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A DRIVE
THROUGH
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FOOD FOCUS
WHAT MAKES
MASTER CHEF
RENE REDZEPI
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INDIA'S LEAST-RECOGNISED FASHION DESIGNER

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WHY DOES **SANJAY GARG** CHOOSE TO TAKE A BACK SEAT?

PLUS! WHY GARG REFUSED TO HAVE KAREENA KAPOOR AS SHOWSTOPPER... PAGE 12



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6 BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS

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Kedar Bobde Nagraj Bhat Rishim Sachdeva Dipak Adhikary Aloysius D'Silva

5 FOOD TRENDS TO WATCH FOR!

Top chefs on gastronomical experiments coming your way this year

By Farhad J. Dadyburjor

CHICKEN IN BLACK



"Black Chicken is a native breed from Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. I was excited to experiment with this rare breed of chicken as it's known to have higher nutritional value and is very rich in protein, low in fat and cholesterol. Plus, it tastes absolutely delicious!"

-Kedar Bobde deGustibus Hospitality

THE PROBIOTIC YET TASTY TREAT

"Good health begins in the gut. Fermented foods like kimchi and kefir are one of the oldest secrets to robust health. Kefir grains can replace yogurt or cheese-based salad dressings and can be used for making sour cream dip and dessert parfait for an amazing probiotic treat."

-Nagraj Bhat London Taxi



GOING GREEN GARLIC

"This year will honour many new flavours and condiments like green garlic. Green garlic is more mellow and less spicy in flavour than regular garlic, and can be used raw or cooked like scallions. Green garlic will definitely become a favourite for all chefs."

-Dipak Adhikary The Good Wife



FLAVOURS FROM THE KITCHEN

"I see us going back to our origins when it comes to flavours – serving up Indian flavours, whether via a modern take, or a traditional route, by offering age-old recipes that reminds guests of their mother or grandmother's cooking."

-Aloysius D'Silva Lady Baga



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AN EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW WITH
FORMER NOMA
CHEF RENE REDZEPI
TURN TO
PAGE 22



UMAMI RULES

"Umami continues to be a huge trend, one which can be really drawn out of a dish through the technique

WTF
WATCH. TAP. FOLLOW.

Curating the best of the Internet for your Sunday viewing benefits



WATCH

Upgrade your playlist this weekend with The Chainsmokers' latest song *Sick Boy*. The song has received mixed responses so far, so decide for yourself if it's up to the trend they've set!

TAP

The best of Uttarakhand's hill stations, rivers and culture is curated on Euttaranchal (@euttaranchal). Tap for some travel inspiration!



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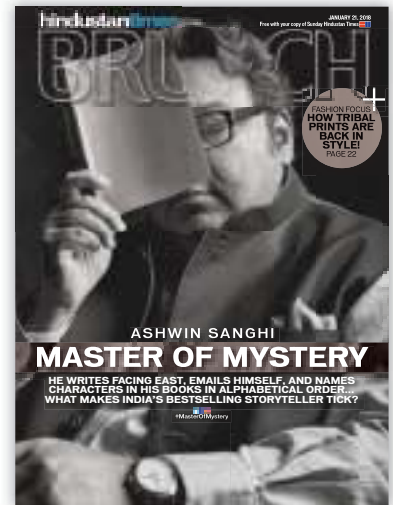
Baby Gives
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Amid all the cynicism on Twitter, these vines of cute animals (@TheAnimalVines) will make your Twitter feed happy and full of good vibes.

Stuff You Said Last Sunday



@HTBrunch Killer issue this week!! So many articles to read. On A Sanghi, articles by Rajiv and Vir and finally Matt Preston. Wow!!
@virsanghvi @RajivMakhni
@MakKhandekar

@ashwinsanghi thank you for the tip on naming of characters... helped me a lot
@HOOMAN46048287

A great read this morning. An insight into the mind & daily routine of most admired fiction writer @ashwinsanghi. The article exalted my belief 'from doubt to self confidence'. Thank You @HTBrunch for such amazing article every #SundayRead #SundayMotivation
@httweets
@GodfatherMohit

Loved @HTBrunch with the perfect blend of literature (Master of mystery- @ashwinsanghi & JLF), Food (Mayo boom @virsanghvi), tech @ RajivMakhni and the lavish tribal couture. And how can I miss the tips to keep kidney clean.
#sundayread
@sidharth1411

The rise of Mayonnaise in India! Perhaps the most popular European sauce here. Burgers, Sandwiches and even our Shawarma wouldn't be same. Great story @virsanghvi
@iamitp

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Flip cover photograph shot exclusively for *HT Brunch* by NAINA REDHU
Soha: Styling by Neha Bijlany
Soha and Sharmila: Make-up by Arjun Bundela, hair by Bharti Chavan
Soha wears a top by Kyna, skirt by Sameer Madan, jewellery from Evara
and shoes by Christian Louboutin
Sharmila wears a sari of her own

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Don't just make an impression on your guests, take their breath away

Our sense of smell is about 10,000 times more sensitive than any of our other senses, and plays a big part in how we think and feel. Adding a fragrance is a small step that can have a huge impact on the room, your home, and everyone in it.

Should you use a home fragrance?

Think of fragrance as an accessory to your home décor. It adds depth and character and allows you to give each space in your home a different feel. As with any other facet of décor, it gives you the ability to create a signature style, or play with fragrances to change things around for special occasions.

How do I fragrance my home?

There are a variety of ways to add the element of fragrance to your home, including pot pourri, reed diffusers, scented candles, fragrance vaporisers, and room sprays, among others.

Reed diffusers

Reed diffusers are a great way to add constant fragrance to your home. The diffuser reeds soak up the fragrance oil and



disperse the scent into the air by capillary action. Diffusers work really well in places where you always want it to smell nice but can't keep a constant eye on it. For example, placing it at the entrance ensures that your guests are greeted with a beautiful fragrance as they walk in.

Using a reed diffuser

Fill the ceramic pot with diffuser oil. Place the reed sticks into the pot. The number of sticks should depend on the size of the room and the intensity of fragrance you desire - more sticks means more fragrance. Use about 8 sticks for a large room, and 4 for a smaller area. Flip the reeds a few times to saturate with oil on the first use. During normal use, flip them



every few days. Keep an eye on the level of oil, topping it up when you see it dip below the halfway mark.

Fragrance vaporisers

Fragrance vaporisers are your method of choice for a special occasion or when you need the fragrance to transform the room faster. Fragrance vaporisers work by heating the essential oils using a tealight or an electric bulb until it vaporises and imparts fragrance to a room. Vaporisers do not just waft lovely aromas, but can also look beautiful in your home as the candle gently flickers away.

Using a fragrance vaporiser

Add a little water to the bowl on top of the fragrance vaporiser, (approximately half the bowl). Add 4 to 5 drops of vaporiser oil to the water. Place the tealight in



the space provided at the base of the vaporiser and light it. If you are using an electric model, switch it on. As the water gets heated, the fragrance will spread in about 15 minutes. Ensure that the bowl does not run dry while the tealight is burning and remember to extinguish the tealight after use.

Adding fragrance to your home can transform it in ways that will surprise you and your guests.



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'THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA WAS COMPLETELY TRUE'

Novelist and *Vogue* writer Plum Sykes on falling down Anna Wintour's stairs and encountering Harvey Weinstein

By Farhad J. Dadyburjor

Once considered an It girl of New York society, Plum Sykes nowadays leads a life that's a far cry from those heady days when she worked at American *Vogue*. She's busy looking after her two daughters on their country estate on the outskirts of England in Cotswolds, if not tending to her 24 hens. It's also the place where she managed to write her third novel, *Party Girls Die in Pearls*, a chick lit-meets-Agatha Christie murder mystery set in 1980s Oxford.

THE REALITY OF FICTION

The book has plenty of fashion of that time inspired by the era's trendsetters like Princess Diana, and is bound to be at least partly autobiographical, given that Plum studied at Oxford in the late '80s herself. "I think all books are in some way autobiographical," she says. "I just don't see how you can

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write a book – a whole book and not pull in things directly from your life! Writers who say they don't are lying."

In Mumbai to promote her book, we're holed up in her hotel room because she has to watch over her 11-year-old daughter Ursula. The main character in her book is called Ursula Flowerbutton – just a mere coincidence? "It is derived from my daughter's name," admits Plum, "coupled with a name I saw on a grave in a churchyard – Dr Samuel Flowerbutton from 1800. And I thought, what a brilliant name! So you just kind of pick up those things."

BEHIND CELEBRITY SCENES

Plum (whose real name is Victoria, with the nickname being derived from an English plum called



Photo: ROBERT FAIRER

Victoria) became famous when Anna Wintour plucked her from British *Vogue* and dropped her into Manhattan's social swirl.

