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Vivacious Vishakha Singh is fun, feisty and rooted

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HOMEMAKER TO HOME MINISTER

7 ways to be finance literate

WHEN LIFE HANDS OUT SCRAMBLED EGGS

Outsmarting Dyslexia is a Lifelong Process

DR. CHOCOLATE

The Healing Powers of Cocoa

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The Way to his Heart
- **Mills & Boon:**
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Editor's Note

It is interesting how some terms have found their way into our everyday conversations. Take for instance, 'technically challenged'! There are many out there who feel life was a lot simpler without the invasion of smartphones and tabs and prefer to restrict their usage of these handsets to 'make-receive calls & send-receive text messages'. Beyond that, they feel, it is too much of a strain to comprehend. Of course, it is a completely different story for the rest of us who cannot imagine how we survived without these gadgets!

On the same note, the other term that has been doing the rounds particularly among women who are otherwise 'super moms' and 'super wives', is calling themselves 'financially challenged'! NO. It does not indicate their lack of financial assets; it has more to do with the lack of understanding when it comes to money matters in the larger sense (read investments, mutual funds, EMIs and so on). During a chance discussion at office the other day one of our team members highlighted the perils of being finance illiterate. She narrated a story of this young woman she knew, hardly into her thirties with a young child. By a flash of cruelty she lost her husband in a road accident. While everyone consoled her and urged her to come to terms with reality for the sake of her kid she realized she had no clue regarding their bank accounts, insurance policies or any other investment detail. The husband had been doing pretty well career wise and hence monies had never been a problem while he was around. She used to blindly sign the application forms without even bothering to pay attention to the details. It was a very harrowing experience for her to deal with at the time of her irreparable loss.

This might be an extreme situation but what is common is that many women, however progressive otherwise, shy away from understanding the nitty gritty of investments and financial planning. Our feature, 7 ways to become Finance Savvy is a brief but comprehensive guide to help beginners get to becoming financial pros.

It is probably the ex-banker in me that has chosen to focus on the approaching of another financial year-end rather than the matters of the heart that fill the air this month. Of course that does not mean I am 'romantically challenged'. (There...that's another version of the challenge term series!!). Nor is this edition short of any either. Check out our Valentine special features to have the perfect Valentine's Day with your loved one. Also catch up with our cover girl, Vishakha Singh who, by the way, hails from a family of financial experts and is herself interested in the nuances of film business as much as she enjoys being in front of the camera. Happy reading!

Cheers,



Bina Sujit
editor@jfw.in





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Wide Variety of Mouth Fresheners



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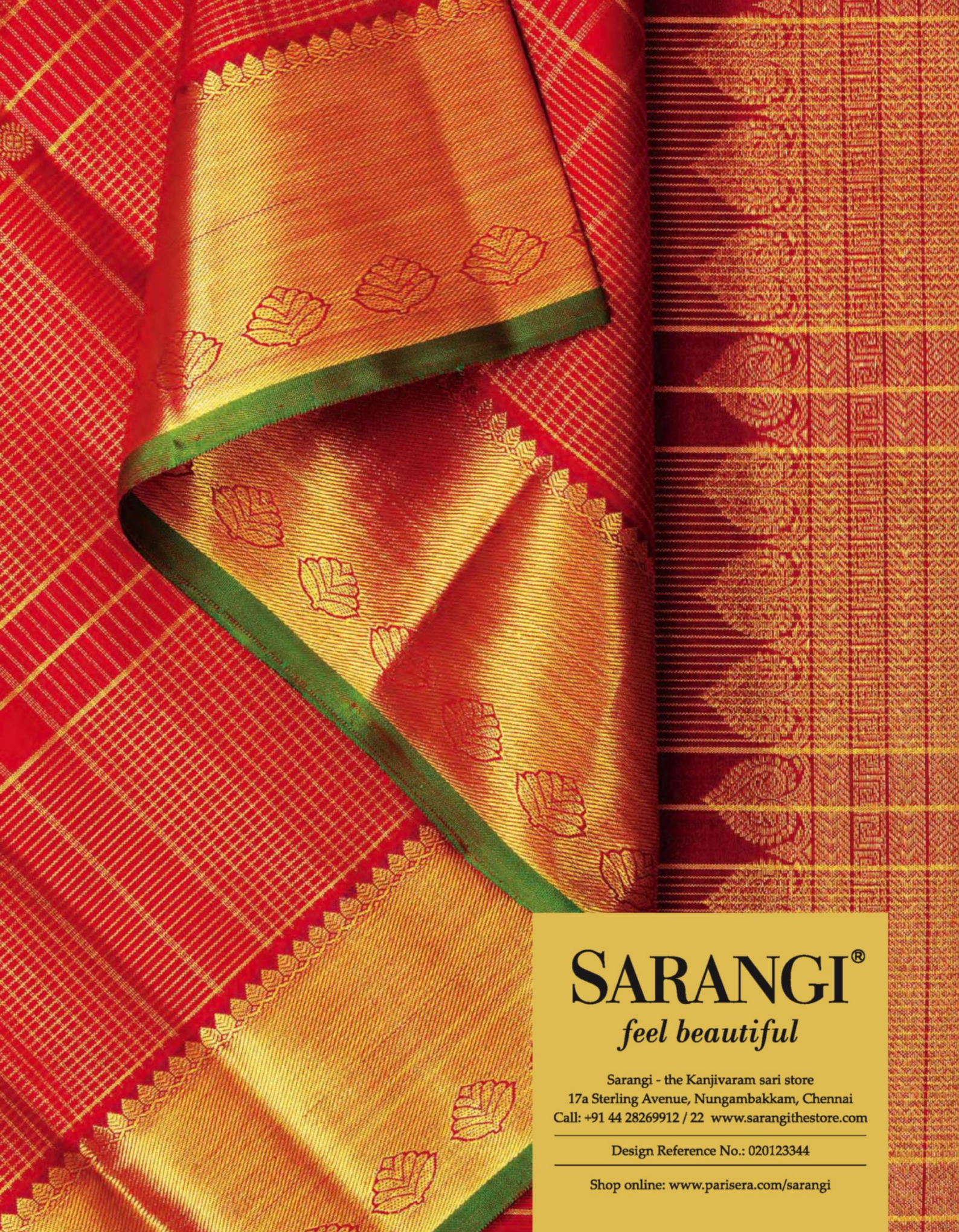
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Actor, dancer, director Roopa Iyer has given as much as she has received. A Q&A with the maker of the Tamil Kannada bilingual Chandra



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The January edition of JFW was the perfect start to the New Year as it was filled with a mixed bag of articles. The interview with Biocon CMD Kiran Mazumdar Shaw was especially inspiring. Her philosophy of giving back to society through her philanthropic endeavours is something we should all try and follow within our limited means. With Women's Day coming up soon I look forward to more such motivating tales.
R. Ragini, Bangalore



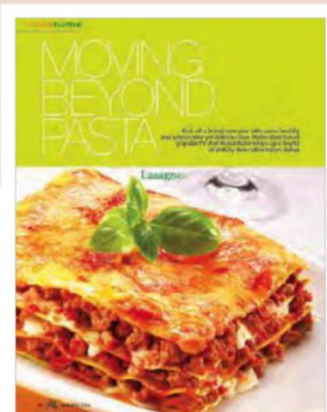
Normally I stay miles away from any women's magazine but Aditi Rao Hydari's alluring face on the cover of JFW forced me to pick up the January issue and I must say I was surprised. Being a diehard fan of hers, I enjoyed reading the cover story and looking at the gorgeous pictures. I equally enjoyed reading Kiran Mazumdar's interview. The dynamic businesswoman is truly an icon. The article on nutrition was unique too and made for a good read.
Rajesh S., Cochin



Birds of the Night was a very timely article and I want to thank you for featuring it in JFW. With a growing spurt in crimes against women, working in night shifts is becoming a nightmare these days. It also takes a toll on the work life balance. Yet there are women who love what they do, irrespective of the fact that it is in the dead of the night. As I prepare to work in the 'graveyard shift' from next month at a BPO, it was great to read 4 real life experiences to help me weigh the pros and cons of my decision.
Mala Ashok, Hyderabad

As the mother of a toddler, I really struggled to get my son to take his medicines. With him throwing tantrums at every such instance, I was forced to almost shove the medicine down his throat. Your feature on the subject was really helpful and has brought down my struggles considerably. Thank you from a relieved mom!

