

BAZAAR

Harper's

INDIA

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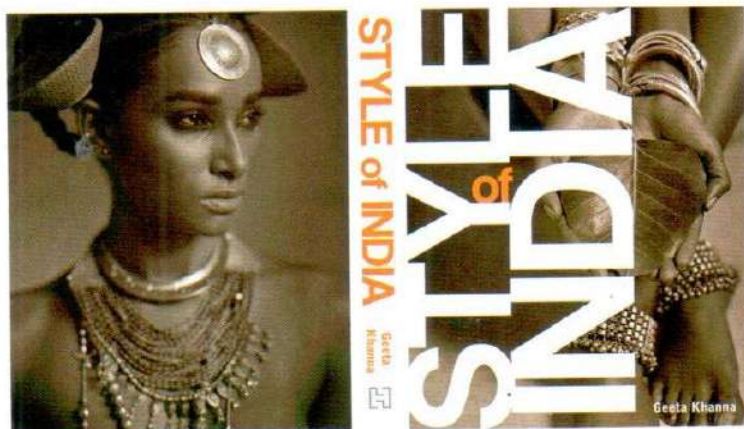
ISN'T SHE
LOVELY
*Aishwarya
Rai Bachchan*

IN CONVERSATION
*Christian Louboutin &
Sabyasachi Mukherjee*
BAZAAR INSPIRES

Best of Beauty

GLOBAL EDITORS & READERS PICK THEIR PERSONAL FAVOURITES





BOOK

INHERITING STYLE

*A first of its kind book
presents the legacy of Indian
fashion and its impact on
haute couture*

Geeta Khanna speaks with the rush of someone newly infatuated, sparkling eyes and gushing voice. The object of her adoration? India. Having spent the past seven years on her first book, a coffee-table tome called *Style of India* (Hachette), she's "fallen in love with India", its history and its current interpretations.

"No book celebrates the talent of the Indian youth. The world needs to wake up to it, to understand that we're a unique pool of talent. That was the real reason to do the book," says Khanna, who studied knitwear design at NIFT, New Delhi, and buying and merchandising at FIT, New York.

The initial plan was to highlight the fashion designers, "but they were already so celebrated in mainstream media that I couldn't add anything new." Which is why, through old-fashioned research in libraries and national archives, and firsthand interviews, she focussed on lesser-known aspects of Indian style. Like how Asha Sarabhai trained Issey Miyake for his pleats, or how Razia Sultan may have been the first androgynous dresser, or how Radhika Raje Gaekwad's mother-in-law would have structured jackets made in Paris to wear with her saris. Enough material for 1,600 pages, pragmatically edited to 320—a process she describes as "heartbreaking".

Most of those pages, however, Khanna dedicated to history, fascinated by how abundant it was. Especially the Gupta Empire, she says, the golden age of arts and culture, of Natya Shastra, the Kama Sutra, zero—the era she would most like to live in. "I was so inspired, I would wear pearls and long

strings around my neck. I've even stopped wearing fake jewellery."

What you see in *Style of India*, which Dr Amin Jaffer, the international director of Asian art at Christie's, calls an "instant magnum opus" in the foreword, is not only India's heritage, but its confluence with haute couture and modern artists and designers. Aastha Butail's Rig Veda shloka artworks introduce the story of Indian style; a concept shoot showcases the fan-shaped headdresses, lotus and peepal motifs, and coiled hair of the Harappan civilisation; Jean Paul Gaultier's 2007 show featuring models in turbans, brocade, and achkan-style silhouettes illustrates the era of maharajas. "I was trying to create a nuance of fashion with history. It took me a year to create the content plan, to understand how the book would be structured," says Khanna, founder of the Hirumchi Styling Company.

After over a year of odd jobs like off-Broadway costume design back in 2001, she got her break at Marc by Marc Jacobs, where she worked as an associate designer. "At that time they didn't value Indian aesthetics. They would give me illustrative jobs, ask me to make spec sheets for shirts," she says. "It wasn't their fault. We didn't have a presentation of the Indian talent pool." The thought stuck. Now, 15 years later, we do.

TOP ADDRESS

DÉCOR

French furniture brand Roche Bobois, which has collaborated in the past with Missoni and Sonia Rykiel, opens its first flagship store in New Delhi—an 8,000 sq ft oasis of design, displaying two collections, Les Contemporains and Nouveaux Classiques. The former features a riot of colours, while the latter focusses on sofas, tables, cabinets, armchairs, and bookshelves in luxurious wood and leather. To top it all? Everything is customisable. www.roche-bobois.com

