to provide imaginative and eco-friendly offerings in the home fragrance space. "By creating unexpected combinations—like elachi and rose—we constantly work towards crafting something new, timeless and intoxicating," says Nisheeta. Their experimentation leads to modern renderings of fragrances that are redolent of everything traditional, in the form of aromas that linger for hours. The finishing touch is tasteful packaging crafted from glass and reflective metals, giving each range a strong, yet distinctive visual identity.

Despite being an unexplored concept at the time of Niana's conception, the Labroo's brand has managed to find a loyal clientele, purely based on the label's reputation for unparalleled quality. It has taken the duo eight years to build not only a brand, but also an authority on aroma—so much so, that today, Niana sells out of prime retail spaces like Moonriver in Delhi and AA Living in Mumbai, amongst others. ■



"We constantly work towards creating something new, timeless and intoxicating."

Love Story

Childhood friends MANSI BHAGERIA and RASHIKA TODI apply their expertise in finance to accessories, creating affordable luxury

Text DIYA MATHUR

In an unexpected turn of events, Christ University graduates Mansi Bhageria and Rashika Todi migrated from finance to fashion, with the hope of reinterpreting Indian accessory design. The absence of a formal education in arts, and no prior connections in the otherwise unaccommodating world of glamour, proved to be no challenge for the dynamic duo. Instead, these two girls from Surat found an opportunity in this idea of starting from the bottom and taking no favours—in the spirit of which, they coined their brand name “On Our Own”, in 2009.

“Any effort at dissecting and understanding this brand would remain incomplete without a trip down memory lane, to the buzzing halls of Christ University,” says Rashika, 31, remembering an observation that she made with her business partner Mansi during their college days. “We had a strict uniform policy, and the only thing we could experiment with were our shoes—so Mansi and I bought Kolhapuris, embroidered and sold them from a counter below our PG, that was made by joining borrowed tables,” she giggles. This step, however small, became the ethos of On Our Own, which was to cater to the rising demand for accessories with chic solutions—that would soon come to life in the form of exquisite clutches.

This labour of love picked up an unimaginable pace in 2011, when after acquiring a degree in finance, Rashika and Mansi diverted all their learnings, energies and creativity, to this project. “We began selling at exhibitions in Mumbai,



“The idea is to provide a refreshing alternative to evening bags, that bedazzle you at first with their stunning allure, and yet, manage to stay relevant with clever silhouettes.”



RASHIKA AND MANSI'S JOURNEY

Christ University graduates in Finance envisioned their accessories' label in 2009, at the age of 19.

Bangalore, Delhi and our home town, Indore. Social media was not an available resource back then, so we had to rely solely on customer responses and our gut," she says. Today, the brand retails out of prime spaces, such as Aashni & Co. and Aza at prices that range from ₹7,000 to ₹12,000. Unimpressed by the available offerings of bags, the duo started to reimagine accessory design. Their conclusion was to use challenging materials—such as mother-of-pearl, wood, enamel and natural stones to create products that are fabulous and functional in equal parts.

Today, the brand's experimentation transcends its bold choice of materials and also dabbles with a daring design language—natural elements being the recurring leitmotif, regardless of seasonal trends. Backed with an incessant need to create splashes in the staid pool of accessories, the brand offers a range of handcrafted clutches, all of which have a standout element. Think daggers instead of a traditional knob, or handcuffs teamed with clutches in black and gold, creating never seen before avant-garde luxury pieces.

A bi-product of innovative thinking is a hoard of rip offs—thanks to the accessibility of social media. While copying may be the finest form of flattery, it also affects business in a big way. However, Rashika remains unconcerned. "There could be copies of our products, but what we offer in terms of quality is unparalleled," she says. And there lies their USP—a blend of materials of supreme quality, cutting-edge technique and finely detailed embellishments.

Their new collection, "Tale of Structures" is another out-of-the box narrative that attempts at juxtaposing natural elements with rigid forms. "The idea is to provide a refreshing alternative to evening bags, that bedazzle you at first with their stunning allure, and yet, manage to stay relevant with clever silhouettes," she says. So, with an extensive use of mother-of-pearl, they look forward to impressing their Indian, as well as, international buyers.