Nandita Iyer, Chennai



I loved the January issue. Kudos to team JFW for covering articles on topics as diverse as keeping sexual boredom at bay, working in night shifts and fixing hair disasters. Plus, the articles on indoor gardening and Italian recipes were a visual treat too.
Rashmi A., Chennai

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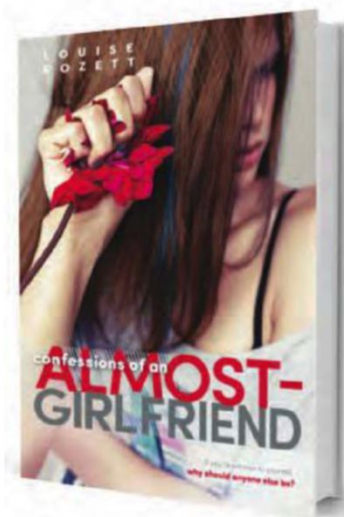
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WHAT'S NEW THIS MONTH

BOOK CORNER

Confessions of an Almost Girlfriend
By Louise Rozett

Hormonal teen Rose Zarelli is back, this time a sophomore, and for whom the world is beginning to make a little



more sense. Published by Harlequin Teen and second in the Confession series, the book follows Rose as she grapples with her emotions, her frenemies and student life in general. This breezy read leads a new journey through high school with more humour, swoony chemistry and different topics. Though stuck in the chick lit mode, the book covers

quite a gamut of topics from bullying and family issues to average school life. With a refreshing new plot and well developed characters, the book is worth curling up on the couch with a cuppa.
Price: ₹ 500

TALKING TUNES

Pure Heroine

By Lorde

No matter how many 'growing up' songs we play in our iPod, we never seem to tire of these coming of age



songs. Lorde's honeyed vocals with a hint of nasal lends the numbers an unapologetic panache but somehow her songwriting which overshadows her voice. Tennis Court has attitude and shows why it is ruling the charts. The blend of the arrogance and vulnerability of youth in Royals touches you. Lorde has given us an easy Album of the Year contender, with well crafted lyrics and still retaining the sense of pop we all love. Pure Heroine almost demands multiple listen with its I don't care mantra and feet tapping tracks.
Price: ₹ 650

FASHION FORWARD

Spring-Summer 2014 collection

By Label Ritu Kumar

With a fresh twist, Label by Ritu Kumar presents their Spring-Summer 2014 collection. The collection shows its neutral side with pieces in earthy tones as well as traditional bright ones. Ranging from maxi to fitted dresses and tops to skirts, there are lots of options, be it for a casual day out or



party essentials. Subtle tones such as powder blue, white, black, off-white, navy blue and brown have been used in many pieces such as embroidered and lace tops. On the other hand, brighter hues such as tangerine, rust red, pink and yellow give an edge to the tunics and dresses.

Price on request

Fashion Detox

By Vero Moda

Forget cleansing juices and fasting, Fashion Detox from Vero Moda





promises to soothe your soul and streamline your look without a

single sacrifice. Long layers of languid chiffon, white-on-white and relaxed tailoring epitomize this easy breezy trend.

Take your style cues from the Chloé catwalk where waterfall fronted blazers, multiple layers and the kind of trousers that look as good lounging as they do lunching are an inspiration. Echo the natural theme of the Fashion Detox, inviting earthy khaki tones into your wardrobe, highlighted by refreshing pastel hues of pink, cream and grey.

Price: ₹ 1500 onwards

SHOES

By Steve Madden

Pony hair footwear seems to be this spring's newest trend and Steve Madden add their touch to this trend with their range of pony hair sandals, sneaks, and booties! Match it with a casual day dress or team it up with a party outfit.

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Skincare

Goat Milk & Jojoba Butter Bathing Bar By Jullaha

Jullaha's latest offering from its Ayurvedic product range is the goat milk soap packed with natural



ingredients meant to keep your skin clean, clear and smooth. Goat milk powder contains vitamins A, C, B1, B12 and E with anti ageing properties and zinc which aims at reconstructing collagen. The large variety of butters including mango butter, shea butter, olive butter, avocado butter and jojoba butter along with vegetable glycerine helps moisturise and soothe the skin, while grape seed oil, wheat germ oil and papaya extracts help rejuvenate the skin. Honey and aloe vera extract aids in nourishing the skin.

Price: On Request

FRAGRANCES

Be Delicious City Blossom

By Donna Karan

Donna Karan's DKNY range has launched Be Delicious City Blossom, a new trio of limited edition fragrances for women. This enchanting essence



opens with an exhilarating blend of juicy Mandarin and Bergamot, infused with exquisite Pink Lady Apple Blossom and Cassis. The precious notes of Rose Absolute wrap themselves in a blend of velvety Peony and succulent Raspberry, for a touch of sweet indulgence. Nuances of creamy Sandalwood warm up whispers of sensual Amber and sweet Reseda to create a blissful feeling of endless pleasure.

JEWELLERY COLLECTION

By Tanishq

Tanishq has announced discount offers on its range of diamond jewellery. Customers can avail a flat 15% off on diamond jewellery priced within Rs.2 lakhs and up to 25% off on diamond products above Rs.2 lakhs at any Tanishq store across India



between 11th January and 2nd March, 2014. There is also discount upto 10% on platinum and colour stones jewellery during this period.

Price on Request

HOMEWARD BOUND

Chef Collection Refrigerator

By Samsung

The Samsung Chef Collection 4-Door Refrigerator (model: RF34H9960SR) aims at bringing innovation in food preservation, storage, organization and meal preparation. Temperature



control is maximized through proprietary features. The Metal Cooling Plate, positioned on the back of the refrigerator compartment, helps to maintain the set temperature throughout the refrigerator, which is important in keeping food fresh and tasty. And Samsung's Triple Cooling System creates three separate airflows in the refrigerator and freezer, enabling optimal humidity control and improved cooling performance for each compartment.

The Triple Cooling System also enables the Chef Collection Refrigerator to feature a lower right compartment – called the Fridge-in-Freezer – which can be converted from a refrigerator to a freezer and back again, and serves a multitude of needs. It can be a fresh food prep zone for restaurant-quality

meals, a storage space for frozen home-cooked meal, or a centralized area for beverage storage. Overall capacity clocks in at 34 cu. ft. (2014 DOE Standard), or 34 full bags of groceries.

GADGET GURU

Samsung Grand 2

After much anticipation, Samsung Galaxy Grand 2 with Android 4.3 is now available in India but it seems to have disappointed smart phone fans. The Galaxy Grand has a 5-inch display, which has a meagre resolution of just 480X800, which gives the display a modest 187 PPI pixel density. This means that everything that comes up on the display, like images



and videos and pixilated. Moreover, the icons look huge and so does the other content on the screen. The phone even runs Samsung's resource hugging TouchWiz UI, and hence if you're an avid multi-tasker you cannot continue opening tens of applications simultaneously, without a few restarts and crashes.

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Kate Middleton and Prince William

Blushing Brides, Dapper Grooms



Shilpa Shetty and Raj Kundra

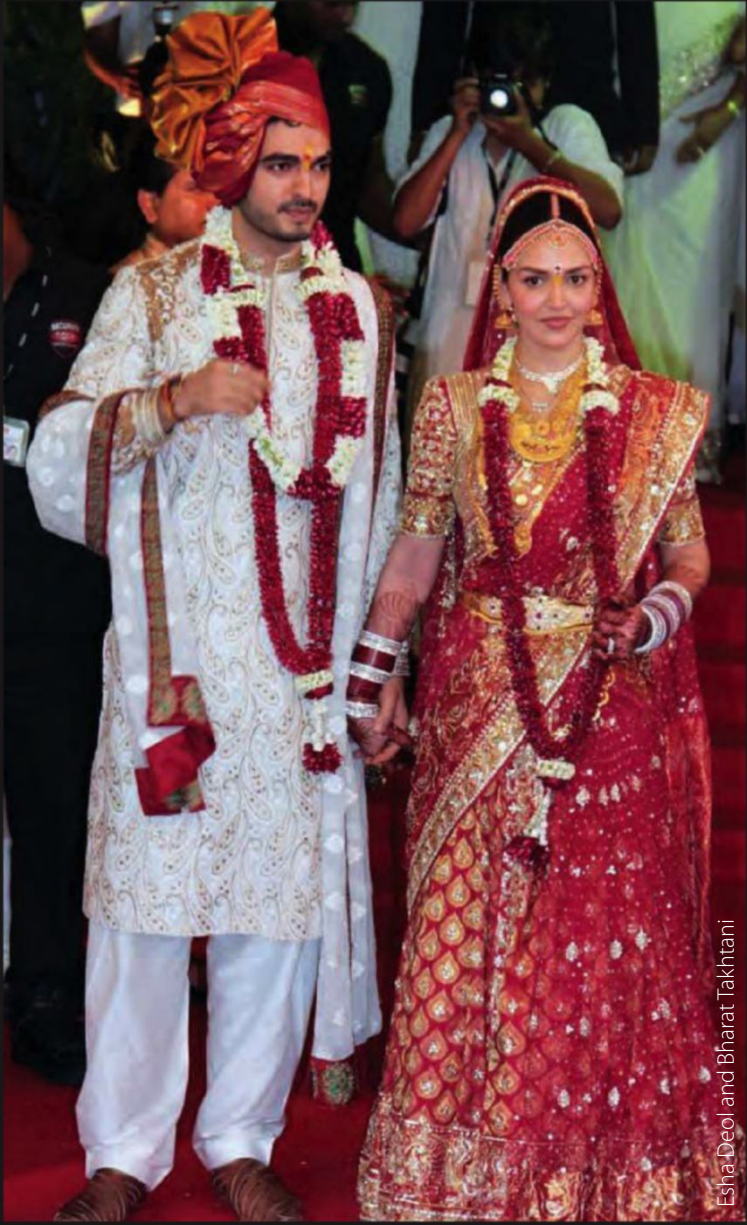


Justin Timberlake and Jessica Biel



Saif Ali Khan and Kareena Kapoor

Weddings are all about the bride. On the big day the spotlight is firmly on her and her bridal finery. The groom too gets his share of stares as the couple make their vows and elicit wows from onlookers. Celebs are known to put their most fashionable foot forward and wedding days are no exception. Go 'Awww' as you look at some beautifully attired women and their dashing men



