

**ANU BHAMBHANI**

It is always the red carpet at the Academy Awards that probably makes more news than the actual awards. But, this time around it was the green carpet that caught the attention of shutterbugs. The best actor award winner, the dashing Colin Firth (who by the way is undoubtedly the best Mr Darcy of *Pride and Prejudice* that the world has ever seen on screen) and his pretty film producer wife, Livia Giuggioli, made a green statement. Dressed in an eco-friendly, upcycled gown made from eleven vintage frocks, the lady grabbed all eyeballs. What's more, it wasn't a recycled dress that she wore, but an upcycled one. The stars have predicted it and with Livia sporting this gorgeous gown, they have even practiced it. Eco-friendly is

same time. The customers are actively looking for star rated products when they go to the market to buy their refrigerators. And, it is not just refs, even the air conditioners, geysers, microwaves, LCDs that are made with eco-friendly technology are being lapped up by an aware consumer. There are some brands that do not use any raw materials that are produced in an inorganic manner while manufacturing their products while there are others who are just too careful in the way they use new technology.

Green gadgets are now in the thing among consumers as these also help bring down the electricity bills to a great extent. Plasma televisions use more power to run as compared to the LCDs and star rated products take up the efficiency level of an electronic product. So the consumer who has access to information like this

FASHIONABLY ORGANIC

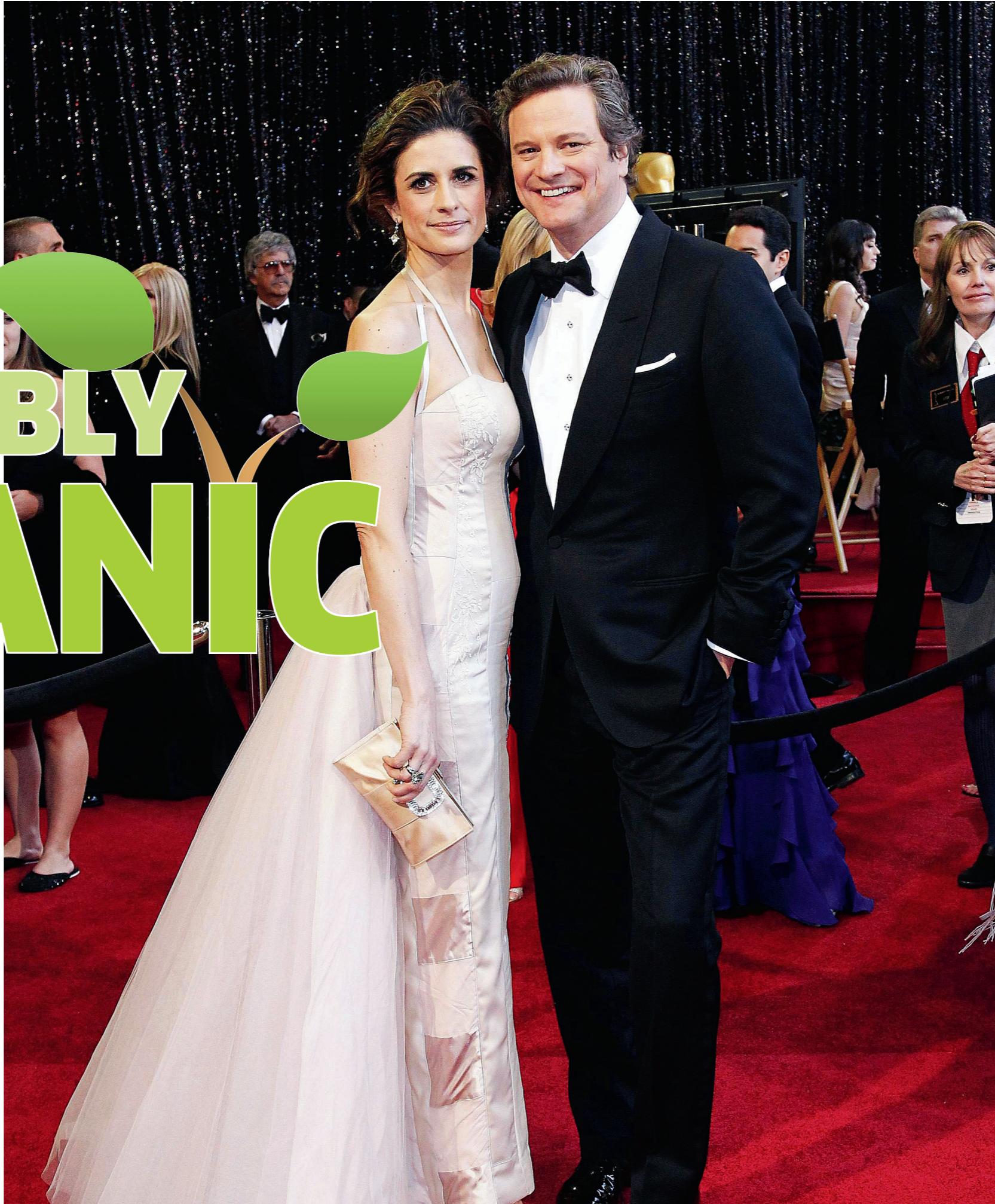
Did you know it is fashionable to go organic? If you didn't, you obviously need to catch up. It's hep, it's healthy and it's happening. With practically every brand in every possible market segment on its way to becoming green, *Planet Earth* finds out how easy it has become to live an organically healthy life. And you know what...you end up doing your bit for the environment as well