"While we have received an exceptional response from within the country, our over-the-top designs find appre-



ciation from international buyers as well. I think it is key for us, as entrepreneurs to push our designs, brand ideologies and ideas internationally," she says proudly. Having established a strong base of buyers across America, Kuwait, Pakistan, Dubai and London, the brand looks at further intensifying their global presence.

So, how do entrepreneurs with no prior exposure to design, gain international recognition and orders? While creativity is often recognised as a barometer for a brand's success—Rashika straightforwardly credits her flair for finance and her partner's understanding of the market, for this success story. "When we started, we didn't have the funds for an accountant, nor did we have access to someone who would, brief us on the financial aspects of our products. We did it ourselves. It is of utmost importance to understand all the facets of the scenario you are placed in," she says.

With this sprouts another question—till when can numbers and stats save you in a creative industry? Rashika's response is unexpectedly simple. "They can't. You have to balance technicality with impulse and creativity. The market demands inventive and thinking creations. Our brand has compromised on neither of the two. As far as understanding design and its subtle nuances goes—you live and learn," she concludes. ■



The SECRET

As the wedding mania takes a toll on Indian brides, YOGA proves to be the homegrown, age-old remedy to this madness

Text SRISHTI GURWARA Illustration DIYA MATHUR

Money can buy all the glitter and gold the bride wants—what cannot be bought is the gargantuan level of patience she needs for what comes after. Beneath the glitz, a Zen-like state-of-mind is essential in order to deal with the craze that wedding planning presents. While some may be blessed with these virtues, the utter chaos that comes with the D-Day, is enough to shake any mortal to their very core. Somewhere between floral arrangements, wedding invites and bridal fittings, what is supposed to be ‘the best day of her life’ becomes a challenge—one that the bride presumes must be perfect.

Striving for perfection brings to the front a hoard of responsibilities. Thanks to the Big Fat Indian Wedding culture, planning is not limited to one function, but spills over to several—each having its own imperative, devilish details. So, amidst the wedding circus, the bride not only presumes the role of the ringmaster but also, is getting ready for the final act—where she must juggle never-ending demands.

Looking flawless is only the cherry on top of the ornate, seven-tiered wedding cake. This is where a detox becomes necessary, and what better way than India’s very own medicine to its madness—Yoga.

Having sustained itself through Western influences and the test of time, Yoga has gained immense respect from global audiences for its

Family drama, last minute shopping and coping with wedding mania is no different than moving through a difficult *asana* practice.

technique and effectiveness. However, beyond its physical benefits, the practice has garnered a special interest for its central focus on balancing both—the body and mind. Subsequently, Yoga’s growing popularity in the West is due to its wholesome understanding of health. One that doesn’t define health in the absence of disease, but instead in the balance of mental, physical and spiritual elements. This is a concept that even the World Health Organisation verifies as the official definition of health—synonymous with Ayurveda’s philosophies.

Adding to the list of advantages is Yoga’s bare minimal requirements. Unlike most exercise regimes, all that’s needed is a mat and a few minutes, to indulge in simple, stress releasing stances. Poses such as aligning your

legs parallel up against the wall provides the same benefits of breaking into a headstand. Elevating the legs above the heart allows tension and stress to de-escalate. It calms the nervous system, aids circulation, and takes pressure off the spine and neck. Even simpler are forward bends, which calm the nerves and assists digestion.

Planking, though slightly more strenuous than free flowing poses, works all major abdominal muscles, while also strengthening your shoulder, chest, neck, quadriceps, and back muscles. The ‘child’s pose’—bending forward with arms stretched out, is another easy to achieve *asana*. For a bride restricted to hectic schedules, breaking into a 15 minute *asana* can go a long way in equipping the body and mind to take on the rest of the day.