"When I first moved to New York (in 1997), I was pretty intimidated by everything and had only been there for two months when Anna invited me to her home for dinner," she recalls. "The guests included Tina Brown and her husband Harold Evans, Isabella Rossellini and whoever her husband is. Wait – I'm not sure if it was her husband. Anyway, Anna asked me to lead the way for dinner and I put one foot forward

"I met Trump a couple of times. He was quite funny, actually – of course at the time he wasn't going to be President"

and slipped and tumbled down the flight of steps. When I looked up, I could see everyone's faces filled with horror, wondering if I had broken my neck. And in front of me was my Prada shoe with the broken heel. Anna's husband David actually taped the heel back so I could walk around the rest of the evening. Later Anna was like 'why do you wear that rubbish' – because she always

only wears Manolos," says Plum with a hush.

Was she ever intimidated working with 'Nuclear Wintour' (as the press has dubbed her)? "She is quite intimidating. She's a very fair boss and a great manager of people, which is why she is the greatest editor in the world. But I think a lot of her skill comes from being enigmatic as a person and being clear as a boss – from that dichotomy," says Plum, who's still a writer with the magazine. "After 20 years of working for her, I still don't know what she thinks about anything!" she laughs, admitting that most of what was in *The Devil Wears Prada* was "completely true". "Everyone thought the character of (her assistant) Emily was based on me, but I was never Anna's assistant," she insists curtly.

She's parted with the rich and famous of New York, including two of the most notorious men of our time – Donald Trump and Harvey Weinstein. "I met Trump a couple of times. He was quite funny, actually – of course at the time he wasn't going to be President."

As for Weinstein, she was one of the lucky few left unscathed in her encounter with the business mogul. "He was the publisher of my first two books. To me, he was very charismatic, but it was a business relationship. What can I say – I was a 34-year-old journalist, I wasn't a 21-year-old actress in a hotel room! I only ever met him in his office with my agent and my editor..." She pauses. "I don't think anyone really knew the extent of what was going on. I didn't, at least. I think it's awful. I'm just really glad I never wanted to be an actress," she says drily.

Whilst both men share a simi-

lar vein of belligerence, arrogance and abusive behaviour, Plum adds, "The one thing about both these men is that they will always remember your name no matter after how long they meet you. That's what made them so good at their job as social networkers."

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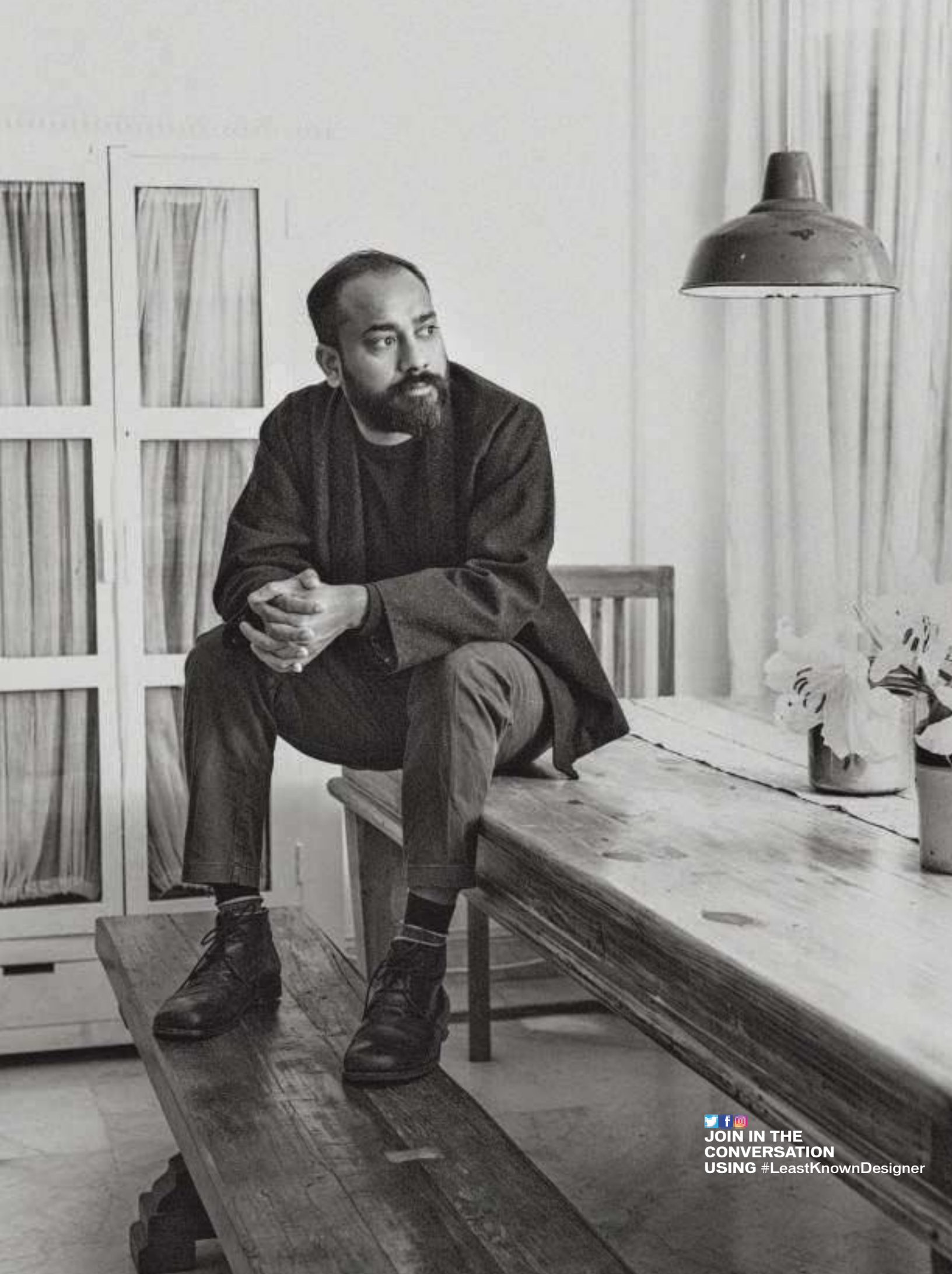
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“WOULD YOU AGREE THAT KAREENA KAPOOR WOULD ADD NOTHING TO MY BRAND?”

WHY DESIGNER SANJAY GARG REFUSED TO HAVE THE ACTRESS AS HIS SHOWSTOPPER.... AND OTHER LITTLE-KNOWN FACTS ABOUT THE QUIET LITTLE CREATIVE GENIUS

Text by Shefalee Vasudev // Photos shot exclusively for *HT Brunch* by Shovan Gandhi

A few months before Lakmé Fashion Week's (LFW) Winter Festive 2017 edition scheduled for August, I got a call from designer Sanjay Garg. “Would you agree that Kareena Kapoor Khan as the showstopper would add nothing to my brand, its definition or its influence – at least in the way I wish to evolve my signature?” he asked.

As always, he was restless and direct. Being offered a finale (or the opening show) is just the kind of homage to his work that would interest Garg. But accepting it with the existent formula – Kapoor Khan as the Lakmé Absolut brand ambassador is the de rigueur showstopper for all finales – didn't appeal to him.

“I don't see my brand that way. I don't want the visual or associative messaging to get mixed up,” he said. “I have checked into a remote forest resort and am going to think it through in the next two days,” he said.

KEEPING IT REAL

LFW opened in August with Sanjay Garg's collection Cloud People at the newly refurbished Royal Opera House in Mumbai. It was a Lakmé Absolut sponsored show – a finale repackaged as an opening show. It did not star Kareena Kapoor Khan. That evening, Royal Opera House throbbed with the expectant excitement of Garg's guests – the who's who, who's new and who's knew were all there.

lingering buzz still emanates from unusual choices. Besides, a majority of his female guests wore Raw Mango hand-woven saris or Sanjay Garg ready-to-wear woven garments. A recognisable subculture stamped with his design DNA was evident. Cloud People revisited *chikankari* on white *mul* without gluttonous excess and included androgynous silhouettes in weaves like gold brocade that are primarily associated with ostentation

**“I DON'T WANT TEXTILES TO BE
MY DESIGN YARDSTICK; I WANT TO
BE ABLE TO DESIGN PERFUMES,
PUPPETS AND MUCH MORE”**

If the underlying context was about his branding, Garg got it right. His dissonance with the celebrity fixated ways of fashion weeks was the best untold story of LFW that season. In an era of clever, me-too marketing,

in India. Fit and anti-fit, plainness and prettiness, emerald greens and jewelled maroons, sheer and opaque, lehngas, short and long jackets and men's kurtas on female models, midnight blue brogues, sleek hair and

dark eye make-up on models were some contours of the show. This was just Garg's fourth participation at a fashion week.

