



Design alternatives

Ritusmita Biswas

The discerning Indian consumer as well as the designers seem to have had enough of the exotic Indian look. Trendy, new designers are exploring the contemporary fashion scene from a new angle. Indian fashion does not need to mean 'exotic' with a capital E anymore. The fashion transgressors seem to have taken a respite from the usual fare of jewel studded lehengas and Swarovski-embedded halter tops. The trend now seems to go for simple - be it *khadi* or ethnic Indian silk modernised with contemporary patterns. The quest for simplicity and innovativeness in designs seems to set the mood humming.

Says designer Sujata Sarawgi, who prefers to be known as a textile designer, rather than a fashion designer: "I never identify myself with the typical trends in fashion, and as a result, I can't create such wares though they might be in great demand. True, the rich, exotic look is immensely popular, especially in the bridal market, but it simply does not fit my sense of design and fashion. I would never be wearing them and so, why create something which I will never wear?"

Like Sujata, a large chunk of younger people now seem to be giving a pass to traditional fashion patterns. "Many of the garments from the so called fashion designers are so tacky and they are strictly passé like the K serials. In fact, the decorated saris, long open hair, large *bircis* and heavy ornate jewellery were essentially a look promoted by K soap operas. With this craze fading, the demand for such a look is also waning," says advertising executive Ranjabati Sarkar, who feels she has her own unique sense of style. Her friend Nimisha agrees and says: "Besides, who can afford to buy them? Such clothes are definitely not for the common people!"

Designer Jaya Misra, who specialises in bridal-wear, however, disagrees. "There is and will always be a demand for such dresses, especially as a part of the trousseau. At weddings, people want to depict the rich, exotic look and so, these dresses are in high demand," she says. Nonetheless, even Jaya agrees that often, this demand for a similar look creates a challenge to the designer and she has to find uniqueness while maintaining the same flavour. "Personally, I am well-known for my rich bridal designs, but at times, even I need to take a break from the going trend. So, sometime back I launched my Peace collection that sought to capture the simplicity of Indian designs by making optimal use of Indian fibres like *khadi*," she adds.

Whatever be the mode of expression of the designer, each garment created should have a sense of purpose and only then can it meet the expectations of the wearer, according to designer Rahul Mishra, who is hailed as the next Sabyasachi Mukherjee in the Indian fashion circuit. Known for his innovative ideas on traditional fabrics, Rahul feels that India has a rich repertoire of unique fabrics and patterns which are yet to be discovered. "As a designer, it is my duty to find them and give a new meaning to these traditional forms - so that they are accepted by the contemporary generation," he says.

As good as his word, Rahul endorses organic fabrics and slow processes, and works with traditional, rural textile designers, promoting ethnic fabrics and patterns by imbuing a contemporary look. He reiterates that the time has come for Indian fashion to be on its own. "India needs to find its own sustainable model of growth and similarly, Indian fashion needs to delve into its own roots and find patterns which are acceptable globally and yet, which staunchly uphold their Indian-ness," he says.

"Why do these patterns need to be the same cliched ones?" questions Fahd Hussein of brand Onseed which is slowly, but steadily capturing a good client base among the metro youth who are fascinated by its iconoclastic designs. "The Indian fashion scene today is intensely boring - the same designs are being replicated again and again. Why does a traditional Indian pattern need to be an image of Krishna Radha or a peacock, for example? Even offbeat motifs, like say, posters of B grade Ramsay movies or political pamphlets can create images which are intrinsically Indian," Hussein says.

Designer Rina Dhaka, however, is sceptical about the Indian consumers as well. "The Indian consumers in most cases are reluctant to experiment; when they are buying designer-wear, they are rather eager to replicate patterns seen in movies and soaps. They love ornate designs and the concept 'less is more' is yet to catch on," she says.

Rahul counters, "A fashion designer is also responsible to a great extent; he/she needs to imbibe a sense of style among the followers of fashion by creating unique designs which uphold Indian traditions and are yet, ready for global acceptance. It is the designer's responsibility to deviate from the accepted fare and educate the clientele about new and alternative patterns."

Trans World Features (TWF)

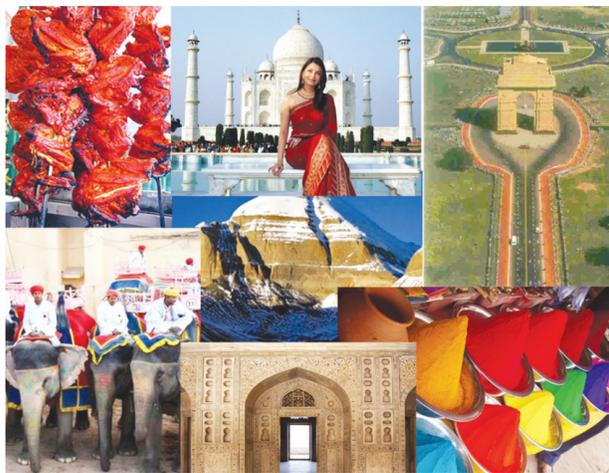
“What was the last thing you googled?” This was a question lobbed at a photographer, writer and make-up artiste on the latest issue of *Vogue*.