What goes often ignored is stress and its influence on the mind—which inevitably heightens leading up to the wedding day. Brides often start looking forward to their D-Day not so it happens, but because they want to be rid of the tension. Yoga simply eases the same tension. Its teachings allow the practitioner to equip the body and the mind, instead of simply losing weight. Come to think of it, dealing with family drama, and last-minute shopping during the wedding season is really no different than moving through a difficult *asana* practice. The practices endows us with the strength to embrace the challenges, rise to the occasion and to conserve the mind-body equilibrium through it all. ■



Sustainability and
being ethical is the
new way forward

Wedding Circus

When KING OF POP, Michael Jackson crooned Let's heal the world, he had rightly set the rhythm for the future. The wedding business can learn from his lyrics and turn a new leaf with eco-friendly celebrations

Text DHRUV GURWARA Illustration DIYA MATHUR

In this mélange, almost 943 tonnes of quality food is wasted at weddings per year, worth up to ₹339 crores.

For the uninitiated, almost one crore Indian weddings take place in a year and out of this rather imposing number, 80% are Hindu celebrations. That's why it is no surprise, this sector is increasing by 25-30% per year, and is worth ₹1,00,000 crores. Here's a fun fact most don't know. Almost one-fifth of a person's income goes into wedding expenses. In a country where more than 65% of the population is under the age of 35, and girls want, a dream event with all the bells and whistles! What's changing now is some have developed a conscience and want to act on it, which shows a move towards making the world a better place.

What's astonishing is that even among the educated, few ponder over how much waste it generates, as brides are consumed by the need for the perfect *lehenga*, jewellery, hunting for the right makeup artist and of course, the guest list. In this mélange, almost 943 tonnes of quality food is wasted at weddings per year, worth up to ₹339 crores. Statistics indicate, in a wedding, 10-15 percent of food is wasted, a minimum 30-50 kilos and a maximum 800 kilos. And the travesty is 40% of the food produced goes awry and never reaches the needy.

But wait...that's not all. Food and décor are the major parts of this calamity. That's where a little soul comes in—eco-friendly weddings. The food can be given to those who need it, thanks to forward thinking NGOs like the Robinhood Army, and now the décor can be recycled into delightful useables as well.

In a world where self comes first for almost everybody, there are soulful organisations like 'Help us Green', run by Kanpur-based Ankit Agarwal and Karan Rastogi, since 2015. They pick up flower waste and recycle them into soaps and incense sticks. About 300-400 kilos of wasted flowers are being processed in a week by them in an effort to save the planet. And, of course, the wonderful team at '21 Fools', who work with seed paper, making wedding invites, coasters and calendars. Divyanshu Sopa, the founder of the Mumbai and Jaipur-based company, admits more and more couples want a digital invite, but if families insist they can opt for a physical one, made of seed paper.

The paper is made of cotton and seeds and it takes about 3-4 days to make it and the printing takes a day. It grows into different plants. Seed paper invites are comparatively cheaper than paper invites because they use screen-printing. You can simply throw it in the soil, and voila! It will grow into a plant in just 10 days.

Though there is so much we can do to make the wedding industry truly a responsible one, like giving apparel designers waste cloth, which can be used for pillow or mattress stuffing. That's not all. There is the option of disposable paper plates made out of palm leaves, and for the enlightened, wooden plates too! It depends how far you are willing to go to make a distinctive change. Décor has taken the road less travelled with some couples opting for bamboo sticks used for lighting, jute for *potlis*, chalkboards for announcements, old kettles or glass

bottles as decorative items as well as terracotta pots for an earthy feel.

You may wonder how easy or difficult is it to organise eco-friendly weddings? Well, the answer really lies in your will. You have to put in a lot of effort to make sure that nothing you're using is harming the environment. If it is paper napkins, they should be recycled; if you are putting flowers in a pot, then use a mud pot and not plastic. For lighting too, opt for LED lights as they consume less energy. Slowly and gradually, the world, to survive, will have to think from the head, not heart, and sustainability will be the buzzword. ■

CHECKLIST

(Worth of wedding collaterals)

- ❖ Gold and Diamond Jewellery: ₹60,000 crores
- ❖ Wedding Apparel: ₹10,000 crores
- ❖ Hotel and Venue: ₹5,000 crores
- ❖ Pandal and Venue Decoration: ₹10,000 crores
- ❖ Wedding Invitation Card: ₹10,000 crores
- ❖ Bridal Mehendi: ₹5,000 crores
- ❖ Dhol and Baarat: ₹5,000 crores