Sanjay Garg, the designer's eponymous label of ready-to-wear (woven on specially re-set looms, not tailored on machines) is just four years old. But this year marks the 10th anniversary of his hand-woven sari label that brought Garg attention and fame. That rekindled interest in his handloom saris through their texture and fall, designs and motifs, parrots, cows or simple blue borders. Garg's seductively reimagined grammar of colour that danced between his saris and boxy blouses (no bustiers, no plunging cholis with strings at the back) brought him clientele that ranges from 20 to 70 years old and beyond. It also changed the fortunes of the Chanderi village weavers in Madhya Pradesh. He was not the first to visit or rediscover Chanderi, but he certainly revitalised the weave with freshness design

intervention and saleability.

In 2008, the year he launched Raw Mango, Garg's annual turnover was ₹90,000. It crossed ₹10 crore in the 2012-13 financial year, he said in an interview in 2013. This year, all he says is that it has increased fourfold in the last four years. While Good Earth, the well-known design store, has been stocking Raw Mango since 2011, Garg now has three standalone stores – the first big “proper shop” as he calls it in Mumbai's Colaba, a riveting space, a small one in Bengaluru, and the oldest and the quaintest in a farmhouse in Chhattarpur off Delhi. Far from any mall or market and a rather long drive from the city, it attracts more than 500 clients a month and about 98 per cent of the visits turn into sales, says Garg. The brand now employs around 120 people in its city offices and owns 500 looms that provide work to 1,500 weavers and other workers in different weaving clusters across India.

OUT OF THE BOX

Those are only some of the reasons why it is time to observe Garg's work and influence in a manner that pries itself free from the rubber stamps it has gathered so far. Profiles (include one written by me in 2013) that betray amazement about a small town boy from Mubarakpur who was educated in the Hindi medium and is today a household name in textile fashion need to be archived. The story turns now. “I don't want textiles to be my design yardstick; I want to be able to design perfumes, puppets and much more,” says Garg. This 10th year will see a more layered design focus with announcements about new products. “I like to prove myself wrong. I am in a

dialogue, in fact many dialogues with myself. I am not sure if handloom makes sense just because so many designers are working with it,” he says.

His words, ideas, imaginations and perplexities topple over each other to create an intense, stream of consciousness conversation. I ask him why he has recently become incredibly fond of English as a language. He instantly switches to idiom-peppered Hindi to describe the furniture and fabric of his mind. And his head.

Garg's mind-head is a stormy, restive place. It is lashed by winds of talent, ambition, unapologetic rebellion punctuated by uncertainty and debate. The three angel-demons that preside here are named Chanderi, Mashru and The Brocade Lehnga. The first is his flagship imprint of arrival, survival and success. The second is a weave he brought unusual interventions to. The third, his ready-to-wear best seller also created in Banaras that became – after the debut of the Sanjay Garg label in 2014 – a “trend”. So much a “trend” that it spurred half a dozen other designers to introduce brocade lehngas. It is a bride magnet after all.

But the way his ideas have been ruthlessly plagiarised by fellow designers and well-known stores makes him fume. “It's taken me time to digest my work being so copied; I will never understand how designers can source from weavers who work with us or replicate designs. Changing the size of a motif or the colour is not enough – our engineered panel lehngas took months to develop. All of us who are widely copied say that this

“I DESIGN ALL THE FURNITURE IN MY STORES AND MY OFFICE... I HAVE IDENTIFIED MY CARPENTERS AND IRONSMITHS”



NOT-SO-QUIET PRAISE
CONOISSEURS HAVE FLOWERY WORDS IN PRAISE OF THE DESIGNER WHO DOESN'T SAY MUCH



Mira Nair,
filmmaker

“The beauty of Sanjay's work is that he makes the ancient utterly modern with ultimate ease. He is a son of the soil, constantly curious about creativity everywhere and in any context, fuelling himself with what goes in the world yet returning to the earth he knows to spin another piece of beauty that is both familiar and yet new.”



Harsh Goenka,
chairperson,
RPG Enterprises

“Sanjay Garg has been instrumental in giving hand-woven fabric and saris a new identity. His designs seem inspired by old miniature art. I really like his Krishna and cow's motif and the way he contrasts his saris with blouses. Even his stores have a subdued drama – an old world charm in a contemporary setting.”



Jaya Jaitly,
Founder Dastkar
Haat Samiti

“Sanjay Garg came to show me his first cluster effort with Chanderi saris over 11 years back. I found them so beautiful that I invited him immediately to be a part of a Dastkar Haat Samiti exhibition in Mumbai. I like the fact that he has stayed true to the sari, not compromised on tradition. He enjoys his profits and pays his people well. I am happy to have been a part of his journey.”



gives employment to a large copycat economy. I understand this impact but it does not justify intellectual property theft," he says.

INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT

Garg suffers from chronic Karmic discontent. It is his quest to do things in his own way: his campaigns have all been shot by photographers out of the fashion domain, his Colaba store is managed by a PhD scholar, he served *chooran* in a brass box instead of chocolates at one of his shows, he doesn't want to duck behind nationalism through handlooms to exploit workers or be spartan with his own money. These days he is gripped with the thought of writing a newspaper column on politics and about design through poetry.

Garg says he is viscerally spurred to elevate any idea that is socially looked down upon. "It is because the sari was seen as an inferior, non-modern garment in the years I was growing up, that I took to it with a vengeance," he says. He disliked school unlike his

two siblings and admits when prodded that neither does he always agree with his mother nor do his parents really understand his work.

All the same, he takes professional criticism well even when it needles him beyond comfort. One of the reasons why no publicist can never really represent Garg is because he has his own vocabulary; his expressions sit at intersections of questioning, creativity, puns and folkloric analogies. He is original. He can't be pinned down to a press release. He wants to make brocades for khadi wearers, but only he can explain why.

Unlike his mind, Garg's surroundings are quiet. His Chhattarpur store has a

MASTER STROKE
Models showcasing Sanjay Garg's creations at fashion shows



Photos: GETTY IMAGES

"I AM NOT SURE IF HANDLOOM MAKES SENSE JUST BECAUSE SO MANY DESIGNERS ARE WORKING WITH IT"

white noise about it and clothes are stocked inside generous closets with his personally designed brass hangers. His work space is a white painted small house in another farm that stands at the end of the same street. While the media was crowing about his saris, he has turned into an ardent collector of antiques – textiles, unsewn fabrics, craft creations, brass, wood work and jewelled objects – anything that unravels Indian artisanal legacies, has a point of view through the name of the previous collector, or is an object of bygone whimsy. Like an Indian currency note from 1932 stamped with Queen Victoria's face.

These artefacts sit adroitly in his store as well as his office – he has 450 pieces so far. An antique brocade sari from his private collection was chosen as part of *Items: Is Fashion Modern?* at the MoMA in New

York. The exhibition that opened on October 1 ends today.

Garg's wooden work desk is a large, wide arresting piece in the colour of ground cinnamon that he designed himself. "I design all the furniture in my stores and my office – I have identified my carpenters and ironsmiths," he explains.

Across us sits a charpoy with some very old (and incredibly soft) handwoven saris. "I collect these as samples to show weavers; it is a piece of proof which is hard to communicate through books. If someone could do it hundred years back, surely a weaver can do it now," he says. He is readying for a show at the Kasturbhai Lalbhai Museum in Ahmedabad next month.

Now bearded and beginning to bald at 37, Garg who is dressed in wintry layers of deep indigo-dyed blue Himalayan wool stitched into a jacket and trousers, and an indigo *khes* (thick indigenously woven textile) around his neck looks like an artist in residence in his farmhouse studio. The E Class Mercedes parked outside is an industrial foil to his artisanal philosophy.

I ask him if he wants to be on the cover of *GQ*.

"*Time* magazine," he says.

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Sonal wears track pants, T-shirt, jacket and shoes from Adidas Originals

Aditya wears a jacket, T-shirt, Snapback, track pants from Adidas Originals

IN LOVE WITH MY CITY

As Honda's popular car turns 20, owners of the iconic City profess their love for the car they've loved to own

Text by Veenu Singh Photos by Runvijay Paul Styling by Mia

Sonal wears a dress from H&M, earrings and belt from Forever 21

Aditya wears a suit and shirt from United Colors of Benetton and sunglasses from RayBan

Models: Aditya Mohan Chanana (Serb Scouting) and Sonal Ved (TSS Talents)
Art direction by Amit Malik
Make-up and hair by Anjali Jain





Sonal wears a dress from Cover Story, shoes from H&M and neckpiece from Forever 21

Aditya wears a shirt, blazer and pocket square by Dinkar Aneja, shoes from H&M, trousers from Zara and sunglasses from RayBan

They say a person is known by the car she or he drives. You could check out the truth for yourself by doing a quick survey of a parking lot. Older people tend to stick to Indian brands; younger people experiment a bit. But one car that seems to find favour with all generations is the Honda City. This sedan made its way to India in 1998, and is currently celebrating the 20th year of its journey with customers who are not only satisfied with their choice, but proud to be part of its ever growing family.