Esha Deol and Bharat Taktani



Vidya Balan and Siddharth Roy Kapoor



Sneha and Prasanna



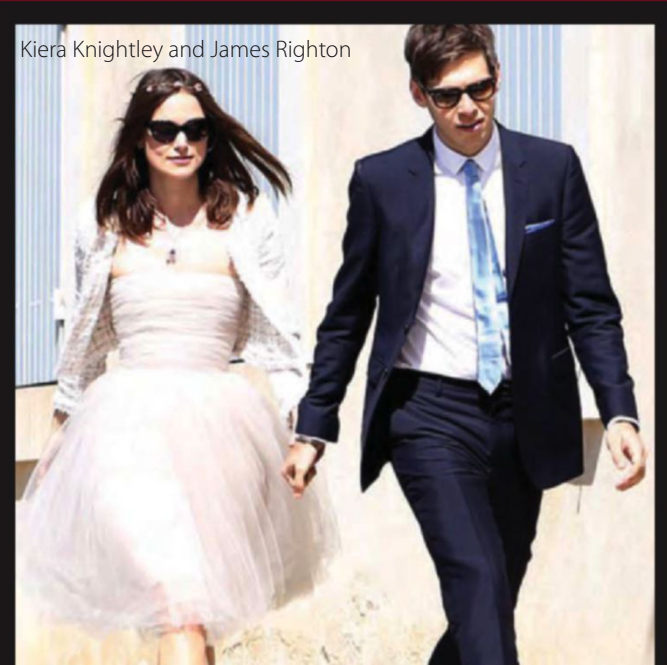
Russell Crowe and Danielle Spencer



Jennifer Lopez and Casper Smart



Ram Charan with Upasana



Kiera Knightley and James Righton



Don the Season's Colour!

Get flamboyant with the right array of clothes and accessories and this time it is more about the colour! Say hello to the favourite colour of 2014 - Radiant Orchid! By Vidhya Anand

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imagine. Keep in mind: radiant orchid belts are one of the sexiest embellishments you can carry! In case you are tired of belts and jackets, relax and get snazzy, with the right hint of this beautiful shade for your eyes and some swanky lipstick in a similar shade. That is all you need to look nifty without too much effort. Even more, deck your look with the right shaded sling or a clutch.



Energetic, charismatic and perfect for almost all skin shades, eyeshades and hair, get introduced to this joyful purple this month. Enjoy the lushness of this hue, as we tell you how to spruce up the mood with the radiant orchid finery!

Damsel's Dresses

Be it your wedding or a party; adorn yourself in a radiant orchid dress. Make it a tiered chiffon one, for that fairytale look, and braid your hair up. Alternatively try on a silky dress, with a well-fitted waist and straps. You can integrate it with statement boots or heels that will complete your look. The hue can be made subtle or deepened, depending upon the occasion. Go flowery and mild or a little dashy and raunchy when needed. This colour will leave you looking blissful and jubilant at the same time!

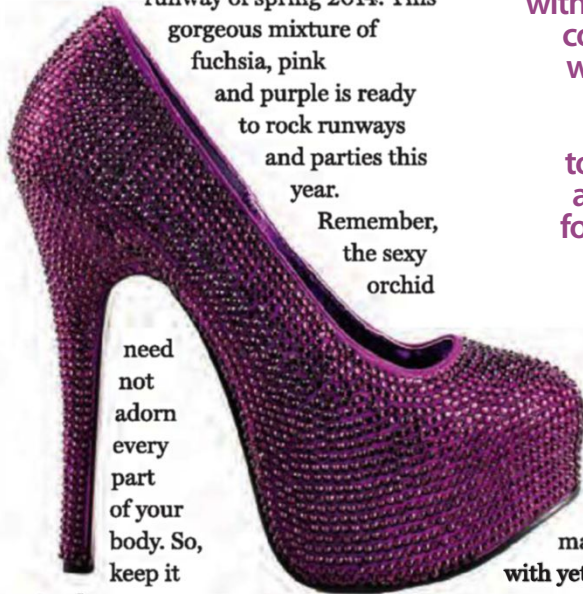
Accessorize!

Radiant orchid is everywhere; pull your hair up with the right tinge of this colour for your scrunches to form a high pony. Accessorising yourself with this shade will help flaunt your body parts more boldly than ever before. Get the casual, everyday look with a rounded bracelet. This would go with any colour you are dressed in. A Moto jacket atop a white tee is sure to magnetize all the attention you can

Nail paints are no exceptions to this lovely colour as it is bound to suit all skin types. All you have to do is figure out the shade that please you the most!

Heel It Up!

Radiant orchid is the perfect colour for spring. It has been all over the runway of spring 2014. This gorgeous mixture of fuchsia, pink and purple is ready to rock runways and parties this year. Remember, the sexy orchid



need not adorn every part of your body. So, keep it

simple yet sexy. Put on heels of this tint even if your clothes are of a different tone. Since this is an adorably friendly colour, you can match

Put on heels of this tint even if your clothes are of a different tone. However, since this happy colour is so vividly radiant, make sure you do not mix it up with yet another bright colour, unless you want to look wild and vibrant. It is better to let the heel get all the attention, for it is a signature colour you are pulling off

it with almost anything! However, since this happy colour is so vividly radiant, make sure you do not mix it up with yet another bright colour, unless you want to look wild and vibrant. It is better to let the heel get all the attention, for it is a signature colour you are pulling off.



colour for a special occasion alone. You can get casual; all you have to do is put on flip-flops or a converse to suit your clothes.

→ Summer being round the corner, get sheers of a similar hue! From sweatshirts to cocktail dresses, radiant orchid has a say in everything. There might be a million colours out there, but this one is all you will need to keep you incandescent as ever!



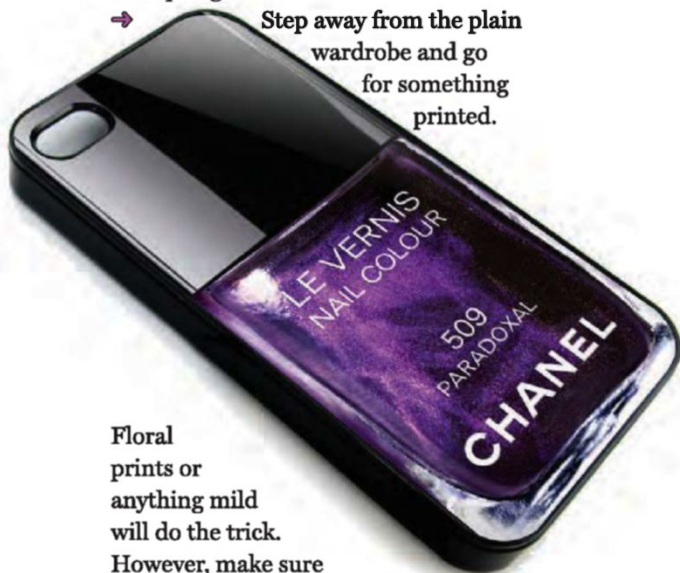
Accessorising yourself with this shade will help flaunt your body parts more boldly than ever before. Get the casual, everyday look with a rounded bracelet. This would go with any colour you are dressed in

The Perfect Match

Here are a few tips to pull off the best radiant orchid look!

- Figure out the perfect shade of radiant orchid that suits you best then begin accessorising.
- To look striking, and draw attention to your orchid piece, such as statement tops, match it with a colour that is not too bright, like black. Radiant orchid tops and black pencil skirts are the best this spring.

→ **Step away from the plain wardrobe and go for something printed.**



Floral prints or anything mild will do the trick. However, make sure you do not choose the wrong accessories for printed dresses. They cannot be printed too, that will leave a sense of confusion.

→ Radiant orchid need not be the



Natalie Portman rocks the hue



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Chanel Vintage - Metallic Clutch



Jonathan Simkhai - Metallic Bounce Skirt



Charlotte Olympia - Chatterbox Phone Box Clutch

Georges Mak - The Madonna Dress



Metallic Magic

Last spring's runway rage seems poised to continue its dominance well into this spring. Add a hint of lustre or go bling from top to toe; indulge in this trend de jour. Whether you go for dresses in heavy metal or sport some light hearted bijoux, the message is loud and shining: Own it, flaunt it and dazzle in it.



DKNY - Metallic Black Pullover

Patent Metallic A line Skirt



Lifestyle - Metallic Shoes by Paprika



Amiote - Double Metallic Ring



Metallic Flower Print Dress

Giuseppe Zanotti - Strappy Sandal with Gold Leaves



Christian Louboutin - Metallic Leather Sandals



Anya Hindmarch - Marano Music Box Clutch



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Eiffel Tower charm with agate and aquamarine stone by **storenvy.com**

Stack ring by **Clare Chandler**



OH PRECIOUS!