CELEBRATING DREAMS

SUKHMANI SARIN of Eventree offers an eclectically romantic feel with floral abundance, and shining just the right light, on your big day, with effortless panache and subtle musings

Text SADHVI ARORA

A bountiful of freshly sourced jasmine, dainty tube roses, striking centrepieces illuminated with a string of twinkling lights set up in an enchanted garden make for a vibrant and whimsical sight and many other picturesque wonderlands offered by a Delhi-based event management company, Eventree, headed by Sukhmani Sarin. At the age of 20, she started working with India's leading event planner, Vandana Mohan, and launched her company in 2014, firmly finding a place on the wedding map of not only India, but abroad too.

She executes and manages all things creative, from swatches to the entertainment section, delivering it down to the detail of every ornament. "I love the rush of being able to coordinate many things at one time, making sure the end result puts a smile on the client's face, packed with memories," she smiles. Be it a fort, palace or a hotel, she arranges nuptials with her understated and minimal sensibilities without forgetting tradition. "My motto is, you are not stressed at all and enter your function as if you are a guest," she says.

While taking on a project, she becomes fully immersed in the process and believes in infusing the persona of the bride and groom in all the functions. "The décor should be a reflec-



tion of the family. If the bride is fun and enthusiastic, I use a vibrant palette to make her even more happier," she says. Her soft and airy creations with a splash of colour are full of charm with each corner adorned with an artistic and innovative piece, meticulously attending to the intricacies of shape, material and forms.

In bringing about these magical experiences, correct lighting plays a crucial role in her directory. She elaborates, "When you walk in, I think there are two things that can spoil your mood: one, if the music is too loud, or if the lighting is too bright. Lighting can either take the arrangement a notch up, or pull it down."

Her style sentiment is radiated at functions through the medium of ignitions, including candle lights, dimmers, crystal chandeliers, leaving an alluring effect on anyone who enters the venue. "We put together candles, marigold, roses, and used over 7,000 kg of jasmine for a ceremony in Jaisalmer. The fresh and musky smell and ambient lighting added to the aura of the site," she adds.

The curations of the wedding aficionado, who graduated in fine arts from Delhi College of Art in 2001, are driven by her constant creative need to modify elements to lend it a graceful touch. She adds, "I don't do ostentatious work. I like simple, subtle and clean lines." ■



BRIDAL ASIA AW'19 CAMPAIGN

ROYAL CAMARADERIE

Ecstatic in love, she danced & twirled her way to the future. Her sultry silhouettes & regal rhythm, came together to celebrate HER. Commanding an empire, she set out to revolutionise the world, drenched in jewels & draped in luxury. We take a bow to her timeless grace, as she basks in the glory of her compassion.

Photography - Hormis Antony Tharakan, Styling - Mohit Rai,
Set & Art Direction - Gopalika Virmani,
Make-up - Komal Gulati,
Production - MMC World,
Models - Dayana Erappa, Aradhana Buragohain & Sheryl Bennett
Editorial Layout Design - Manasi Lamba