THE TRANSFORMERS

Twenty years ago, it was a simple sedan. Since then, it has undergone several transformations, not just in terms of looks, but also in terms of issues like safety, space, and convenience. So while the third generation of the car (2008-2015) saw some massive upgrades from a sturdy front grille, large headlamps, airbags, sunroof, a full-touch infotainment panel and a CNG version, the fourth generation (2014 to current day) moved to LED headlamps, AVN System, rear AC vents, and an all-new DIGIPAD, with a first time offering of a 1.5-litre diesel i-DTEC engine variant in India.

Designed to be a game changer, the DIGIPAD is innovation at its most entertaining and information at its smartest. The revolutionary screen

allows the driver to be connected at all times to music, social networks or smartphones, via easy-to-use controls that minimise driving distraction.



Siddharth Mahajan, brand manager at Shivan & Narresh, trusted Honda so much that he never bothered to test drive before buying the car two years ago. "The car is easy to manoeuvre even in peak traffic, and doesn't cause too much stress," he says. "It is a good entry car that works well not just for a single person but also for a nuclear family, and offers great features in terms of connectivity and comfort. The after sales service and the trust that the name Honda offers speaks a lot for itself."

SAFETY FIRST



A smart design with a premium feel, and ample space for a comfortable ride are the best things about the car, says entrepreneur **Prateek Saxena**, owner of a Honda City for the last four years. "The exterior of the car competes well with some premium models that definitely fall in a much higher price segment," he explains. "So this not only offers value for money, but also ample leg room even at the back. With the DIGIPAD, I can

conveniently take calls and even connect to social media without stress."

Vipul Kapoor, another young entrepreneur, is a fan of the Honda City's sleek design and after sales service. "I need to travel as much as 100 kms daily for my business, in all kinds of crazy traffic on narrow roads," he says. "In such a situation, the AVN (Audio-Visual Navigation) system is a big help as it offers full assistance while parking or reversing the car. The airbags in the front and at the rear add to the overall safety offered by the car."



Chartered accountant turned businessman **Harish Mittal** believes in loyalty. So when he decided to buy a new car, he simply upgraded his 2008 model of the Honda City to the 2011 model that, six year later, still makes him a happy car owner. "The car offers great ease of driving even at high speed and over long distances; there is no fatigue," he says. "The turning radius is excellent and the boot space can easily be compared to that offered by a luxury car. Today, if I need to change my car again, I will simply buy another Honda City again."

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rude hotels



vir sanghvi

Delhi's Hotel Of Dreams

Biki Oberoi renews his father's vision as the Delhi Oberoi reopens

The story of the Delhi Oberoi is really the story of India's luxury hotel sector. By now most of us know about Rai Bahadur Mohan Singh Oberoi who started out as an employee of a Shimla hotel in the Raj era and worked his way up to buying the hotel. Then, in the 1940s, when Calcutta's venerable Grand Hotel was in trouble, he took that over. By the time the 1960s came along, the Oberoi chain was well established.

But the Rai Bahadur had a dream. He wanted to build a modern, American-style hotel with 24-hour room service, a multiplicity of restaurants and facilities that were the equal of, say, the Hilton chain's many outposts all over the world. He procured the land to build the hotel right next to the Delhi Golf Club, got Piloo Mody, the architect-politician, to design it and construction began in the early 1960s.

But the hotel could not be completed because the Oberois did not have the foreign exchange required to import many of its fittings. The Rai Bahadur flew to Washington and asked his friend B K Nehru, then India's ambassador to the US, if he had any solutions to suggest. B K Nehru told him that the US Exim Bank would fund the project if the Oberois got an American partner. So the Rai Bahadur partnered with InterContinental Hotels (then owned by Pan Am, the American airline), got the financing and finally in 1965, opened his dream hotel as the Oberoi InterContinental.

As the Rai Bahadur had intended, the new hotel changed all the rules. It was super smooth and super sophisticated.



A REVOLUTION

The old Oberoi InterContinental was transformed into the more contemporary and luxurious: The Oberoi, New Delhi

There was a grand restaurant called the Taj, a nightclub called Café Chinois that served Chinese food, a rooftop bar called The Skylark, a North Indian restaurant called The Moghul Room and not one but two coffee shops: one off the lobby and another next to the pool.

Many of the things we now take for granted – all-day dining, express laundry, multi-cuisine restaurants, swimming pools, health clubs etc – were not considered essential till the Oberoi InterContinental opened. In that era, for instance, The Taj Mahal Hotel in Bombay had only a dining room and a French restaurant. It had no coffee shop, no 24-hour-room service and no swimming pool.

Though the hotel was called Oberoi InterContinental, it was largely managed by the Oberoi group. Its success meant a) that foreign hotel chains learnt that Indians didn't need their expertise which is why India is still the one Asian country with its own world-class hotel industry and b) that other hotels would have to up their game to compete with the standards the Oberoi had set. The Ashoka, the Oberoi's only real rival, struggled to keep up and then gave up the fight once it was fully nationalised (till then, the government had jointly owned it with various maharajas). The Taj, in Bombay, built a new modern wing, using the same interior decorator (Dale Keller) as the Oberoi and even tied up with InterContinental for a branding.

FLAVOURS OF THE PAST

Café Chinois served Chinese food in Oberoi InterContinental



Aaj Kya Khaoge?





COMFORT ZONE The superior rooms of the Oberoi are the largest in Delhi



ORIENTAL TOUCH Baoshuan serves Chinese and has chef Andrew Wong of A Wong as its mentor chef



PIONEER Rai Bahadur Mohan Singh Oberoi

The Oberoi InterContinental had been structured to be inclusive, so if you could not afford to go to Café Chinois (which had dancing and a live band), you could still go to Café Espresso, its coffee shop, for an after-dinner coffee. The hotel's appeal cut across the entire Delhi middle class, taking in all age groups. Often the parents went for a business lunch to The Taj but their college-going children could be found eating ice cream, late at night, at Café Espresso. Consequently, from the late '60s onwards, the Oberoi became – for the Delhi upper middle class – an iconic property. For many people, it defined what a deluxe hotel should be.

Which is not to say that the hotel did not have its ups and downs. By the late 1970s, a dozen years after it had opened, the Oberoi InterContinental had begun to look a little tired and the management had become smug with success. It was at that stage that the Taj opened its Delhi property on Mansingh Road and (mainly because of the food) managed to become Delhi's number one hotel.

The Oberoi limped along for a while and only recovered when Biki Oberoi, the Rai Bahadur's son took charge of the company. Biki was smart enough to recognise that the Hilton-InterContinental model of hoteliering had now receded into second-ratedness after the growth of such luxury companies as Regent and Four Seasons. Biki pushed the Oberoi group to benchmark itself against the world's great luxury chains.

In the process, he transformed the old Oberoi InterContinental into something newer, more contemporary and more luxurious: The Oberoi, New Delhi.

But while he was able to transform the public areas and introduce higher standards of refinement and elegance, he was still stuck with a problem: the small rooms.

The great global luxury chains offered guests rooms that were at least a third bigger than room sizes had been in the '60s. If the Oberoi was to be the luxury hotel of Biki's dreams then it had to have larger rooms.

The only way Biki could do this was by reducing the hotel's room inventory and combining rooms. Commercially, this was not the shrewdest strategy. The Oberoi got very high rates for its 283 rooms. To reinvent The Oberoi as Biki's dream hotel, they would have to give up over 60 rooms just to create 220 large new rooms. Would these new rooms command enough of a premium to make up for the loss of revenue from 63 rooms? Moreover, the hotel would have to be shut for nearly two years while renovations took place. Was it worth forgoing the revenues from the period (over 100 crores of profits) while the hotel was closed?

One of the advantages of having your name on the door is that you can take chances. And so, Biki closed the hotel, remodelled it and reopened it as the hotel of his dreams on January 1, this year.



THE TORCHBEARER

Biki Oberoi, the Rai Bahadur's son, changed the old Oberoi into a luxurious The Oberoi, New Delhi



TEAM PLAYER

Vikram Oberoi, son of Biki Oberoi, is an instinctive hotelier who settles for nothing but the best

Who would have thought that a hotel that set the standards for the 1960s would do that all over again in 2018? None of us did

The first thing to be said about this version of The Oberoi is that it is still recognisably the hotel of old. Nobody who wanders in here will be disoriented or think that they are in an unfamiliar space. The second is that nearly everything has been improved. I once called Threesixty° the drawing room of Delhi. Well, it now looks even more than like a drawing room. It is warmer, more casual and has better food. The banquets area has been opened up but the real innovation is a beautiful courtyard space. The old pool which seemed like a bit of a waste once the new one opened at the rear of the hotel has now been turned into a stunning water body.