So there, I've admitted it. I read *Vogue* like any other female airhead and moon about clothes that would cost me an arm and a leg. But my point is, what you google accurately sums up the kind of person you are. It's a Rorschach inkblot test in the cyber world to explore the intimate spaces that house the real you. This is not to say there is a permanent you, an immutable you. We are constantly reinventing ourselves, coming under the influence of people, events, ideas and then receding from them. Sometimes this happens with a rapidity which is truly alarming.

Like everybody else, I google quite a bit in my spare time and the topics could veer wildly from Leela Naidu's memoirs to Enrique Iglesias' latest album. In between, you can throw in some images of hot bod Jacqueline Fernandez and George Carlin quips. It seems that about the worst gaffe you can commit on cyberspace is to google yourself. I did that a couple of times before I became aware of its no-no quotient, so I suppose that doesn't count.

Now, what I google cannot possibly be of interest to anybody, but the last name I googled was Joel Stein. Joel who? Well, he's a '71 born US journo. The Wikipedia pic has him grinning into the camera with that clean-cut easy, all-American charm which is hard to resist. But this Joel dude is bad news. He is making the fur fly and creating bad blood between people. Joel Stein is the *Time* magazine columnist whose piece *My Own Private India* is the literary equivalent of a Ku Klux Klan racist attack. His insulting comments on the Indian immigrants of his hometown, Edison, New Jersey, has raised a storm of protest, with *Time* handing out an abject apology.

My favourite comedian, George Carlin said comedy means knowing where to draw the line and crossing it. In the realm of the comic, nothing is sacrosanct. Some of the most persecuted people of the world - the Jews, are the subject of numberless side - spitting jokes. In Chaplin's hands, the feared German megalomaniac became vastly entertaining. Cracking jokes at the expense of a certain community is actually a backhanded compliment, if taken in the right spirit. This was underscored when a colleague from down South taped "Hotel Keralafomia" - that whacky musical ode to all things Malu, and cheerfully played it for us over and over again. But my quarrel with Stein is not just his racist attitude. The piece rancles because it is not funny enough. He is guilty of not being able to tap the comic potential of his boyhood encounters with Indian immigrants. Instead of helping us gain an outsider's insight into our quirks, his piece leaves a bad taste in the mouth. America has been the land of opportunity for people around the world. No one needs to apologise for being there. It embraces multitudes and gives everyone out to try his luck a level playing field. And then suddenly, one of America's most respected magazines carries a piece that reeks of everything that is provincial, thick-skinned and bigoted.



Cheers to Curry Imperialism...!

What really are the contents of Stein's piece? Simply put, he is deeply resentful of the presence of too many Indians in his hometown Edison, New Jersey, where the inventor Thomas Alva Edison set up base. He is not at all amused by how old landmarks are being replaced by an Indian sweet shop, Indian grocery, Indian restaurant. After the first wave of doctors and engineers, the merchant cousins, and then the less bright ones settled there. The alleged stupidity of the later day immigrant convinces Stein he knows just why India is poor. He thinks "dot-heads" is too light an insult for a people whose gods have multiple arms and an elephant nose. He ends with the sneering remark that young Indian immigrants are looking like Italians these days - with their gelled hair, gold chains and unbuttoned shirts. Stein barely skims the surface of the Indian community. There is a school-boy pugnacity that suits a bully in the playground, not the hallowed precincts of Stanford (which he attended) and *Time*. He also talks of his own youthful stabs at shoplifting, watching R-rated movies, and carousing in drunken parties. Given this track record, it can be safely assumed that Stein is no role model and his views hardly worth taking seriously. The kind of high decibel noise Indians are raising show we are still way too touchy about our identity. With a numerical strength of one billion, an economy thriving in spite of the global recession, and a membership to the nuclear club, it will take much, much more than the cheeky words of a small

town American ignoramus to make India blink. Even so, words must be used with responsibility, and Stein has no business giving a tacit nod of approval to India-baiters under the guise of raising a few laughs.

When all hell broke loose, Stein wasted no time in putting the phone off the hook. Then, he twittered that he truly felt stomach-sick that he hurt so many people and also that he expected the reactions to be Gandhian... that we Indians would simply turn the other cheek, because pacifism was our national legacy.