They complement your little black dress as perfectly as they perk up your denims and tees. Rock solid at number one on the trend charts in this season of love, these pieces of semiprecious stone jewellery are the just-right blend of retro glam, modern chic and flamboyant hues



22kt gold plated cuff bracelet with green chalcedony by **zariin.com**

Amethyst ring by **Melinda Maria**



Emerald ring by **David Yurman**



Yellow ring set with customer's own citrine by **Diana Porter**

Turquoise earrings by **Damini**



Tear drop earrings in pink topaz by **Citrine**



Green Purple 'Ekin' earrings by **Tiklari**



White gold and rhodium plate ring set with pear shape emerald by **Diana Porter**



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Crystal Watch by
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Oceanic Red
Pendant by
Swarovski
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Oranges & Apples

Blend the colours of sunset and lush tomatoes together. Now splash the resulting hue liberally on outfits or sprinkle it sparingly on accessories. The effect is subdued effervescence. Tangerine red is rocking the fashion charts and how. Romance the chic colour this month



Mini Candy Bag by
Furla ₹ 10500

Loafers by **Tods** ₹ 20000



Shirt By
**Christopher
Kane** Price on Request





date ideas for your *Valentine*

Let's face facts: planning the perfect date on Valentine's Day is not a guy's cup of tea. This year, take the initiative of planning something that he enjoys. Keep in mind that there are better ways to get closer to your guy than over a candlelit dinner for two. Here are a few ideas to kick start your perfect day of love

1. Sing Your Heart Out: Karaoke is catching on like wildfire, with almost every watering hole in town hosting a night, just for all the bathrooms singers to have a go! This fun, upbeat activity can easily become part of your weekly routine in future. Choosing a corny old number to croon together is an incredibly fresh way to bring you closer to your man. Feeling like you are doing something goofy together can also make you feel more connected to each other.

2. Laugh It Off: Good humour is something everyone enjoys. Find out if there a good stand up

comedy show around town and buy tickets for two. How better to celebrate any day than spending time laughing till your insides hurt? Not only will it lighten your mood, it will be a pleasant surprise for your guy.

3. Double Date: Sometimes there is a lot of pressure on an outing involving just the two of you. Rope in another couple you are friends with and go out on a double date. This will ease the air and add a casual touch to the proceedings. And when you are happy and having a good time, you will find yourself feeling closer than ever.

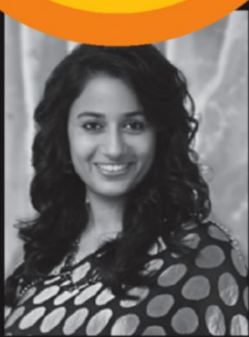
4. Spa Date: Book a couple's massage, at a nice spa. Guys usually

shy away from spa activities. A couple's massage will make him feel less awkward. Add to that, your intensified senses at the end of the session are a sure recipe for some steamy action. If you cannot get your man to go out, tap into your inner masseuse and give him a nice hot rub down. Ask him to return the favour and get naughty!

5. Arcade night: Remember men are still little boys. Delight him with a gaming night date. Take him bowling and get him to teach you. It is sure to come off as a grand gesture to show him you care. Impress upon him that you are not all diva and that you are ready to meet him half way!



SUNNY
SIDE
UP
ANU HASAN



The new year saw me spending a lot of time on trains, travelling between London, Basingstoke, Manchester and Liverpool. In each of these places were people I needed to see and during each of these journeys I realised how different life is. Just when you think you are going through a tough time you see someone fighting a tougher battle. Just when you think everything is so profound, something funny happens and you are laughing. I not only looked through the window of the train at the beautiful English countryside but I also found opportunities to look into windows showcasing peoples lives.

On the train to Manchester from London, I was sitting across an amazingly built man. I felt flabby and fat. He must have been a rower and I wanted to slap him for being so fit and muscular. How dare he!

Training Windows

The couple opposite me watched as I doubled over and the man finally got up and pulled a bottle of water from his bag and offered it to me. I thanked him and gratefully took a few gulps. As I lowered the bottle, he said, "It only has some gin in it..."

At that time I was texting my niece on whatsapp and I told her just that. When I looked up from messaging her, I snorted in laughter and hastily converted it into a cough. The man had turned on the front camera on his iPhone and was practically admiring himself. If that level of fitness came with that kind of vanity... I didn't want that.

On the train from Liverpool, I had gotten in early and the seat next to me was vacant. An old lady, in her 70's came up to sit next to me. I moved

my back pack that was on my lap to make space for her. And she said, "I'm sorry if I am troubling you, but I like to sit facing forward, you see" I smiled at her and told her, "Oh no, I was merely making space for you. This backpack of mine is rather large isn't it?" And that started off the conversation.

In the span of 20 minutes, I knew that she had spent 5 hours on the phone waiting for a call centre to respond to her queries, that she was a teacher whose husband had a gambling problem and who finally left her. And 45 years ago, there she was, left on her own to bring up four kids. The youngest was 2 and the oldest 12. I asked her what she did. And she said "Oh I went back to college, got myself a degree, and taught at a school." I tried to put myself in that situation and my mind boggled and I asked her, "However did you manage?" Her response was as simple as it was profound "I didn't have the time to think about how I was going to manage. I just did."

She is so right. I think we waste more of our time and energy worrying about the how instead of just going ahead and doing it. I looked at her wizened face,

her sparkling grey eyes and the ready smile and felt such a rush of humility. And I think I work hard and juggle many things!

"So you managed fine without your husband," I said to her. She replied, "I did better than fine," and in the same breath "He died a few years ago." I was startled into saying, "I'm sorry" and with the same simple clarity I had seen before she said, "Oh, I'm not. I loved him when I married him, he was the father of my children. But after he did what he did, he was nothing to me." As she bid goodbye to me and wished me a happy 2014, I thought to myself, was this the attached detachment that the Bhagwat Gita spoke about?

I was mulling over this when a bout of coughing overtook me. The couple opposite me watched as I doubled over and the man finally got up and pulled a bottle of water from his bag and offered it to me. I thanked him and gratefully took a few gulps. As I lowered the bottle, he said, "It only has some gin in it... not much" I looked at him in mild alarm for a second until I noticed his eyes twinkling and I started laughing.

His wife joined in and said in a broad

northern accent that I could barely follow, "Oh, don't you be payin him any attention. He doesn't drink and hasn't in 40 years!" He turned to her and winked, "So you think Darling." I was giggling watching this byplay. Such a comfort wrought from years of being together. I felt like dhristi suthufying them.

A fit but vain young man, a strong old lady, and a happy couple. I look forward to more of these windows I can peek into. I'd like to think I not only appreciate differences but also learn from them.

As I got off the train and started striding purposefully towards my sister's (technically she is my cousin.. But it's a peculiarity in our family that we don't differentiate between cousin and sister), I heard a yell from across the road. It was my sister who had come to pick me up despite the fact that I had told her I was happy to walk. This was also the same one who sent me off on my train trip to Liverpool with a paper bag that had a sandwich, an orange and a paper napkin. ☺ It is interesting to see that in her eyes I am still a kid who needs to be taken care of. And why did I tell you that? That's your window into my life.





NO HANKY PANKY PLEASE!

It's that time of the year again; love is in the air, couples are everywhere! It is easy to get carried away and forget about your surroundings. While it is great that you are part of a cosy twosome, don't put on a show that might put others at ill ease. *Malini Gopalakrishnan* ponders the etiquette of demonstrating your affection for your partner in public

They say when you are in love you see the world through rose coloured glasses. You want to throw caution to the wind and shout it out from rooftops. As sweet and warm

and fuzzy as it might be to see people in love, no one wants to see the whole nine yards. The Romeo who chastely kissed a fair maiden's hand in return for a dainty hankie is a guy long forgotten. February in particular brings out the kind of PDA that is enough to make you lose your appetite. So here is the million dollar question. If you love someone and want to show it, how much is too much?

Do: Hold Hands

Holding hands with the person you love is just sweet. Palm to palm or arms intertwined, you get a sense of security and warmth from being connected to your significant other. It also feels like a statement announcing your togetherness to the world; that you are with a person who is special to you. Not only does it give a couple the



physical link that ensures a sense of security, it also makes for a pretty picture. However, you need to be conscious of your environment. While in casual places it is okay, holding hands may be considered inappropriate at workplaces, schools and even some places of worship.

Don't: Let Your Hands Wander

Somehow being in love fills you with abandon. So often in your love bubble,



holding hands becomes a preview to something much larger and much more inappropriate. Agreed, lovebirds get carried away at times. Copping a feel in a dark corner of a club (while no one's looking) is fine, but do save any more feeling up for more intimate places. Take into consideration the kind of gathering you are in the midst of. You might think it is perfectly okay to slip your hand into your partner's back pocket but some may find it vulgar. Shoving your hands in your jeans pocket or clutching the mobile like it is a life force may help curb wanton desires!

Do: Say "I Love You"

Saying the words out loud is probably the best way to seal the deal. It is a heart-on-sleeve gesture that melts the heart. Try not to overdo it though. A mush overload might seem

distasteful, not only to those around you but also to your partner!

Don't: Talk Dirty

While hearing couples say 'I love you' stirs the heart, hearing them say 'I want you in my arms' stirs the stomach! Keep a check on the dirty talk. No one wants the low down on what you plan to do to each other. The occasional sweet nothing whisper is passable. Husky proclamations

the staring game. After all, there are others around and you need to contribute to the conversation or at least look at the others. Imagine being the friend who has to endure two lovebirds who only have eyes for each other, while you are left to amuse yourself. If you are in a mood to just revel in your feelings, a romantic candlelight dinner at home is more apt.

Don't: Make Bedroom Eyes



of desire are not! If you absolutely cannot wait to tell your partner your naughty thoughts, pull them aside and talk in private. Texting your lustful thoughts is also a great way to connect. It feels like having a private sexy secret that no one knows of. Be careful to send the message to the right person though!