Of the new public spaces, everyone likes the lobby but opinions are divided over the screen near the entrance. The Indian restaurant is relaxed and with Alfred Prasad (who won a Michelin star at London's Tamarind) consulting, the menu offers traditional flavours in innovative dishes. The rooftop bar is younger than most Oberoi bars and perhaps, therefore, is a runaway success. The Chinese restaurant (which I have written about before) is helmed by Andrew Wong from London and seems to have successfully won over even those regulars who liked the terrible food at Taipan, its predecessor.

The real stars though are the rooms and the suites. The superior rooms, at 50 square metres, are the largest in Delhi and are designed by Adam Tihany in a style that is cutting edge but still comfortable.

So, has Biki's gamble paid off? In purely aesthetic terms: yes, without a doubt. He has achieved the impossible, taking the hotel of his father's dreams and turning it into the hotel of his own dream.

In commercial terms? Well, it is too early to be sure but I reckon the Oberoi will get the highest rates in Delhi this season and revenues at its restaurants have crossed all previous records.

It helps also that Biki can depend on the best team in the business. His son Vikram and his nephew Arjun are instinctive hoteliers. They grew up understanding excellence and are never satisfied with anything less. The renovation was overseen by Jay Rathore who ran the hotel for a decade before the refit and embodies the Oberoi ethos of discreet luxury. He must also be the hardest working general manager in India. The hotel manager, Udiksha Panshikar, was one of the moving spirits behind the Mumbai Oberoi and here too, she is the life and soul of the hotel. (Remember the name; she is the star of her generation.) And chef Rohit Gambhir is understated but first rate.

Who would have thought that a hotel that set the standards for the 1960s would do that all over again in 2018?

None of us did.

But Biki Oberoi has surprised us once again.

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spectator



seema goswami

Just Say No

For a man to hear a 'no', a woman has to actually say it

No means no. That cannot be said often enough. No means no. But if you mean 'no' then it follows that you also have to say 'no'. If you want someone to hear your 'no', then you need to say it out loud. Non-verbal cues do not cut it. Nor do verbal cues. Nor does less than 'enthusiastic' participation.

That's because all of the above rely on someone else to receive a message that you have not actually articulated. It requires your sexual partners to intuitively pick up on a discomfort that you have not voiced. It enjoins them to be mind readers (trigger alert, all you 'woke' millennials!) even when they may not know you well enough to be able to read your mind.

And that is putting a lot of responsibility for your safety and well-being on the shoulders of someone else.

Yes, I know, this is where a lot of you will pause reading to shoot off tweets asking me to stop 'victim blaming'. To tell me that I am putting the onus on women not to get raped or sexually assaulted or abused instead of putting the men who rape, assault or abuse them on notice.

But no, I am not blaming the victim. Mostly because I don't see women as disenfranchised victims with no agency of their own. I don't see them as passive participants who have no control over what happens to them. And any movement, feminist or otherwise, that seeks to turn women into hapless creatures who cannot stand up for themselves, who cannot speak for themselves, does not have my support.

As you can probably tell by now, this column was triggered (there's that word again!) by the Aziz Ansari case. (No, I'm not going into that whole controversy; I'm sure you're fully up to speed by now.) So, what I am writing about today applies only to urban, educated, emancipated, sexually-active women with jobs and lives of their own – like the woman, dubbed 'Grace' to grant her anonymity, who sought Ansari out and went on a date from hell with him.

I am on the side of the generational divide that does not believe Ansari's awful sex moves amounted to sexual assault or even sexual abuse. And I have difficulty understanding my millennial friends who insist that 'Grace' was coerced by Ansari. Her own account of the evening, in my reading, suggests otherwise.

But what is clear to me is that in this age of Tinder, when casual hook ups with people you barely know are the rule rather than the exception, women need to be empowered to navigate this sexual minefield instead of being infantilised and told that they bear no responsibility for their own actions.

It goes without saying that consent is essential in every such encounter and that it is the responsibility of men to ensure that they secure it before initiating any kind of sexual contact. (And yes, 'enthusiastic' consent is the very best.) But I baulk at the thought of casting women as helpless creatures who cannot even say 'no' when they mean it.

Sex, like much else in human life, is about communicating



Photo: SHUTTERSTOCK

Most adult women have a well-honed instinct for sniffing out the bad boys from the good. Trust those instincts. They will stand in good stead

SAY IT LOUD AND CLEAR

If we want men to listen then we must also empower women to speak up so that they can be heard

your desires, your needs, and yes, your reservations. But if we want men to listen then we must also empower women to speak up so that they can be heard. Women need to be active participants with a voice in the proceedings, not passive objects to whom things happen without their having any control over it.

I have lost count of the number of women who have told me over the past week that women don't say no because they are afraid of the consequences. As in, they may meet with violence or even death if they say no. And yes, that is true in some cases.

But here's where those 'verbal' and 'non-verbal cues' come in handy. It's not just incumbent on men to pick up on these cues. It's imperative that women read them as well. If you feel you're not being listened to during your date, being rushed into things at a pace you are not comfortable with, then maybe you should say 'no' sooner rather than later. Split the bill, call a cab and get the hell out of there.

Most adult women have a well-honed instinct for sniffing out the bad boys from the good. Trust those instincts. They will stand in good stead. And if that voice in your head is telling you this is not going to end well, then end it right then.

Of course there will be times when men you thought were honourable and 'safe' will surprise you. When a 'friend' you have known for years will suddenly turn into a monster. We've all been there. It's truly awful and hard to negotiate, especially when your 'no' is heard but not acknowledged. But to conflate sexual assault or even sexual abuse with bad or awkward sex does a disservice to both men and women.

Yes, there are many men out there in the dating pool who won't take 'no' for an answer. Who will push, push, push, until you're well into sexual assault territory. And it is often difficult to see them coming until you're right there in bed with them.

But there are plenty of good guys too, who are primed to look for your consent. Sadly, very few of them are actual mind readers. Which is why it's imperative to remember that for a man to hear a 'no', a woman has to actually say it.

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The views expressed by the columnist are personal

Spectator appears every fortnight

techilicious



rajiv makhni

The Best Is Yet To Come

The CES 2018 went beyond expectations this year with advances in technology – Part II

It's done and dusted. Millions of products, billions of metres of cables and trillions of dollars of deals are all done this year. The Consumer Electronics Show (CES) 2018 in Las Vegas has wrapped up and closed its mighty tech doors for a short while. Many called this the best CES ever (take that with a pinch of salt, most PR companies spin it like that every year). Still, CES this year went above and beyond expectations. Continuing from where we left off last week, here's Part II of the absolute best of CES 2018.



Sennheiser Ambeo soundbar

Sennheiser pulled off huge crowds, long lines and hours of waiting. All because of this one sound-bar. This is a Dolby Atmos sound system that doesn't need speakers to be placed on your roof or at the back. It gives you 3D sound from a single unit. And it sounds divinely Ambeolicious.

Desktop Metal 3D printer

3D printers! It's awesome to have a device that can produce any shape or object within minutes. The only problem – they all look ugly as hell as the material used predominantly is plastic. Enter Desktop Metal that prints 3D objects in metal, steel, aluminium, copper and titanium – and all from one single process machine. No more cheap plastic trinkets from your super expensive new machine!



HTC Vive Pro

The Vive has always been crowned the King of VR headsets. But now, it's taken a quantum leap forward. The resolution inside is now a staggering 2880x1660, has built-in headphones with an amplifier, dual microphones and is completely wireless. Virtual reality is finally starting to look very real.

Razer Project Linda

Many have tried before and have failed. But Razer may just have cracked it. The premise is simple. Your smartphone now is as powerful as your laptop. So why should you need one of each? Slip in a Razer phone into the trackpad area of a Razer Blade Stealth chassis and it automatically boots up as a laptop. Bigger screen, completely different layout and system! Time for Apple and Samsung to come up with their own.



MAXIMUM CONVENIENCE

Toyota's full-scale autonomous vehicle, that is a full store, drives to you



Toyota e-Palette

First we went to shops. That's now called offline retail. Then the shops started to send us things by mail. That's called e-commerce. How about we combine both? The full retail shop now comes to us. Toyota's full-scale autonomous vehicle which is a full store drives to you. A bakery, restaurant, pizza store or a shop full of designer outfits. Get ready to burn an even bigger hole in your pocket.