Stein's wit made it worse for me because it confirmed what we had guessed all along. Stein's cruelty is the cruelty of the bully who picks on the weakest victim, someone who is not likely to hit back. He thought our Gandhi ideals would render us defenceless. All that uproar has proved otherwise. And Stein can be stomach-sick all he wants, not for us, but his own prospects in the career scene.

However, America and India are not as polarised as Stein would have us to believe. Writer Rana Dasgupta says that the two nations share the same arrogance, identical assumptions about their importance and superiority, as well as their self-obsession. But this in no way should make us feel smug. For, in aligning ourself to this country, we would lose our timeless character, the intangible sum of what makes us Indian. As Raja Rao wrote in *The Meaning of India* - "India is not a country, it is a perspective, it is not a climate but a mood, in the play of the absolute - it is not the Indian who makes India, but India

which makes the Indian." Former BBC chief of Bureau and writer Mark Tully, an India watcher for years, make an astute observation about modern India in his book *No Full Stops in India*, which is worth recounting. According to him, colonialism still exists in the minds of Indians today. The most successful students may no longer knock the doors of Oxford or Cambridge. They now prefer Harvard or Yale. But do they learn what is relevant to their country? The scientist are trained in reducing the role of human beings in production, though labour is India's greatest asset. The doctors want to practise medicine which uses the latest and most expensive techniques of healing, whereas the country needs public health, preventive medicine and simple cures. The business school graduates learn to head huge corporations which will cripple small enterprises. This is the sort of criticism about India that we ought to be sitting up and taking notice.

Racist prejudices against India seem understandable in the context of India's growing influence in all spheres. What in the sixties was a fad of Westerners for yoga, transcendental meditation, *nadraksha* beads and *Hare Krishna* chants is now a full-fledged curry imperialism that shows no signs of abating. There are more Indians on the Forbes list of millionaires, more Bollywood premieres in the West, more whizkid Indian techies heading start-up companies, writers winning international awards. The thrifty, hard-working, family-oriented Indian is everywhere, from transplanting hearts to changing car wheels. He is ubiquitous, unstoppable and cruising smoothly down the highway to El Dorado. And if somebody sulks because Indians are holding the trump card, that's too bad. Because racists are all under the delusion that God made a creative mistake when He brought some people into being. And prejudice, after all, is the child of ignorance.

When I first read Joel Stein's piece, I knew at once that it had an Assamese connection. After some hard thinking, I knew what it was. Edison. That's the town he writes about. And that is the very place on which S'Mitra Kalita, a journalist at the *Washington Post* based her book of narrative non-fiction, *Suburban Sahibs*. I interviewed Mitra some years ago and read her book. It traces the lives of three immigrant families that make their way from various parts of India to the suburbs of New Jersey. It sheds new light on the pursuit of the American Dream for the estimated 1.7 million Indians living in the United States. Middlesex County, New Jersey, is home to one of the largest Indian population in the world outside India. And as they achieve economic success, their desire for political and social parity grows stronger and their acceptance in the US is less of a question and more of a reality.

We Indians are comfortable with the idea of goggle-eyed Westerners falling in love with our elephant rides and delirious festival dances. We want them to fingerlick the curry off their plates and wear turbans to get into the Oriental spirit. But peddling such exotica is not always the smart thing to do. Sometimes, we must let them know we mean business.

And that, they had better not mess with us. inclrani.raimedhi@gmail.com
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Despicable me

Cast: Steve Carell, Jason Segel, Russell Brand.
Director: Pierre Coffin, Chris Renaud.

In a happy suburban neighbourhood surrounded by white picket fences with flowering rose bushes, sits a black house with a dead lawn. Unbeknownst to the neighbours, hidden beneath this home is a vast secret hideout. Surrounded by a small army of minions, we discover Gru (voiced by Steve Carell), planning the biggest heist in the history of the world. He is going to steal the moon (Yes, the moon!) in Universal's new 3-D CGI feature, *Despicable Me*. Gru delights in all things wicked. Armed with his arsenal of shrink rays, freeze rays, and battle-ready vehicles for land and air, he vanquishes all who stand in his way. Until the day he encounters the immense will of three little orphaned girls who look at him and see something that no one else has ever seen: a potential Dad. The world's greatest villain has just met his greatest challenge: three little girls named Margo, Edith and Agnes.



The Twilight Saga

Cast: Kristen Stewart, Robert Pattinson, Taylor Lautner.
Director: David Slade

As Seattle is ravaged by a string of mysterious killings and a malicious vampire continues her quest for revenge, Bella once again finds herself surrounded by danger. In the midst of it all, she is forced to choose between her love for Edward and her friendship with

MOVIE WATCH
Vikram Barkataki

TOP 10 Hollywood

- Despicable Me
- The Twilight Saga: Eclipse
- Predators
- Toy Story 3
- The Last Airbender
- Grown Ups
- Knight & Day
- The Karate Kid
- The A-Team
- Cyrus



Jacob - knowing that her decision has the potential to ignite the ageless struggle between vampire and werewolf. With her graduation quickly approaching, Bella has one more decision to make: life or death. But which is which?