Do: Exchange Passionate Stares

Isn't it great when it is just the two of you and no conversation is required? You could just as happily spend the hours staring into each other's eyes. Every relationship has that beautiful phase when you just never get tired of eye contact. This is also a totally acceptable form of establishing 'coupledom'. Of course, if you are part of a small group you should limit

The regular hug requires the active participation of only the upper half of the body, arms wrapping around another's shoulders. The body slam however, is a full body contact, a hip to hip spectacle which is just not acceptable in most social milieus

Now people, your eyes do a lot of talking. So long as you are just



gazing into each other's eyes things are cool. But don't think you can get away with staring at a butt or someone's neck and mouth the whole time. Almost anyone would be able to see what is on your mind.

When you start thinking saucy thoughts, snap out of it and take stock of your surroundings. It is very likely that your thoughts have translated into a look on your face that is all too easy to read. While love is an emotion to declare, lust is best left for behind locked doors.

Do: Quick Peck on the Cheek

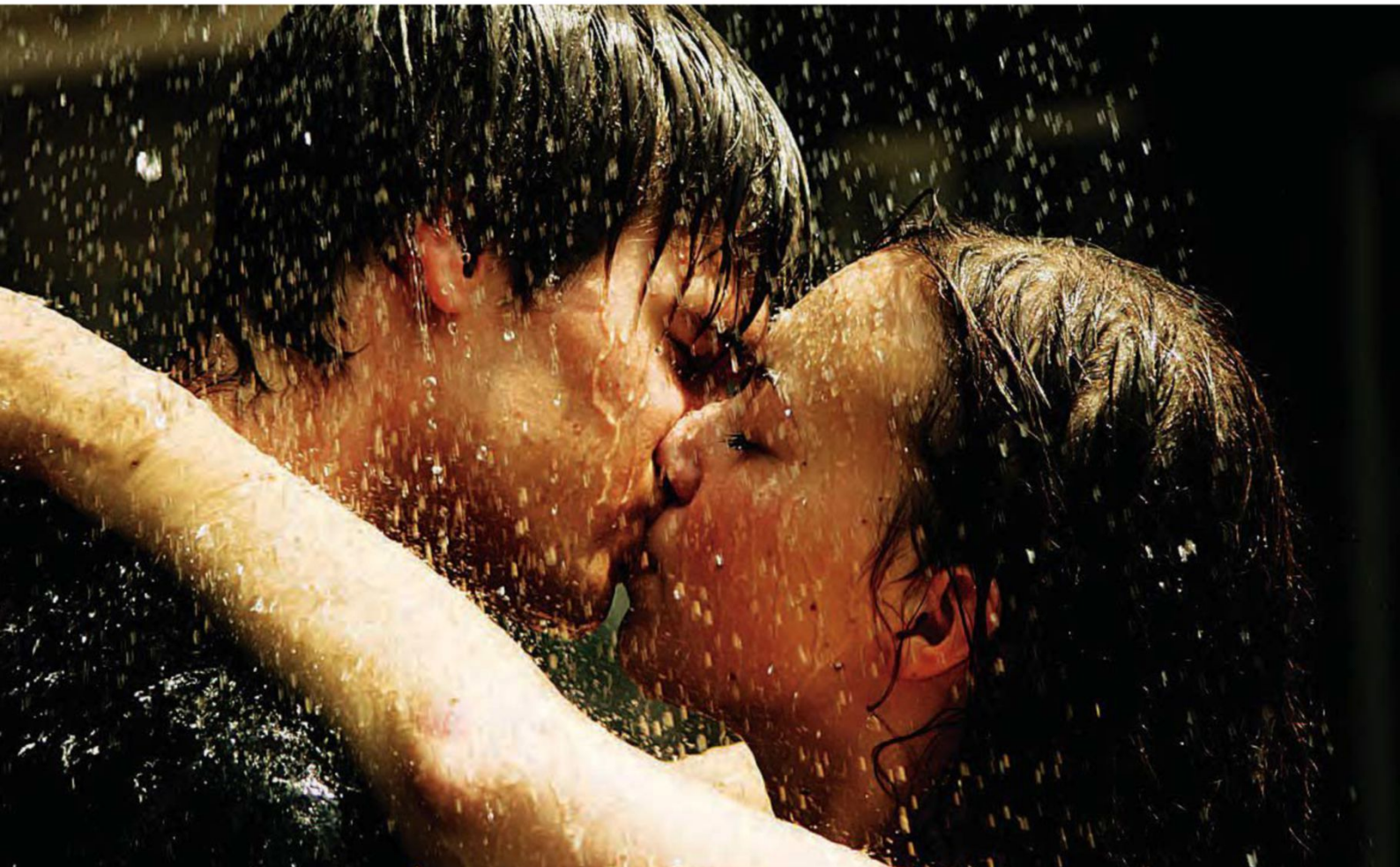
There are moments in a couple's life that just demand more contact. A parting (even for a short time), meeting (after the said parting), or just an all out lovey-dovey moment that asks for a kiss and nothing less. A quick kiss on the head or cheek is usually okay. Keep these pecks light and dry. Even then reserve them

for special moments. There are always people who find any sort of physical contact disrespectful. Be especially careful in the presence of elders and little children (for fear of protective parents).

Don't: Exchange Wet Kisses

Well, here is the simple rule: kisses that involve saliva are not for public viewing. Especially in India, French

Well, here is the simple rule: kisses that involve saliva are not for public viewing. Especially in India, French kissing is still a taboo. Even in western cultures, prolonged lip-to-lip kisses are frowned upon in most settings





kissing is still a taboo. Even in western cultures, prolonged lip-to-lip kisses are frowned upon in most settings. The reason is not hard to guess. French kisses are very intimate. While the tongue wrestling might seem like a very loving gesture to you, it is sure to come off looking shameful and disgusting to those watching. Just to be clear, all the other variations of 'making out' like kissing the neck, nipping the earlobe are ill-advised too. Don't make a spectacle of your love, particularly the kind that could give the audience a bout of nausea!

Do: Light Hugs

A hug is a simply magical thing, isn't it? It is a gesture that is now accepted the world over as a form of greeting. So, there is nothing to stop you from giving someone a nice big, warm hug. The comfort of finding yourself wrapped in someone's arms is without comparison. Holding your partner this way gives your relationship an instant boost of trust and safety. It also drives away the annoying feelings of loneliness, sadness and is even known to relax muscles!

Don't: Whine 'N' Grind

Introducing the younger, perverted cousin of the hug, the full body slam!

Now, the regular hug requires the active participation of only the upper half of the body, arms wrapping around another's shoulders. The body slam however, is a full body contact, a hip to hip spectacle which is just not acceptable in most social milieus. Simply keeping the gesture above the belt goes a long way towards helping couples stay within the realms of decency.

It is great to be in love.

It is one of the most celebrated emotions of all time. That said you should always be mindful of your surroundings, company and the situation. After all, isn't it only fair that in a celebration of love you don't make someone else angry? If not, don't get offended when the clichéd "GET A ROOM" is yelled at you! ■



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MORE THAN A PRETTY *Face*

Whenever life has given her lemons, she has made not just lemonade but also a lemon cake. Though her entry into the world of films was by chance her stay is anything but! For Vishakha Singh, life is a platform to explore her multitude of talents with no compromise on her ideals and logical sense. She has carved a niche for herself in Bollywood and is now making inroads down South as well. Having ventured into the world of film production too, Vishakha is the perfect picture of happiness and inspiration. *Anusha Surendran* listens in as the *Fukrey* star speaks with marked candour with one common highlight: logic!

Photography: Sunder Ramu

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With movies such as Fukrey and Bajatey Raho she was identified as a talented artiste in Bollywood. Gradually her foray into Tamil and Telugu films made the audience notice her anew. With her toes dipped into film production as well, Vishakha is the archetype of sane judgment, beauty and talent.

“I never wanted to become an actor. But I have realized that I am a decent one”

Born and brought up in Abu Dhabi, Vishakha's entry into movies was by sheer chance. She finished her high school studies from Ghaziabad and then went on to pursue her under graduation in Business Studies from Delhi. Vishakha agrees that she has always been intellectually oriented. When she got a chance to star in movies, curiosity got the better of her and made her give it a shot. “I do not have formal training in acting. I am like one of those people who were

“While in London I started co-producing with Anurag Kashyap a few films meant for the international audience and one of the films got selected for Cannes Critics Week. It gave me such a high!” she gushes. So why the hiatus, we ask her and pat comes the reply! “That is just because I never really wanted to become an actor! I am still not sure that I want to become one,” she laughs, adding “In this short period I have discovered that I am a decent actor. And I started understanding about the economics of filmmaking. As I am very good at saving, I invested the money I had saved up while acting from 2007 to 2010. And I started getting box office returns,” she says.

“It just makes more sense to use my looks now and brains later”

When she started getting acting offers again, after a three year gap, no one was more surprised than Vishakha.

Does she enjoy production more than being in front of the camera? “The word Vishakha means diversification. I love multitasking and did not dream that I would be living up to my name! Fortunately or unfortunately, my back up plan is set and ready as my brain is constantly ticking. So when these opportunities came about, I knew there was a reason behind them,” she smiles. As for her roles in movies, Vishakha candidly states that she has no issues with being a pretty face but has a problem with the objectification of women in cinema. “In Indian cinema, women are often portrayed as just relief elements who are expected to sing, dance and stand on the sidelines while the hero bashes the bad guys. That is why the opportunities are also scarce. But I am not an ambitious actor. That is why if someone comes to me with a script that has a bikini or a kissing scene forced into it for the sake of titillation

“The word Vishakha means diversification. I love multitasking but I did not dream that I would actually be living up to my name! Fortunately or unfortunately, my back up plan is set and ready as my brain is constantly ticking”

thrown into the sea and discovered how to swim!”