Vivo under screen fingerprint sensor

How do you make Apple look bad? You come up with a phone and technology that they should

have got first. The Synaptics FS9500 Clear ID optical sensor sits between the display glass and OLED panel. Just press your finger on the screen and voila. Vivo showcased what the iPhone X should have.

L'Oréal UV sense

A cosmetics company got into the wearable business and surprise, surprise – its kickass! A UV sensor that needs no battery, attaches to your thumbnail and communicates with your phone to tell how much sun and exposure you've had and warns about over doing it. Imagine the headline – L'Oréal eradicates skin cancer!



Lenovo smart display

In a world dominated by smart speakers with voice assistants, Lenovo went in a different direction. Along with the Google Assistant and a speaker, it adds a smart display screen that pops out even more information. Hey Alexa, are you nervous?

Omron Forpheus

While we all rile about how Robots and AI will take over our world, here comes Omron Forpheus, the most gentle robot in the world. It's a table tennis playing robot that is almost impossible to beat, but sends out encouraging messages and tips on how to play better. Let me just give you its full name – Future Omron Robotics Technology for Exploring Possibility of Harmonized aUtomation with Sinic Theoretics. What could be cuter?



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The views expressed by the columnist are personal

Rajiv Makhni is managing editor, Technology, NDTV, and the anchor of Gadget Guru, Cell Guru and Newsnet 3

**CULINARY PASSION**

Chef Rene Redzepi hard at work at his Noma Mexico pop-up

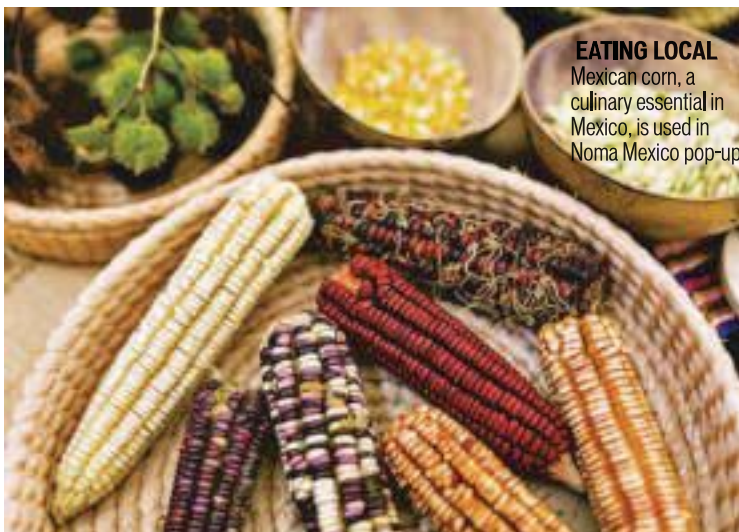
SEEK AND YE SHALL FIND

Celebrated international chef Rene Redzepi is on a mission to locate flavours from everywhere

By Rupali Dean

**TEAMWORK**

Chef Rene and his crew taste the ingredients before making the meal



EATING LOCAL
Mexican corn, a culinary essential in Mexico, is used in Noma Mexico pop-up

Photo: VINCENT LONG



THE SWEET TOOTH
Mango covered with green ants was the dessert in Noma Australia

Photo: RUPALI DEAN

For Rene Redzepi, flavours can be found anywhere. The much-awarded chef has been at the forefront of Nordic fare and foraging for years; his restaurant, Noma, in Copenhagen, has four times been awarded the honour of being the world's best restaurant – and countless times been talked of as the world's most frustrating restaurant because it's booked out years in advance.

So I was very fortunate to not only dine at his pop-up in Sydney, but to actually meet the man!

Rene's culinary background was just the right recipe for his

learnt he could use vinegar for citrus, and seaweed for leafy greens; his quest for new ingredients and flavours became his passion.

With an understanding of the terroir, he and his crew foraged not only for wild plants, but sometimes also insects, to amplify the cache of flavours accessible to his kitchen. He also brought back methods native to the region, such as preserving, pickling, fermenting and smoking. And now Rene was ready to try foraging in another country.

"Ever since we did our first pop-up in Japan we have had of-

OF PETALS AND PICKLES

Elderflower, rose petals, chanterelles and gooseberries pickles at Noma, Copenhagen



has been the same for all three pop-ups, though in Mexico we faced more obstacles than other places because of the simple fact that the logistics are not as well developed," said Rene. "For example, we had a big problem finding schools for our children, because all the schools were full.

Then there were a million small logistic issues, like having to physically pick up a special papaya fruit from 300 km away! And 'normal' restaurant problems, such as suddenly there is a northern wind in the Yucatan, and the boats aren't out so we can't get the octopus we planned, so we are forced to adapt the menu!"

**"When I think back on my life, I am either a child running around in Macedonia or I am in a kitchen."
- Rene Redzepi**

success. "I left school in Class IX, just after finishing basic studies, and very quickly realised that I wanted to be in this industry," he told me. "Before Noma, I was a cook working at the French Laundry and El Bulli, which were considered the best restaurants in the world at the time. When I think back on my life, I am either a child running around in Macedonia or I am in a kitchen."

QUEST FOR INSPIRATION

A trip around his country educated Rene about its possibilities. Rene

fers to go to many different places. But we do not choose where to go based on the best offers," said Rene. "For instance, we were never offered Japan, Australia or Mexico. We pursued these locations on our own, based on where we thought the inspiration would be, and where the team would have an amazing time."

The 'amazing time' is, of course, preceded by challenges. Doing a forage-based pop-up in an unfamiliar country is no joke. "You often ask yourself, why the hell are we doing this? This



Photos: LAURA L.P./HDG PHOTOGRAPHY

**FOOD COMA**

Noma, Copenhagen, creates world-class dishes presented in 20-course meals

Photo: LAURA L.P./HDG PHOTOGRAPHY

JUST JAPANESE

Noma pop-up in Japan was done with local ingredients



Photo: SATOSHI NAGARE

RAPID FIRE

Do you have an Indian chef in your team?

Garima Arora is a former chef who now runs Gaa in Bangkok. One of the many talented Indian chefs we have had.

Does the family travel with you during your pop-ups?

Yes. My family has joined us for all of our pop-ups and we enrolled our children in an international school.

Do you prefer any particular season?
All seasons have their moments...

Juice or wine pairing?

I enjoy a drink but I drink rarely. So if I really had to choose between juice and wine, I'd probably do a juice menu.

Your advice to budding chefs would be...?

- a) Don't panic.
- b) You are going to have to live with the fact that you will always be working when other people are off. The hours are many and the pay is on the lower end. But you get to feel part of a team and make people happy every day. To be a successful chef, you have to surrender to that.



Photo: LAURA L.P./HDG PHOTOGRAPHY

FLORAL APPEAL

Flower tart at Noma, Copenhagen;



Photo: VINCENT LONG

THE BEAN STORY

Local Mexican beans used in Noma Mexico



Photo: VINCENT LONG

GET CRABBY

Noma Australia serves unripe macadamia nuts with spanner crab broth and a dash of rose oil

AWAY AND HOME

There were more serious problems too, such as getting the locals to take them seriously. Though Rene always appoints local project managers when he does international pop-ups, the fact remains that for people in a country where food foraging does not equate to a fine-dining restaurant, there are issues of understanding.

"Some of the small communities who grew produce for us are so unacquainted with orders like ours that they didn't believe we really wanted or needed the amount of ingredients we asked for," said Rene. "They almost didn't believe that we were for real."

For now, Rene's travel travails are over. There will be no pop-ups for a while. Noma, his two Michelin, 40-cover restaurant in Copenhagen, served its last meal in February 2017, and now Rene is working on Noma 2.0 – a metropolitan farm and completely vegetarian restaurant.