the way forward and being one is not only about living frugally. You can do it in style as well. Look around you. There are so many brands that are going green. Right from clothes to food to fashion, almost everything is tuned to gel well with the environment. Organic is the word for these brands and they have proved that living an organic lifestyle is now possible.

GADGETS GO GREEN

With green becoming the buzzword for every marketing strategy and every brand, the electronics market isn't leaving it untouched either. They are going ahead in full steam to offer their customers a chance to own gorgeous gadgets that are efficient and contribute to saving the environment at the

on the internet and can do a comparative analysis of the general trend in the market, keeps all this information in mind when he decides to buy something for his home. That's not all. One can also go eco-friendly in the way they decide to light up their home by using CFLs. Even when it comes to driving cars that are energy efficient, a lot of people are interested in getting hybrid cars that can run on electricity and at the same time on gasoline. Though such cars are in their initial phase in the country and are a little more expensive, the Union Finance Minister has 'exempted from customs duty specified parts used in environment friendly vehicles' in his budget proposal 2011-2012. This might just be the good news for green geeks.

**ECO DOESN'T STOP AT ELECTRONICS**

Of course there are eco-friendly ACs, geysers, refrigerators that help you bring your electricity bills down and do not harm the environment as well. But then, that's not all. The market has taken the term eco-friendly and organic to a whole new level. Thanks to the easy availability of products that are eco-friendly and organic in nature, it is the consumers who have started realising that since they can't stop shopping, eating or doing anything that they have been doing, so why not do it in a way that supports the green good. And then, it is also healthy. Sangeeta Kamath, Director for LUSH fresh handmade cosmetics in India, a premium brand from UK that makes products out of fresh fruit and vegetables, essential oils and safe synthetics, without animal ingredients, gives an industry perspective when she says, "The growing consumer awareness about the environmental effects of the lifestyle industry in India has resulted in an upward trend in the organic market in

seated. She doesn't remember having mangoes in these six years ever. Thanks to the big amount of pesticides and chemicals in them, she has become allergic to almost all fruits that are sweet in nature. Is Anumita alone in her suffering? Not really. There are scores of people out there who are going through the same, even worse in some cases for more or less the same reasons.