After three years in the movie industry, and working in films in different languages, she decided to go along with her parents' wish to take up higher studies. Soon a post graduation in Advertising and Public Relations followed and she went to work in her father's company in London. “My father is a venture capitalist, and I used to work in the Finance Department. I took the break from films quite easily as I always felt there was more to life,” she states adding,

“I was stunned when I got a call for Kanna Laddu Thinna Aasaiya in Tamil. After all, my last stint as a heroine was three years ago. But the director was quite adamant and I went ahead,” she replies candidly. There has been no looking back for Vishakha since then! Soon calls to act in Fukrey, Ankur Arora Murder Case and Bajatey Raho followed and Vishakha had her dates and hands full! “I did not plan any of this. Life just started happening to me, and I went with the flow. I thought it just made more sense to use my looks now and brains later,” she quips good-naturedly.

I close the door on the talks before they go ahead,” she maintains.

“I am glad I am in a position where I could say no to 11 films”

After the sleeper hit Fukrey, Vishakha says that she refused 11 films for various reasons. “My roles need to have substance. And I want to work with those with whom I am on the same page,” she says. With her trademark candour she says that there have been times when she thought if she was being too picky but has stuck

to her guns as she firmly believes that her market value is much more than just a face in a movie.

"I am rather fearless when it comes to my roles and I never grudge others' happiness when I miss out on projects. As far as Bollywood is concerned I am glad that I am in a position to say no! I don't want to be a starlet. I want to be a star," she says. In that context, Vishakha feels that South Indian films have given her heroine-backed roles. "Here the films are usually clean. In Bollywood if I say no to a kissing scene, eyebrows are raised. But unless it is justified and I am convinced, I have a premium to my kissing scenes," she states.

"Film production is not just about making money. I want to influence minds"

Stressing that a script is the mainstay for any film, Vishakha believes that production gives her the power to choose films with substance that need to be showcased to the public. "The films that I have co-produced are all small budget ones, but it is not just about making money. I want to influence minds. I want to support films that showcase women as strong individuals," she says. She laughingly admits, however, that there have been times when she wishes she were a hero. "The shelf life is that much higher for a hero. For a heroine in the South staying in movies for even 10 years is considered to be an achievement. Bollywood is slightly better in that aspect!" That is why Vishakha says

production helps as there is no bar on age!

"I love Priya Mani's role in Paruthiveeran. I know I would do great in local regional roles"

Having worked across a gamut of languages in her short stint in the industry, Vishakha says that she is the most comfortable working in Hindi as it is her mother tongue. "With other films there is always the additional stress of remembering the lines in a language you don't understand. Santhanam, my co star in Kanna Laddu..., was extremely down to earth in spite of being a huge name in the Tamil comedy genre. He helped me with my lines and we enjoyed doing a kuthu dance in the film," she says. She also agrees that she took a gamble when she agreed to star in the song Maama Will You from Kanna Laddu.... Being someone who is vehemently opposed to the objectification of women, she agreed to do the song only because the director had promised her that there would be no voyeuristic camera angles. What are the kinds of roles that she is looking forward to work on in future? "I know I can do justice to roles of rustic village belles like Priyamani's in Paruthiveeran and Amala Paul's in Mynaa. I am very hard working and I know for a fact that I would do great in such roles!"

"My parents feared that I would become a victim of the casting couch"

Vishakha comes from a high-powered, traditional and well-educated family. Coming from such a family where every member is intellectually oriented in their chosen fields, what kind of support did she get when she decided to enter the world of cinema? "My mother is an expert in reiki and feng shui and my brother takes care of father's business in Singapore. My sister is Anil Ambani's executive advisor. She was actually angry with me for acting in the 'mama' song! I know that they are just being protective, because once you enter films people tend to think you are public property. That is why I never cross the line."

Vishakha recalls that the stiffest opposition came from her dad. "My dad was shocked when I told him about my decision to act. He knew I was multitalented and was stunned when I wanted to get into films. Everybody kept telling me that an actress' profession does not demand many qualifications, which is also partly true." But they gave in eventually as they believed in her ability to hold her own with no compromise on family values and ethics. "They did harbour fears about me becoming a victim to the infamous casting couching syndrome in cinema." Her firm approach to films has made sure that she is the mistress of her own fate. "In fact, I was approached for a cameo in the Ajith-starrer Veeram. Though I absolutely adore Ajith sir, I refused the role as I feel I am

"In the South they have started calling me 'laddu girl' in the Tamil industry and now 'rowdy girl' in the Telugu one. It is fun being brash in a different language"



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lead material. Why should I exhaust my talent in any other role?" she says.

"Director Ashutosh Gowariker wanted me to audition for Swades opposite Shah Rukh Khan"

Vishakha's entry into movies was tapped by none other than the ace director Ashutosh Gowariker. "When I went to Mumbai once, Ashutosh sir spotted me in a street and wanted me to audition for Swades opposite Shah Rukh Khan. But he told me that I looked too young next to Shah Rukh. However, something told me that I should not let this chance go. After graduation I started getting offers for modelling and did a lot of print and TV ads," she says. So when her first Tamil film *Pidichirukku* happened she was very happy. Though the film was

"When I went to Mumbai once, Ashutosh Gowariker spotted me in a street and wanted me to audition for Swades opposite Shah Rukh Khan. But he told me that I looked too young next to Shah Rukh. However, something told me that I should not let this chance go"

not a box office hit, Vishakha says that she got a lot of positive reviews for the movie. "That film made me an actor. I was a small town girl in the movie and absolutely loved the role."

"I can work with anybody. I am very comfy with my 'Kanna Laddu...' team"

Vehemently stating that her choices of roles are totally based on substance and not glamour, Vishakha says that she can work with anybody but shares a very good camaraderie with the Kanna Laddu... team with whom she is doing another film *Valiba Raja* in Tamil that is to be released soon. "I am Archie's Betty in the film. The film would be incomplete without me and it is a family entertainer," she says happily. In Telegu, she is currently doing *Rowdy Fellow* with Nara Rohith. "In the South they have

started calling me 'laddu girl' in the Tamil industry and now 'rowdy girl' in the Telugu one. It is fun being brash in a different language," she laughs.

"I could teach a lot of actors how to act"

Having been someone whose brain is constantly ticking and who is also educationally inclined Vishakha stresses that she did not feel the need to go for professional lessons when it comes to acting. "If you want to be a good actor, you have to be humble and save the attitude for the camera. I could teach a lot of actors how to act. That much I am sure of," she laughs cheekily. She believes in learning on the sets and that learning on the job always has the edge. "But I need to learn to dance. I can do a mean kuthu dance though!" Every actor, consciously or unconsciously, seeks inspiration

from yesteryear idols or from peers. Who does Vishakha feel are great on screen in terms of stage presence and acting? "I am a great fan of Nithya Menon in Malayalam just like I am a fan of Kajol, Priyanka Chopra, Rani Mukherjee and Deepika Padukone in Hindi. I have worked with Deepika and she was so professional and focused! I loved her roles in *Chennai Express* and *Ram Leela*. I would have loved to act in those films!" she says.

The spontaneous and effervescent actor also adores Hrithik Roshan and Shah Rukh Khan. "Aishwarya Rai, Jaya Bachchan and Hrithik praised me for *Khelein Hum Jeen Jaan Se* directed by Ashutosh Gowariker." Vishakha is also working on a Malayalam film *Motorcycle Diaries* directed by Rajesh Pillai and starring Kunchako Boban. "I was supposed to have worked with Rajesh in *Traffic* as the main lead.

But my dates did not work out! So to look on the bright side, I thought I am finally in a phase where I have date problems," she laughs.

"I am a tomboy in real life"

Agreeing that she was pampered as a kid, Vishakha says that she has never been a 'delicate darling' in real life. "I am a tomboy and a joker in real life, not at all girly! I go out with my guy friends and pay the bill many times. I don't expect men to open doors for me," she giggles.

Maintaining that in real life her parents are her role models, Vishakha states that everyone else who has made it on their own merit is a role model for her. "I admire Sivakarthiseeyan here in the South. He was a junior artist in one of the ads I had worked on. When I saw him make it big I was so proud and happy for him," she gushes. Vishakha notes that small-budget hard-hitting films are becoming successful these days, a trend that is happening in cinema all over India. "Small budget films are raking in more revenue. Now there is a lot of hope for actors like me who are fixated on the script more than the glamour."

"I have written stories for children and hope to get published in the future"

Not only is Vishakha comfortable with acting and film production but she also has a way with words! "I have written a series of stories for kids. It is about an aunt who narrates stories to her niece before she starts school. Hopefully I will get published soon," she smiles. Finding inspiration from real life, she says that she is also an avid reader. "I always tell my friends: never date a guy who does not read," she laughs.

Is marriage on the cards in the near future for her and in her typical straightforward attitude she says, "Yes, definitely in another two or three years. But hey, you are the journalist! It is for you to find out who it is!" ■



Before you get seized by sudden guilt pangs and throw away your half eaten bar of chocolate, here is some piece of news that may cheer you up: there are oodles of health and beauty perks packed in a bar of brown. But does that mean chocolate is out from the junk food list and is almost brushing shoulders with the likes of broccoli, kale, quinoa and beans?