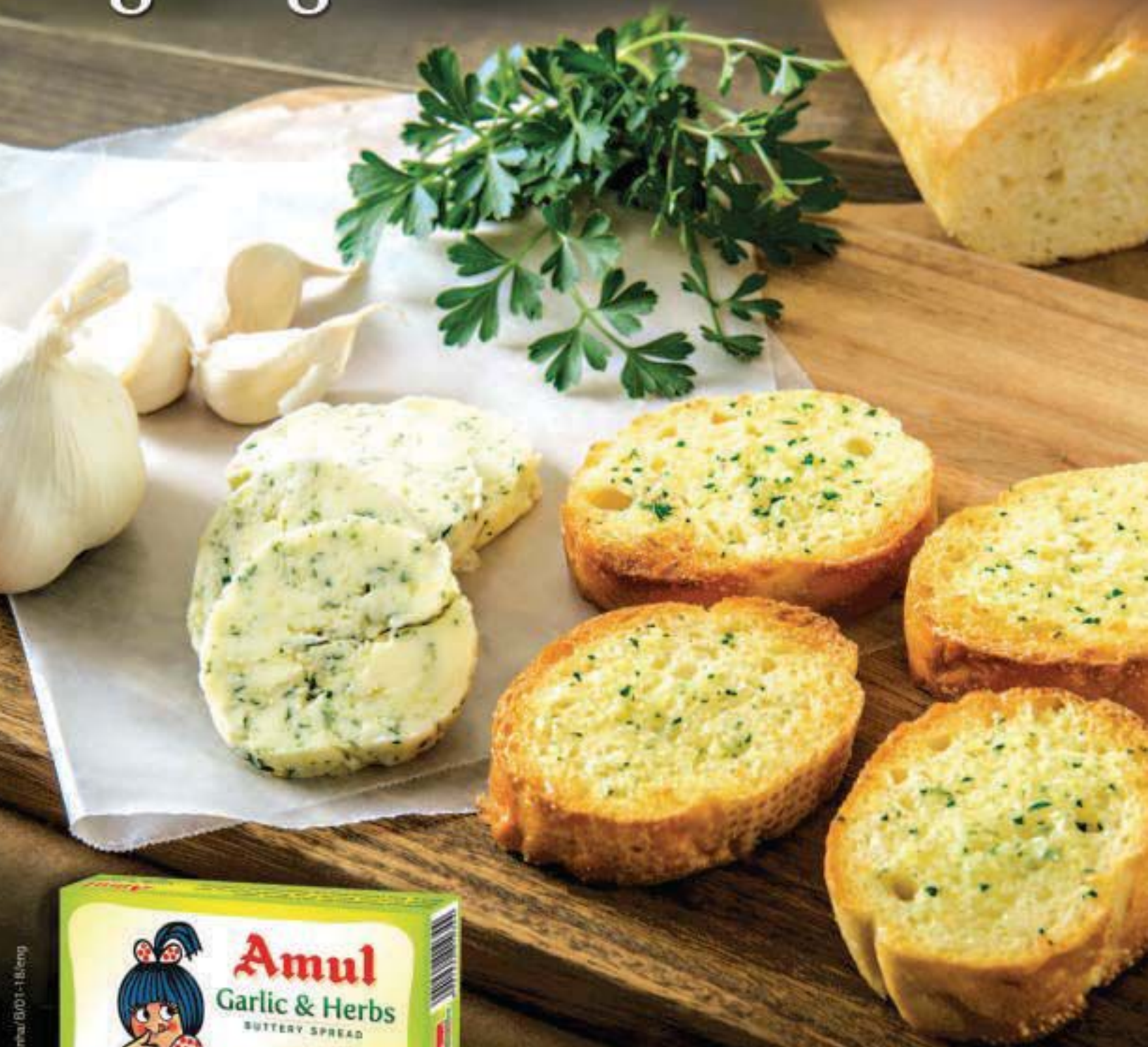
"We do not have a set opening date for the new Noma yet, but we aim on opening towards the end of this year," he said.

I will make a reservation the moment I learn the launch date.

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50 SHADES OF WHITE

The white towns of Spain and Portugal offer a lifetime of memories that'll be etched in vivid hues

Text and photos by Saubhadra Chatterji



One shouldn't blame me for giving a hoot to traffic rules when (a) there are no other cars on the road and (b) there aren't any cops around.

On the highway number A 2300 of Spain, there's another alibi to take the wrong side and rash turns. A turquoise blue lake lies below shimmering in afternoon breeze. Hills of different shapes and sizes surround the vast waters and paint the horizon in shades of brown, grey and green.

Across the lake, halfway up the hills, there are lines of white houses – like strings of pearls – amidst this dramatic Andalusian landscape. The canvas, as if straight from Claude Monet's studio, is so astonishing that I almost forget that my rented car is not at an authorised parking

lot! (No, I didn't pay any fine.)

Ten minutes later, we start climbing up the cobbled road that goes through this 'white village' with a fancy name – Zahara de la Sierra.

And when we reach the steepest part of the road, my wife cum navigator abruptly makes me stop, emphasising that we missed a parking space.

My driving skills have been acquired in Noida. I tackle cars rushing from all directions, jumping red lights and bovines blocking 70 per cent of the roads. It's a cop-out that the Maruti school never taught me how to restart cars on a slope!

Every time I press the accelerator, my fat Citroën Cactus rolls down further. Finally, when it halts dangerously close to the brand-new BMW behind us, I

Driving halfway up the hills, there are lines of white houses – like strings of pearls – amidst this dramatic Andalusian landscape. The canvas is straight from Claude Monet's studio



ART ATTACK

Wall graffiti in Lagos, Portugal

SPANISH SURPRISE

Grazalema, one of most picturesque white villages of southern Spain

HOME ALONE

A typical Andalusian farmhouse in the middle of rolling hills



LO AND BEHOLD The busy marketplace of Lagos teems with tourists throughout the year; (Inset) The cemetery in Zahara de la Sierra, Spain



get down. Request a bewildered beauty to drive it to safety.

HIT THE WHITE

This place in the craggy backdrop is widely considered as one of the most beautiful white towns or pueblos blancos in Spanish. The colour keeps the houses cool in the extreme summer heat. It must have also helped, centuries ago, to locate these villages from miles away. Only the church is painted

cornsilk (to stand out from the rest, I presume). There's a small parking (in difficult roads, I am a law-abiding Bengali *bhadralok*) and a few restaurants. Most of them offer a set meal: a drink, starter, main course and a dessert.

We walk in to Mesón Los Estribos. Not because it serves a better meal than others in this village but we get a table overlooking the stunning landscape.

It becomes our longest lunch. We simply can't take our eyes off

the gorgeous lake (a reservoir, I learn later), the white houses on its banks and the imposing hills. And blame it on the heady cocktail of the nature's opulence and full-bodied red wine, my wife, for the first time, praises me (only for planning the trip)!

Half an hour and a narrow, steeper road later we are in Grazalema – another gem of a pueblo blanco. Hotels are available here but two-three hours are sufficient to get the feel of the place.

I start negotiating for a belt at a leather workshop, then enquire for some cheese, a calendar, wooden toys, Jamón and finally buy the local favourite orange-flavoured chocolate.

The Andalusian sun has tilted towards the western mountains and we have a long way to go back to Seville. The highway through the rolling plains, is a delight to drive even for a novice like me.

The white villages/towns can be found all over Andalucía. Each is an unparalleled romance. Ronda hangs perilously on sheer cliffs. It's old and (relatively) new towns is connected by three old bridges.

While the entire country is obsessed about Jamón (Spanish ham), Ronda's town squares surprisingly have tapas bars that sell mouth-watering duck breasts.

It's evening. Don't expect a Spaniard to stay at home. The entire town seems to have gathered at the plazas (squares). The cafés and tapas bars are teeming with



WHITE IS RIGHT
Lagos, the white resort town in Portugal

A CHARMING GETAWAY

The large reservoir adds to the charm of Zahara de la Sierra, Spain. Catch a glimpse of this place in *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*



SIP N BITE
A busy Tapas bar in Ronda, Spain

customers who prefer the patio over the bar counter.

At Plaza del Socorro, we get a table at La Taberna – recommended by the receptionist of San Cayetano hotel – and wait for a slow braised pork cheek and Galician-style octopus.

Although the place is crowded, there's no hurry to prepare or serve the food. It's a small town and people are not

bores like us. They take their life seriously – and thereby – slowly.

PORTUGUESE INVASION

If you happen to hit the Portugal's Algarve region, you may feel like home. It's the Goa of Europe. Small towns/villages, excellent beaches and awesome seafood with a great variety of wine.

The thing that's missing here

Although the place is crowded, there's no hurry to prepare or serve the food. People here take their life seriously – and thereby – slowly!

is the coveted old 'Portuguese homes' that is a quintessential part of Goa's heritage. Instead, the sleepy towns have rows of white houses often decorated with glazed tiles.

Tavira, near the Portugal-Spain border, is a cut above the rest. Unlike the bigger cities of Portugal, it's almost a virgin territory for tourists as the bigger and boisterous crowd goes to the resort town of Lagos, an hour's drive to west. Tavira celebrates its days with happy locals and British pensioners.

River Gilão bifurcates the beautiful town, which dozes off early. But at the corner where the river takes a silent turn, two restaurants, housed in non-white buildings, are my favourite destinations.