In order to satisfy the increasing consumer demands and to make profits, the producers and manufacturers make use of technology which makes it easy for them to produce more with the help of harmful pesticides and other chemicals. Almost every other day you read in the papers about the amount of pesticides increasing in every single vegetable you get from the market and even the meat products you consume aren't free of chemicals. That's where the importance of organic food comes in.

Dr Vijay Laxmi, a homeopath from Delhi, has been growing her own vegetables at her property in Sector-4 in Gurgaon for past



the country. Recent surveys and reports on organic trends show a steady growth in this sector in the past few years. The organic market initially had very few takers, however with the influx of eco-friendly companies in India whether it is cosmetic, apparel or food, conscious buyers began to incorporate 'green' steps in their lifestyle. The slow but steady shift has been instrumental in changing the lifestyle of India. With a huge focus now on being more environment friendly, people have come to realise living without damage to self and the earth is quite possible."

ORGANIC FOOD IS GOOD FOOD

Anumita Singh is a healthy 26-year-old young working woman who has been living alone in Mumbai for over six years now. Ever since she moved here from Uttarakhand, she has been only on a vegetable diet. A person who loved and lived on fruits back home is today forced to live without them. Every time she consumes apples, her favourite all these years, she feels nau-

several years now. Shares she, "Ever since my husband fell ill, I felt it was crucial for me to stop eating outside food of any sort. So no readymade food and no outside grown food also for me. I got dug up three pits in which I kept dumping whatever biodegradable stuff I found like paper, vegetable peels, etc. I covered up the pits and watered them. This acted as the natural manure. Then I sowed seeds of whatever veggies I wanted in almost 250 sq yard area of my 500 sq yard property with no pesticides and no chemicals."

In today's time of less space and apartment culture, not everyone has the luxury of having their open space to grow their own vegetables. But if they are concerned about their health, they can head straight to the organic food section of their neighbourhood departmental store. The availability of this kind of food has given the consumers a choice to take care of their health.

Mohit Khattar, MD, Godrej Nature's Basket, a high end gourmet retail chain,



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opines, "Indians by and large prefer fresh food and in the minds of most, fresh is equated with healthy food. Organic food is considered healthier and safer and is therefore an extension of the traditional preference for healthy and fresh food. However, there is that relatively smaller proportion of people who opt for organic food because they perceive it to be environment friendly. And then, there are those who have become fans of organic food simply because they find it more natural and tastier than non-organic products." Industry players have judged the concept of organic food more prevalent internationally, but they say Indians are yet to develop a taste or awareness about the same. Nevertheless, the potential is huge and is increasing too, especially in big cities. Manjunath Pankkarambile, MD of Lumiere, 'first Multi-cuisine Organic Restaurant in India' located at Bengaluru and

people buy these purely because of health reasons. Helping the environment is least on their priority. Nevertheless Clinical Nutritionist and Director, Whole Foods, a health food company, Ishi Khosla, feels the international customer is far more aware. She is of the opinion, "Indian consumer still has to feel for his health; he still has to know how and why should he protect himself and his family from this slow poison of synthetics and other chemical infected food. In the process, he will also realise how by taking care of his health, he can save the environment at the same time."

WEAR YOUR GREEN ATTITUDE

Till a few years back, not many people had even heard of eco-friendly clothing. It was like an unknown concept to many. At the max, wearing cotton clothes and shunning synthetic wear was consid-



Cochin, didn't think much of big bucks when he left his high paying IT job in the US to set up Lumiere with his friend Ambrose Kooliath. The duo had no idea about starting a restaurant. Initially they started "organic vegetable farming first and it was difficult to locate the discerning customers in one locality and marketing the produce was bit tough. We had earlier experience in running conventional restaurants and we converted that to an organic one by using our organic yields," explains Manjunath.