***Divya Purushotham*, dietician at the Chennai based Qua Nutrition Clinic, highlights the benefits of cocoa while busting a few myths**

Back in those days when pocket money was meagre and resources were frugal, chocolate was the official toasting ingredient. Celebrations of any kind seemed incomplete without raising a bar of cocoa to good health and success and sinking our collective teeth into a gigantic slab of gooey goodness. But one not so fine day we were flooded with reports of pesticide usage at chocolate plants, the instilled fear

of dental cavities and 'well-meaning' warnings of obesity which pushed our favourite dessert to the periphery of oblivion. The good news is: experts have found out that chocolate is not quite the villain it is portrayed to be; rather, it can turn out to be quite a health hero, if consumed right.

For a happy, healthy heart
Chocolate, minus its high-fat, sugary



and creamy content may actually be beneficial for your ticker because of its 3 basic good-for-your-heart ingredients.

1) **Stearic Acid:** Stearic acid is a saturated fatty acid found in chocolate which is the ONLY saturated acid of its kind to NOT raise cholesterol levels. Other foods belonging to the lot of saturated fatty acid containing foods

Stearic acid is a saturated fatty acid found in chocolate which is the ONLY saturated acid of its kind to NOT raise cholesterol levels. Other foods belonging to the lot of saturated fatty acid containing foods are animal fats such as cream, cheese, butter, ghee etc. that have all been found to raise cholesterol levels

are animal fats such as cream, cheese, butter, ghee etc. that have all been found to raise cholesterol levels.

2) **Flavanols:** Flavanols are naturally occurring phytochemicals found in chocolates that have proven to be heart-healthy. Research suggests that these antioxidant compounds belonging to the flavanol group - epicatechin, catechin and procyanidins, are richest in dark chocolate and may increase vascular dilation and improve blood flow, reducing the risk of heart disease.

It is believed that the flavanols in chocolate work by:

- a) Increasing insulin sensitivity and
- b) Increasing the levels and the action of nitric oxide, a naturally occurring compound in the body that acts as a vasodilator. Thus, the clot-forming process is slowed down.

Levels of flavanols have been reported to range from a low of 12 mg/30g of milk chocolate to a high of 709 mg/30g of baking chocolate,

which is made of 100% cocoa solids.

3) **Cocoa:** Clinical trials have suggested that cocoa, the main ingredient in chocolate, may help improve heart health through 2 mechanisms:-
a) Lowering LDL cholesterol while raising HDL (good) cholesterol levels.
b) Reducing platelet aggregation and having an anti-inflammatory effect.

Research Reveals

Very few food items have been as widely researched on as chocolate, especially for their health benefits, and the results have been deliciously positive. It is now believed that chocolate can help in the following:

1) **Reducing Risk of Stroke:** A systematic review of relevant studies have found an association between weekly chocolate consumption and a lower risk of stroke (22%) and death from stroke (46%).

2) **Managing Blood Pressure:** An analysis of 15 trials, in which flavanol dosages ranged from 30 mg



to 1,000 mg/day and lasted for two to 18 weeks, suggested that dark chocolate has a small but clinically significant blood pressure-reducing effect, but has no effect on normal blood pressure.

3) Lowering Risk of Heart Failure:

A recent study of almost 32,000 women found that a modest intake of any kind of chocolate (one to two servings per week) was associated with a 26% lower incidence of heart failure compared with those who ate no chocolate.

Melting Myths

Myth 1: Chocolate causes cavities

Fact: Candy alone is not responsible for cavities. Cavities are formed when bacteria in the mouth metabolize sugars and starches from any type of food (soda, candy, juice, bread, rice and pasta) to produce acid. This acid then eats through the enamel of the tooth, causing a cavity.

Myth 2: People with diabetes have to give up chocolate

Fact: Chocolate does not need to be completely avoided by people with diabetes. In fact, many are often surprised to learn that chocolate has a low glycemic index. As said earlier, recent studies suggest that dark chocolate may actually improve insulin sensitivity in people with normal and high blood pressure and improve endothelial dysfunction in people with diabetes.

Myth 3: Chocolate increases cholesterol level

Fact: This statement is not true. The saturated fats that chocolate contains consist mostly of stearic and oleic acids that are not responsible for the process of cholesterol deposition on vascular walls.

White Chocolate vs. Dark Chocolate:

The Eternal Debate

Which is the right kind of chocolate to have?

The labelling of the flavanol content of chocolate products is not mandatory, but as a general rule, the higher the percentage of cocoa solids

in a chocolate product and the more bitter the taste, the higher the flavanol levels. Milk chocolate, which is the most widely consumed chocolate, is much lower in flavanols than dark chocolate. But even dark chocolate can vary greatly in flavonoid content, depending on the amount of cocoa solids it contains and how it is processed. And then, of course, there is white chocolate, which is not chocolate at all, but cocoa butter; it contains zero flavanols.

Cocoa beans contain approximately 50% fat. It is primarily comprised of two saturated fatty acids (palmitic and stearic acids) and one mono-unsaturated acid (oleic acid). Cocoa butter and chocolate do not raise blood cholesterol. However, when consuming milk chocolate or lower grade chocolate where a part of the total fat content comes from milk fat or various other types of fat, the cholesterol level might be adversely affected.

Dark chocolate has more antioxidants than red wine or green tea. It has higher cocoa content than milk chocolate. Dark chocolate products

Research studies indicate that flavanols in dark chocolate keep cholesterol from accumulating in the blood vessels, and improve blood flow

have 30% to 70% cocoa, with extra dark varieties containing over 80% of it. Research studies indicate that flavanols in dark chocolate keep cholesterol from accumulating in the blood vessels, and improve blood flow. As per a study, dark chocolate can help lower blood pressure in those with hypertension.

A medium-sized bar from a leading chocolate company contains 180 calories and 21 grams of sugar. It has 2 grams of protein and 12 grams of fat, of which 8 grams are saturated fat. However, the calorie and fat content





can differ between brands; some dark chocolate bars contain 200 to 250 calories, and 17 to 24 grams of fat per serving.

The Bottom Line: Clearly, not everyone is a fan of dark chocolate, but it is the one to consume for heart health. Experts advise the consumption of dark chocolate (>70% cocoa solids). But it is good to remember that eating too much chocolate, like any high-calorie snack, can have harmful effects. Despite its benefits, dark chocolate should be eaten in reasonable amounts. It contains sugar and fat, so overindulgence could cause weight gain. Eat a smaller portion of dark chocolate to get the antioxidants, while limiting the calories.

Whip This Up!

We don't need any excuse to lap up our much loved bar of cocoa. But if you need one, here is a health friendly chocolate recipe

Chocolate - Topped Crispy Bars

Nutritional Information:

Serving Size- 20 pieces;
Per Serving Size: 1 Piece
(Calories 143Kcal; Protein 2 gm;
Carbohydrates 24 gm; Sugar 16 gm;
Fat 5 gm; Saturated Fat 3 gm;
Sodium 75 gm; Cholesterol 3 gm)

Ingredients

- Unsalted butter 2 tbsp
- Marshmallows 1 bag (280 gm)
- Rice cereal (such as Rice Krispies) 6 cups
- Chocolate 340 gm

Method

1. In a large saucepan, over medium-low heat, melt the butter and marshmallows, stirring until smooth, 6 to 8 minutes. Add the cereal and stir until coated and combined. Press into a 9-by-13-inch baking dish.
2. Roughly chop the chocolate and place it in a heatproof bowl set over (but not in) a saucepan of gently simmering water. Spread the chocolate evenly over the rice mixture.
3. Cover and refrigerate 45 minutes. Cut into 24 squares.

Beauty Benefits of Dark Chocolate

1. Dark chocolate hosts a range of potent antioxidants which protect your skin from free radical damage, keeping it soft, supple and young for long.
2. With great sun protection properties, it shields your skin against detrimental UV rays and thus helps prevent

- conditions like sunburns and skin cancer.
3. Regular consumption of dark chocolate helps you achieve a smooth, problem free complexion. It also keeps your skin moist and well nourished.
4. Dark chocolate makes an excellent skin-detoxifier in combination

- with caffeine. It sloughs off the dead skin cells and allows the newly exposed, fresh skin to breathe freely.
5. It helps in promoting blood circulation in the scalp which leads to increased growth of healthy, lustrous locks and reduced hair loss.

SEDUCED by WORDS

Wrapping them up in tacky newspapers to hide the oh-so-desirable hero from the conservative eyes of our parents as schoolgirls to frowning at our teenage daughters for reading them, we trace the evolution of Mills & Boon romances and how they are still standing strong against the onslaught of chick lit



“His lips crushed hers with an almost velvety force. She gasped and welcomed the lustful invasion into her hot, moist mouth. Immediately their tongues engaged in a sensuous war which he seemed poised to win. She felt herself surrendering helplessly to the ravishment”

They have been criticised for their predictability, panned for their clichéd endings and submissive heroines, and even blamed for causing sexual health problems and marital breakdowns. But the fact remains that Mills & Boon romances

are the bees' knees for women (and some men) the world over.

Rise of Romance

Gerald Mills and Charles Boon founded Mills & Boon Limited as a general publisher in 1908 and opened offices in London's Covent Garden. Their keen eye on the reading market during the Great Depression in the 1930s told them that there was a growing demand for escapist literature, especially the happily-ever-after romantic genre. Deciding to concentrate on hardback romance completely the company revamped itself but even the owners

themselves could not perhaps have predicted the superlative success that the franchise would enjoy over the years. In spite of its acquisition in 1971 by the Canadian company Harlequin Enterprises and the sales of its e-books overtaking that of the print books, the essence of love and lust in all M&B books remains the same.