I sit by the riverside to be baptized to Super Bock

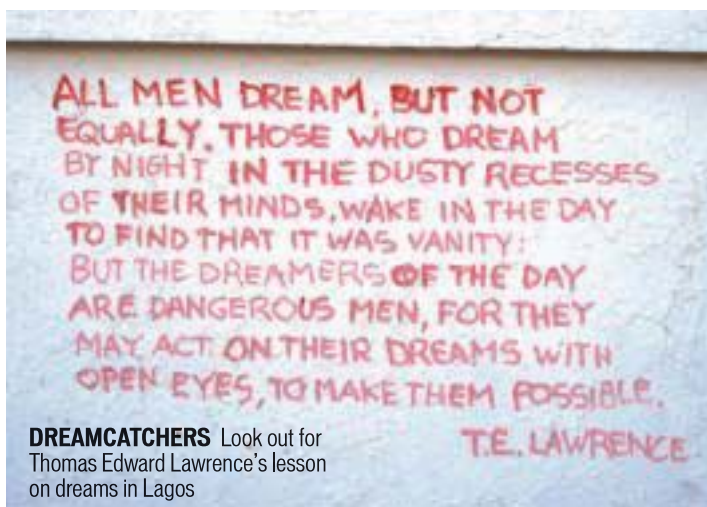
beer. Many customers are glued to the TVs hanging on the outer walls to watch what is probably the Portuguese version of *Kyunki... Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi...*

Somewhere, someone strums his guitar. The moonlight flows on the gentle waters. The sea gulls have returned home. The empty cobbled streets bid adieu to the last few faceless pedestrians. The air smells of serenity.

If one cares to listen to these moments of daily life, they will whisper: never be a tourist. Be a traveller.

And if you travel to the white towns, your memories will be etched in vivid colours. Guaranteed.

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DREAMCATCHERS Look out for Thomas Edward Lawrence's lesson on dreams in Lagos



shikha sharma



Photo: SHUTTERSTOCK

Tea Is Served...

When it comes to tea, you should know exactly what you're drinking

Tea is one of the most popular beverages in the world, but it helps to know the intricacies of this beverage to avoid fakes. Here's a brief overview:

Fake teas

These are usually used tea leaves, which are dried, then mixed with low quality tea dust and other leaves, and then sprayed with artificial colour to look like fresh tea.

Genuine teas

Depending on how tea leaves are processed, you get many varieties of the beverage.

- The rich flavour and dark colour of **black tea** comes from the process of oxidising the leaves after plucking. Its caffeine content is less than half of coffee.
- The same leaves can make **green tea**, which is less oxidised than black tea. It has a lighter flavour, less caffeine and is rich with natural antioxidants.
- **White tea** is the least oxidised of all teas.
- **Herbal tea** is of two kinds. One is black tea mixed with aromatic spices, best known as masala chai. The other kind is actually an infusion of natural herbs and spices.
- Earl Grey is an example of **flavoured tea** – one that's had its leaves sprayed with a natural aroma in the drying process.
- **Oolong tea** is made using a semi-oxidising process and has a flavour halfway between green and black tea.

Tisanes and infusions

Made with herbs, spices or fruit, but minus tea leaves, these are naturally decaffeinated.

- **Fruit tea** is made from dried and processed fruits and herbs.
- **Flower infusions** are made with actual dried flowers, either whole or powdered.

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IN SEARCH OF COMMON GROUND

It's unsexy to talk about values, but it's what we need most in these divided times

By Rehana Munir

Catching up with two old friends over a drink, I was building an argument about the temperamental behaviour of a common friend. One of my friends was in agreement. The other was not. At one point I said, "But it's basic human decency to..." I was put in my place by my other friend who said simply: "It's not basic."

He was being neither belligerent nor facetious. When I had had time to process his statement, I found there was a more troubling explanation. What's basic to me is not basic to someone else – that's what he was trying to drive home. There is no universally acknowledged and enforceable charter of personal values. This idea dismantled an unconsciously constructed ethical framework I had built in my head over a lifetime – one that I thought was shared by "people like me".

MASTER OF NONE

Let's take the Aziz Ansari case. An anonymous lady has accused the celebrity comic of inappropriate sexual conduct on a date, despite her repeated verbal and non-verbal requests. Ansari issued a swift statement saying he did not read her signs of discomfort, and apologised for the misunderstanding. That for him, the events that occurred during the date were not out of the ordinary.

Right there you see common ground slipping away rather quickly. What's normal for Ansari was not normal for his date. And what we routinely refer to as "normal" is what by rights can only be described as "common". (In a characteristically tongue-and-cheek aphorism, lively poet and withering critic Dorothy Parker says: "Heterosexuality is not normal, it's just common.")

Consent is a contentious issue in sexual relations, and so the law is routinely summoned to adjudicate on it. Recent public discourse on the matter has hopefully illuminated this dark area and started a continu-



Photo Imaging: PARTH GARG

ous conversation. As a woman, I believe if you need to consult friends, books and the law about whether it was okay or not, chances are it wasn't.

A while ago, I was horrified on seeing comedian Amy Schumer joke in the stand-up part of her comedy sketch show *Inside Amy Schumer*, "We've all been just a little bit raped, right?" Schumer explained in an interview: "Most women I know that I'm close to have had a sexual experience that they were really uncomfortable [with]. If it wasn't completely rape, it was something very similar to rape. And so I say it's not all black and white. There's a grey

Globally, people are discovering insurmountable differences between themselves on the most fundamental matters. And there's just nowhere to hide them any more

area of rape, and I call it 'grape'." Despite her intentions, I think the term "grape" muddies the waters further – 'rape' is a term that does not need watering down. So, though Schumer and I both identify as feminists, where's the common ground?

RIGHT OR LEFT?

The conversation about a shared understanding – or lack thereof – seemed to have peaked in India in 2014, around the general elections. The country erupted in heated, often nasty, discussion. Many proclaimed allegiance to the forces of purported development despite what they agreed was morally indefensible behaviour. All signs pointed to a sharp divide on human principles, considered, till then, to have been shared.

Globally, in homes, offices and communities, people are discovering insurmountable differences between themselves on the most fundamental matters. And there's just nowhere to hide them any more.

In an India where social aspirations furiously fuel the middle classes, everyone is chasing the high life. Offer a counterpoint to the mad dash for material success and you're branded an unpatriotic, unambitious Pakistani. Which begs the question – what is this 'common ground' made of?

BATTLING FOR VALUES

The answer is eminently unsexy. Values, of course. Even the mighty Kohli and his team have had to face a Test series defeat in South Africa. Maybe it's time for us all to ditch the swag and bravado for some good old-fashioned values. A time to channel our inner Rahul Dravid rather than Ravi Shastri, perhaps?

Business schools, too, have ethicists on their faculty – a recent discovery that left me feeling quite heartened despite its oxymoronic quality. Soul-searching, deep thinking, conscious living – not exactly the most newsworthy activities, but rewarding nonetheless.

Saying, "We're all too different" and giving up is the easy position of the cynic. The alternative is to think and write and discuss and debate and fight and appeal – all in a quest for this lost legacy. It's worth every bit of effort to find the common ground that only made itself obvious once it had slipped away.

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SCHOOL/COLLEGE Fergusson College, Pune	FIRST BREAK Konkani film <i>Gho Mala Asala Hawa</i> (2009)		
LOW POINT OF YOUR LIFE They are a part of life		HIGH POINT OF YOUR LIFE Yet to come!	

If not an actress, what would you have been?

I would have been a mathematician.

A classic film you would have loved to be a part of...?

Pulp Fiction (1994).

The worst thing about Bollywood is...?

You end up getting recognised everywhere. Sometimes you just want to hide.

According to you, what's the best way to connect with your fans?

Through my films.

Your first impression of Rajinikanth was...?

It was amazing as he is very sweet and made me feel very comfortable. He is very sincere and hardworking, and an incredible person.

Your perfect way to de-stress is...?

Hanging out with people from fields other than Bollywood.

The best thing that a loved one has done for you...?

My partner Benedict moved countries for me, which is truly amazing.

The sweetest thing that a fan has done for you...?

I was sleeping on a flight and when I woke up, there were

beautifully wrapped chocolates for me on the table with a message wishing me luck for a successful career.

Things that you look for in a man...?

Equality, intelligence, sense of humour and trust.

One person you really bond well with from Bollywood...?

I bond well with Kalki (Koechlin).

What's your bio on Tinder going to read...?

I would never be on Tinder!

A black dress or a black sari...?

I usually prefer wearing a black dress, but I would love to wear a black sari too.

The first thing you do in bed when you wake up in the morning...?

I look at my phone.

And the last thing you do before falling asleep...?

I always read or watch something.

If you were to describe your style statement in a word, what would it be?

Comfort. I can easily live in a big T-shirt also.

What do you do to stay fit?

I prefer to run and do yoga.

Interviewed by Veenu Singh

Note: This is the last editorial page of the regular issue of *Brunch*.

Photo: AALOK SONI

My Favourites

BREAKFAST IN BED: Poached eggs and avocado on toast

STREET FOOD: Pani puri

FASHION ERA: The era of David Bowie

BACKPACKING DESTINATION: I love exploring different destinations all over the world

SLEEPING POSITION: On my stomach