"We're out of mouthwash, so I borrowed the deodorizer from your car."



"I rub pepperoni under my arms. If I have to smell like something, I choose pizza!"



"You said my feet stink, so I put breath mints between my toes!"



"If I rub deodorant under my arms, I smell good. If I rub deodorant under my nose, everyone smells good!"

FORECAST

JULY 19 - 25, 2010

ARIES (MAR 21-APR 19)
A rendezvous in a strange location lends some excitement to the start of your week. That charge launches you into Wednesday and Thursday, when you find yourself pursuing a hot new lead. On Friday, you may use someone else to your advantage. This weekend, after a successful mission, your sights will be set on still greater heights.

TAURUS (APR 20-MAY 20)
As much as you love your friends and associates, other people are a liability on Monday and Tuesday. You'll have plenty of time for coffee on Wednesday - you'll have time to take a swim in a river of coffee, if you want - and Thursday and Friday, you should spend enjoying other people's ideas. This weekend, a confusing interaction with someone else leaves you flummoxed.

GEMINI (MAY 21-JUN 21)
If what you are saying just isn't getting through to you-know-who, consider the way you're saying it and where this person is coming from. Wednesday through Friday will be a little sparse, laughs-wise - you've got some business to attend to - and you might find yourself frustrated that the week ends on such a confusing note. But the weekend restores you.

CANCER (JUN 22-JUL 22)
On Monday and Tuesday, do something chill: take lunch on your own, stop by the video store on your way home from work, get supplies for a bubble bath. The whole week you'll be in this mood, and it may lead to a meaningful revelation or two, the kind you can't have when you're surrounded by buzz and chatter. This weekend, indulge in your most eccentric side.

LEO (JUL 23-AUG 22)
You have a passion for travel at the start of the week. On Wednesday and Thursday, you make a good impression without even trying, and Friday you do something healthy. This weekend, you have the answers; when someone hands you a problem, you have fun seeing how quickly you can solve it.

VIRGO (AUG 23-SEPT 22)
Overcoming the tension from the start of the week will be key to enjoying the romance that kicks into high gear on Wednesday, and lasts through the second half of the week. This weekend, you learn a bunch of new things all at once. Be open-minded and you'll be thrilled with what you discover.

LIBRA (SEPT 23-OCT 22)
Social experimentation at the start of the week totally pays off. Nevertheless, Wednesday and Thursday, you have little time to be dazzling the masses with your thinking, as the home realm requires your attention. Friday, you're still feeling a bit out of it - sentimental, though not sentimental in a fun way - but this weekend is nearly nonstop romance and good times.

SCORPIO (OCT 23-NOV 21)
You are your own person, certainly, but you find yourself at the start of the week feeling more identified with a group than you have in a while. The second half of the week, particularly Wednesday and Thursday, your self-control and shrewdness will be called upon, and Friday, you may need to finesse something over the phone. Saturday and Sunday, those same skills will be needed around the house. Demonstrate your diplomatic prowess.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV 22-DEC 21)
Good feelings and good will abound on Monday and Tuesday. Wednesday, you feel more moved by art and music than you have in a while. Watching what you spend on Thursday and Friday - right down to packing your lunch - is a brilliant plan. Over the weekend, you'll meet someone in a random way and end up talking to them for a lot longer than you expected.

CAPRICORN (DEC 22-JAN 19)
You're at about normal energy levels on Monday and Tuesday, but come Wednesday, you go on hyper drive. Your radiance is turning heads on Thursday, and by Friday, your demonstrated stamina will be downright jaw-dropping. An airtight new plan will occur to you this weekend.

AQUARIUS (JAN 20-FEB 18)
Your social group could use a few new members, so be open to unfamiliar faces on Monday and Tuesday. Wednesday and Thursday, however, restriction is the order of the day, and discipline is important. Friday has you exhausted, but Saturday is a bend in the river: Suddenly, you're among a singing, dancing crowd. You're not always in the mood for musical numbers, but you'll be charmed. Sunday is an energetic day as well.

PISCES (FEB 19-MARCH 20)
Monday is your lucky day. So is Tuesday, in fact. If someone needs your help on Wednesday, you're happy to give back. On Thursday and Friday, even the toughest tasks are a snap. This weekend, you'd like to work magic for as many people as possible, but you can only fit so many tricks up your sleeve.