When Vinita Mathur started The Health Shop in Cumbala Hill, Mumbai almost 10 years back, she was aware that India is a treasure trove of all things natural, but lack of availability of the same had the customers buying things otherwise. Today, the scene has changed tremendously. Now, affluent and aware Indians are fishing for organic food to keep themselves healthy. She asserts, "We need to have greater availability of organic products. They also need to be available at a more competitive price. Information about the advantages of organic food should be disseminated to the common man which will lead to preference for the same."

It's true that the future of organic food in India is bright, but it is equally true that a number of peo-

pered a big step in the direction of supporting the environment, without even realising what exactly constitutes organic cotton. But even back then, there were some who were constantly innovating and figuring out ways to help the environment. Anita Dongre was one of the first fashion designers to have started work on procuring environment friendly fabrics for her creations. Her label titled Grass Root is a 'fashion movement that encourages the use of textiles made from techniques that do not harm the environment and are recyclable'. Sharing her thoughts on her experience, Anita says, "I only buy fair trade cotton to make all my clothes. When I started with this, there weren't many who thought of doing something like this. But now there are several designers who are working on the same concept thanks to the awareness among their clientele. Even the young budding designers that I interact with have lots of ideas to share." The conscientious generation today is well aware of how its carbon footprint is affecting the world climate. It also knows that every little effort counts. If work pressure and hectic lives don't leave them with a choice to do something actively, they prefer to do it indirectly. Buying and wearing eco-friendly clothes is perhaps

Buying organic products? Remember the following:



Why should you wear organic clothes?

- Organic cotton is softer and also does not cause allergies on the skin. Bamboo fabrics have natural wicking properties. These also have anti static and anti bacterial properties and are incredibly soft. They also keep you cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter.

Know your cosmetics

- Look carefully at the ingredient label. If there are ingredients there you cannot even pronounce, chances are these are synthetic compounds. It's a bit like taking a chemistry lesson: you'll know right off the bat that a product with ingredients like Benzyl Benzoate is a manufactured compound, and therefore cannot possibly be Organic. Look for the label



USDA Certified Organic or the Ecocert label to guarantee authenticity, because these organisations prohibit products from containing any synthetic petrochemical-based ingredients.

-Charu Suri, Editor-in-Chief, BeautyStat.com

International certifications for all things organic:

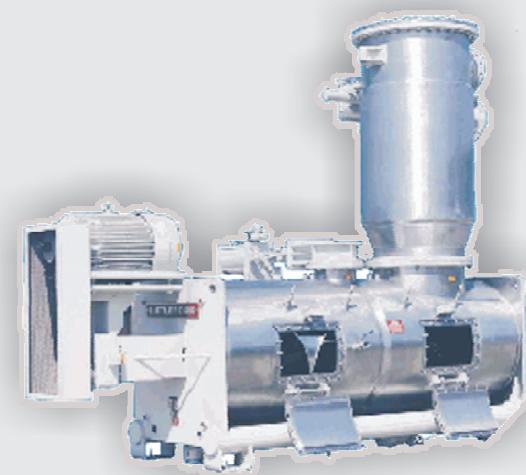
- National Standards for Organic Production (NSOP) - Indian Organic Standards.
- EC 834/2007 and 889/2008 - European Organic Standards.
- EC 710/2009 - European Organic Aquaculture Standards.
- NOP of USDA - US Organic Standards.
- Japanese Agriculture Standards (JAS) for Organic Production.
- Demeter (Bio-Dynamic Certification Agency)
- BioSuisse
- Naturland
- ECOCERT Fair Trade Standards (EFT).
- Organic Textile Standards - GOTS and OE
- ECOCERT-Cosmetic Standards
- ECOCERT-Organic Aquatic Plants Standards

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PICTURE COURTESY: DO U SPEAK GREEN

one way of doing so.