Outfits - Akanksha Gajria
Jewellery - Khurana Jewellery House







Outfits - Papa Don't Preach by Shubhika
Jewellery - Raniwala 1881



Outfits - Papa Don't Preach by Shubhika
Jewellery - Raniwala 1881





Jewellery & Outfits - Rare Heritage,
A Mehta Emporium Initiative





Outfits - Amit Aggarwal
Jewellery - Jewels of Jaipur

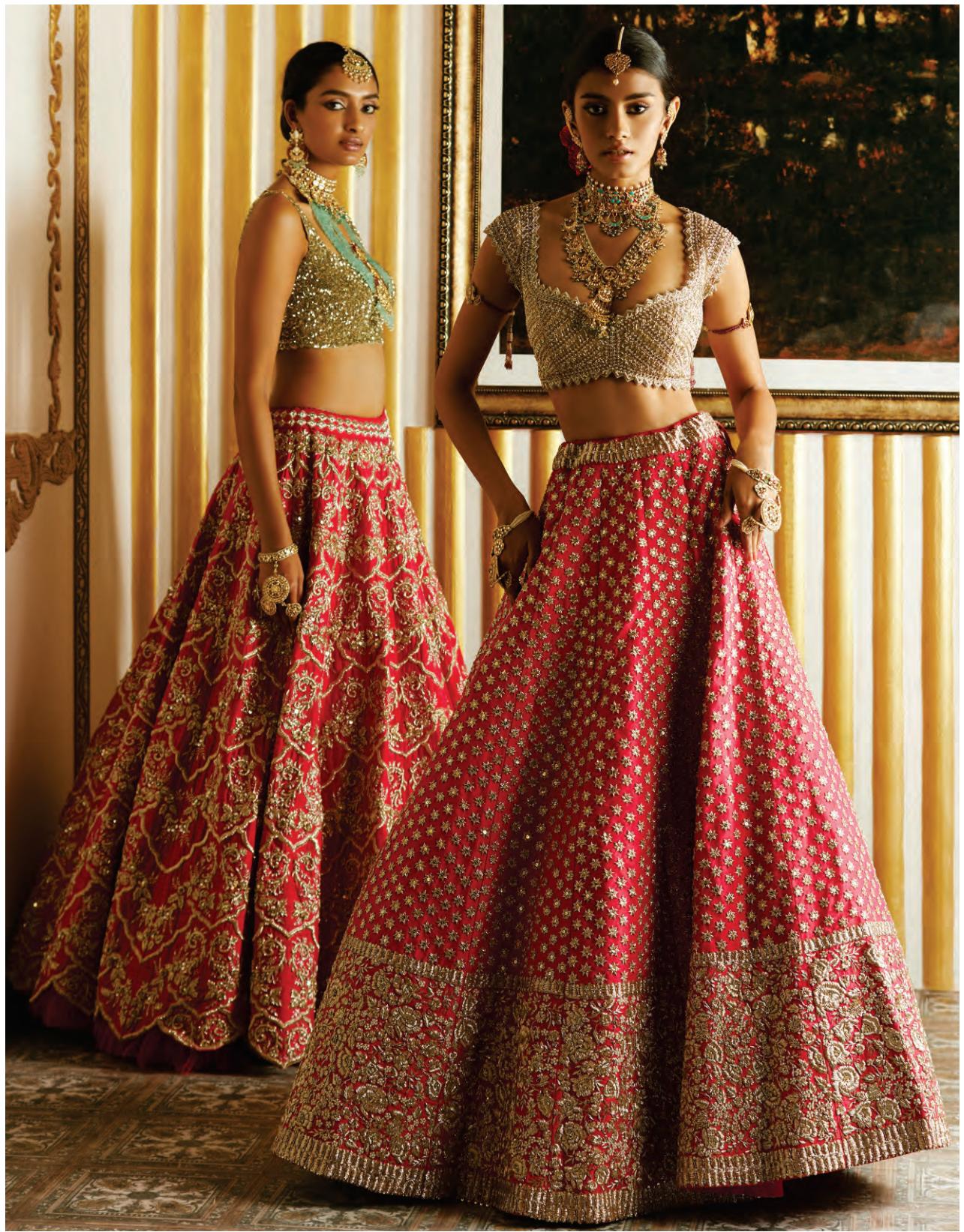
Outfits - Anushka Khanna
Jewellery - Goenka India





Outfits - Rahul Mishra
Jewellery - Raniwala 1881







Outfits - Anushree Reddy
Jewellery - Hazoorilal By Sandeep Narang
Since 1952, GK-1