Shishir Goenka, Founder, Do U Speak Green, a clothing brand webstore that only uses organic cotton yarn grown free of pesticides and chemicals and eco-friendly dyes, feels the young Indians are looking for a way to make their strong intentions about environment loud and clear. He says, "Our inspiration for Do U Speak Green came about due to the absence of smart looking clothing for the nature lover and also absence of organic clothing in India. Most importantly, I have a passion for wildlife and helping preserve our natural environment hence the decision to contribute 10% of sales for the environment." With internet as their medium of selling clothes and environment as the ultimate beneficiary, people like Shishir are taking environment to the masses.

Charu Suri is the Editor-in-Chief of BeautyStat.com, an online interactive community that works with 'beauty brands and agencies to develop and implement marketing and market research solutions leveraging both online community as well as the overall online beauty consumer market'. She agrees that "technology has led to increased online purchases. We see women voicing their online consumption habits on a daily basis, even in the beauty vertical. They seem to do the surveying/experimenting in person at department stores and order the products online."

On one hand, while there are several benefits of organic textiles, in India, there are still no government regulations that make it mandatory for companies to go organic. Amol Nirban, Business Development Officer, Ecocert India Pvt Ltd (South Asia operations), Aurangabad, says, "One such regulation is in the process of preparation in India. Commonly accepted organic textile standard globally is Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS). Certifying bodies who are accredited for this are Ecocert, Control Union, IMO, OneCert. Having the standardised regulations enables the producers and manufacturing industry to comply with a

regulation which is known by everyone in the world from farmer to consumer."

LOOKING GOOD, BUT IS IT FOR GREEN GOOD?

Dr Anshoo Sharma from Jaipur calls herself an environment conscious person. She wears cotton clothing bought from brands that claim to sell organically produced clothes. She buys only organically manufactured cosmetics that do no harm to her skin and she tries to buy only organically grown food as much as possible. This lecturer of English Literature at a government college in Rajasthan says the information and benefits about such a life should be spread among all. "I always make sure I do my bit for the environment. Of course I do it mostly because of health reasons since I know if I become eco-friendly, I and my family's health stand to gain a lot. But then, by doing so, I also realise that the environment becomes a little bit better. Isn't that the idea behind the whole thing?" she asks. Well it is, but then doesn't the word organic make the whole eco-friendly experience a little too expensive? "It does but then that's because the demand for such products is less. If they are produced in such small quantities, one can expect them to be expensive. People in power and in the know-how must make efforts to bring down the consumerism. In the past, people would live frugally and they were far healthier than any one of us today. The environment was much cleaner too," she adds.

Dr Praveen Khare, Inspector,

Organic Cosmetics and Eco-Products, ECOCERT India Pvt Ltd, states, "Organic cosmetics are the cosmetic products produced from ingredients coming from organic agriculture and from natural origin sources. Right from hair care to foot care, all the products can be certified as organic, if they follow the organic cosmetic certification standards."

With the intelligent brigade of aware women also becoming the decision makers at home and at work, a lot depends on them, even when it concerns environment. Charu Suri is of the opinion that this trend is here to stay. She asserts, "Many emerging countries, India and China included, are realising they want to embrace the complete eco-friendly and conscious lifestyle. India has long been synonymous with holistic practices and wellness. It's not surprising that the organic movement is gaining widespread acceptance there. Companies are doing so well in India because they are tapping into a growing niche for Fair Trade, Organic and/or naturally-sourced beauty products." Agrees Sangeeta

Kamath of Lush, "Living an organic lifestyle is much more possible today, considering the gamut of choices that our conscious consumer has in today's way of life. The choices range from organic clothing, organic food stuff and of course cosmetics.

And, the internet is a blessing—everything is at your fingertips. You search and you have an option too many. Moreover, the organic term

goes beyond selling, for brands like ours this word has an honest meaning. Like I mentioned earlier, it is not just for self but for the earth."

You heard it people. An organic lifestyle is not only the need of the hour but today it is also fashionable to live it up in style. So, are you living it up?



PICTURE COURTESY: LUSH