Outfits - Seema Gujral
Jewellery - B.C Jain Jewellers By Vikash



Outfits - Ritika Mirchandani
Jewellery - Goenka India



Outfits - Monika Nidhi
Jewellery - Jewels of Jaipur









Outfits - Debyani
Jewellery - Shri Ram Hari Ram Jewellers, Dariba Kalan





Outfits - Ridhi Mehra
Jewellery - Birdhichand Ghanshyamdas



Outfits - Natasha Dalal Label
Jewellery - Nirakara Jewels





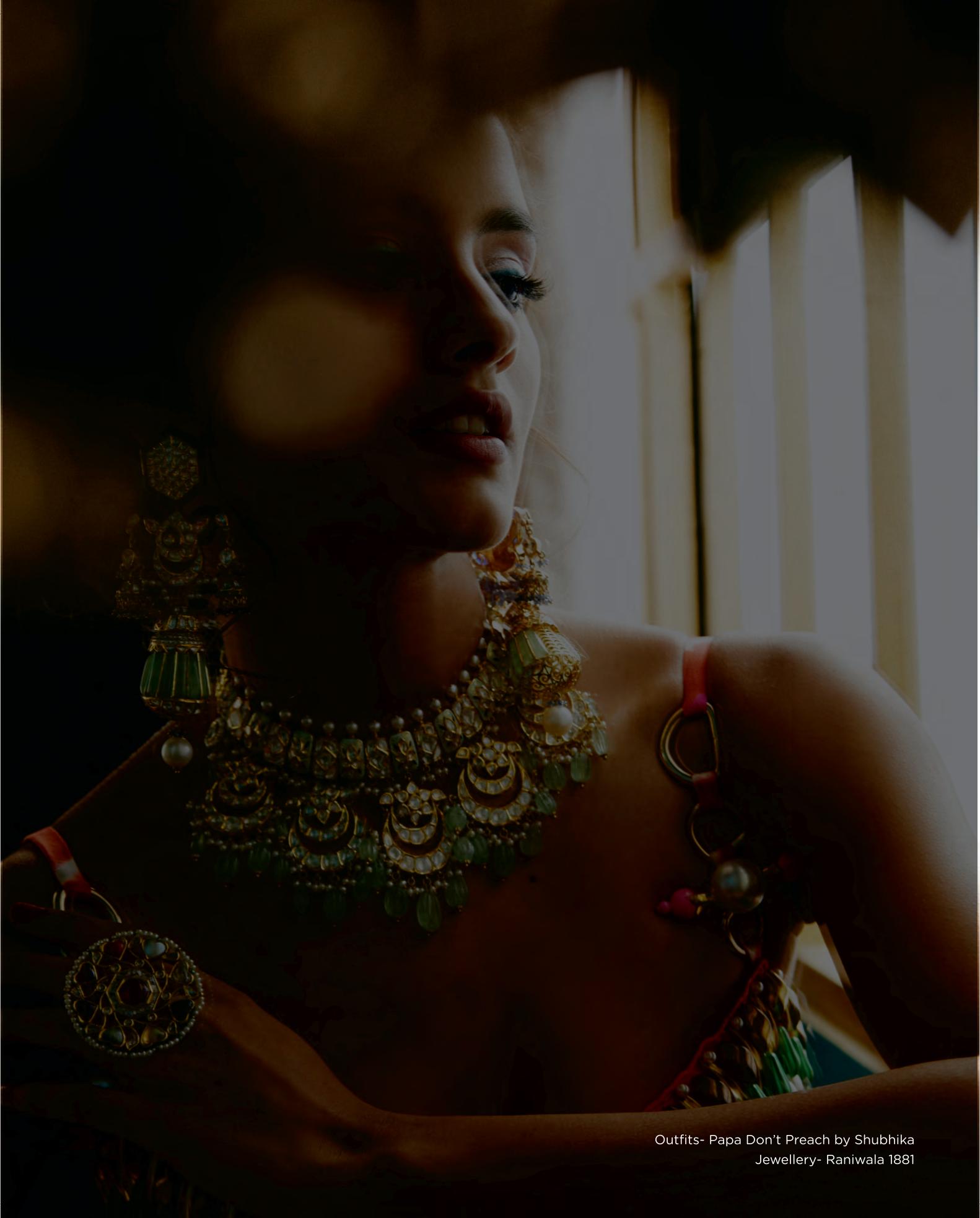
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Jewellery - Hazoorilal By Sandeep Narang
Since 1952, GK-11





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