Of Billionaires and Beauties

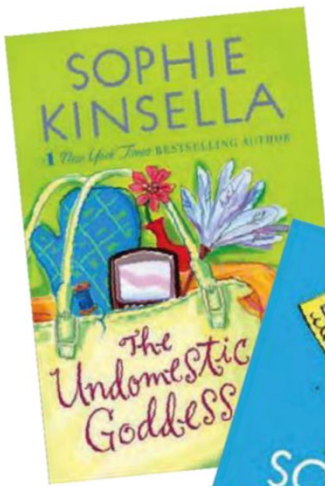
In their initial decades of being in print, M&B unfortunately did not feature heroines to be proud of. Waiflike and destitute twenty-something virgins waiting to be rescued by boorish businessmen



who taught them the meaning of love and intimacy were not exactly role models for modern go-getting women. That they were lapped up anyway by readers made the publishers vary to come out of the set mould.

Chick lit Competition

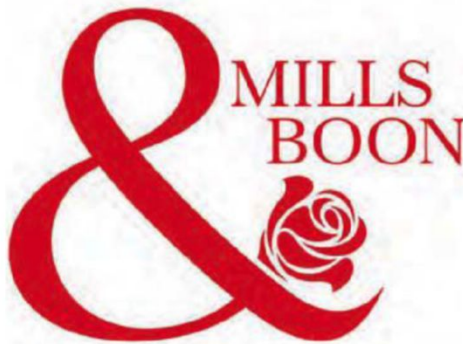
Ever since Sophie Kinsella and her ilk burst on to the scene, M&B Harlequin started feeling the pressure for reinvention while staying true to its format. From shopaholics to workaholics, Kinsella's heroines are wide ranging and do not fall at the



hero's feet at first sight. They are endearing, relatable characters who stumble through relationships, engagements and even weddings before finding their Mr. Right. In keeping up with the times, the last decade or so has witnessed M&B's leading ladies transform from wallflowers to assertive characters, though not quite as much as Rebecca Bloomwood, Poppy Wyatt or the many women from Kinsella novels. The heroes, mostly British and American when the series started out, have evolved from home grown hunks to



mythology and non-fiction all jostling for shelf space but none of them have been able to shake the consuming passion we feel for our beloved M&B. As their website proudly proclaims,

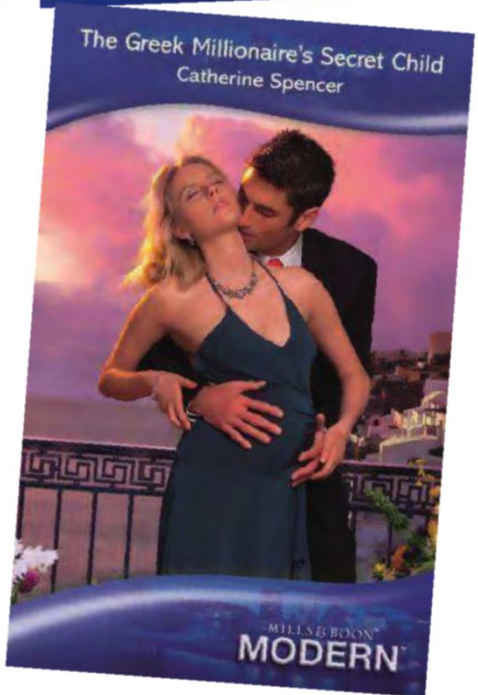


exotic studs (think Greek, Italian, French, Arabian) who treat their women as their equals (Well, almost!) Even the meeting places have shifted from farms to boardrooms en route to the bedroom.

Eternally Loved

All said and done, M&B is our window to the world of passion, seduction and romance, in that order. It is our great escape from the humdrum of routine monotony: a world where the men don't have paunches, receding hairlines and don't snore, where there is an honest insight into their feelings and sentiments and where they are clued in to every tiny emotion that their partners experience!

Over the past few years, there has been a renaissance of sorts in the literary world with horror, fantasy,



"In the past 50 years, our characters have had: 10,325 weddings, 29,500 kisses and 35,250 hugs." And counting!





If you thought that trends were limited to fashion and themes are for parties, it is time to wake up and smell the paint; the trends for your spaces change as often as any other. Hyderabad based interior designer Vipul Samrat talks to *Lubna Parveen* about the most wanted décor styles this year. Clue in and snag a drool-worthy home!

Valentine is a month of makeovers, a month when we groom, scrub, paint and pout ourselves into divas to catch that 'wow-she-is-hot' glance in our man's eyes. Most of us want to extend the sprucing up philosophy to our homes as well. If you are tempted to give your space a makeover, this is the time to do it. The current look in interior décor leans towards extremities: it is either all about being minimal or being ultra luxurious.

Earth Child - The Country Corner

Love all things traditional?

Try this simple trend to perk up the dullest of spaces

The country style steers clear of the

formal feel in favour of a comfortable lived-in look.

The popularity of this trend stems from the suggestion of a peaceful rural life that acts as a refuge from daily urban pressures. The country style offers plenty of scope for blending pieces of different periods and traditions. This décor follows the less is more philosophy. The mantra to getting the look just right is simplifying, streamlining and refining.

How to get it

Scour flea markets for crafted items that can be incorporated in your décor. As the look is focussed on comfort, your favourite and slightly sagging armchair can retain its place of pride

in your home. Simply throw a plaid or quilted slipcover over it and place a patchwork mat on the floor next to it. Windows with tiled shutters and colours like brick red, orange, brown and turquoise are the essence of the country look. Use bamboo blinds instead of drapes. Hang copper pots and bunches of herbs in your kitchen.

If you are in the mood to splurge, add false wooden beams to your ceiling. Stencil floors to make them look aged and worn. To complete the effect, hang a yard long photograph of a group of people staring at the camera. For a dramatic look introduce an element of surprise wherever possible. For instance, adding a bright red piece



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in an otherwise traditional room provides a refreshing contrast. Add texture and details through wooden wall panelling to highlight the old world look. Using red clay tiles adds to the rustic charm.

Prima Donna - The Victorian Space

Acting like royalty isn't just for when you are outside your home; treat yourself like a queen in your own digs!

Victorian décor is a flamboyant



one and can work well for those with extravagant tastes. Use of colours in Victorian homes is limited: blue, red, green and brown reign on cream or beige backgrounds. Highly decorated furniture, rich colours and heavy fabrics are typical of the Victorian trend. Walls are patterned in floral

print wallpaper while ceilings have embossed papers. This trend also uses a lot of imitation frescos, panels, cornices and columns. Staircases with curved balustrades, patterned friezes and ornate frames are also very common in this trend.

How to get it

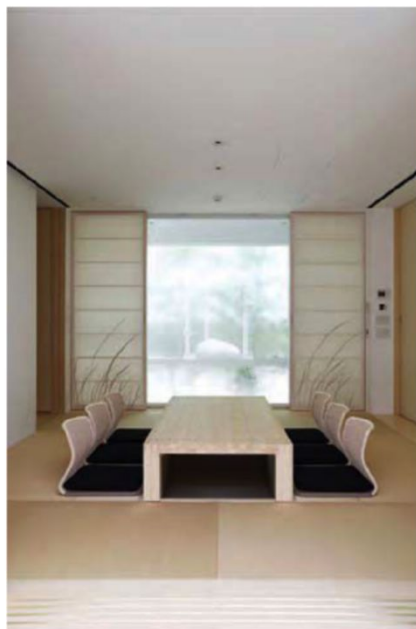
To get the right effect of the Victorian trend, make the interiors rich and intricate. Start with the walls. Use antique style wallpapers with border sets or try stencilling on painted walls for a different touch. Floral designs like lilies, roses, brambles and vine work well on red, blue or green backgrounds. Texture your walls with finishes like sponging, marbling and splattering. The guide to buying classic furniture is to think big. Heavy wooden furniture with ornamentation is essential for working this décor trend. The general feeling should be one of increased wealth and status. Large glass fronted armoires do justice to your chinaware or your figurines and dollhouses. While armoires increase in width and height, couches become plumper. Use plush upholstery like velvet and suede or opt for brocades. Use heavy drapes that almost reach the floors and add an oriental carpet for a touch of luxury. Adorn walls with tapestries and portraits. Using stained glass lampshades adds colour and character to the room. A chandelier in a large room provides an interesting touch. And of course, don't forget the old style beds with lace trimmed pillows.

Au Courant - The Japanese trend

If drama is your thing, black and white is your combo.

Turn your home into a conversation starter with this trend

Japanese home decoration is based on the Zen idea of simplicity. The quintessence of Japanese interior décor comes from maintaining the balance of yin and yang by contrasting opposites. The overall result is one of serenity and calm. To get the true Japanese look you need to view colours differently. Black and white are the major colour elements in Japanese décor. Black is used to define form and align structural geometry. Colours are used for definition rather than for making a statement. Limit the use of bold colours to a single object or architectural



feature that acts as a focal point.

How to get it

Rice paper room dividers, known as Shoji, are integral to Japanese homes. Use shoji screens, black wooden frames and low seated furniture for a simple yet elegant effect. Use tatami mats instead of chairs for informal sitting. Futons instead of beds are also characteristic of Japanese homes. Spread out a silk comforter on a couch; add a few cushions and you have a cosy seating area. Long grained cedar wood furniture makes a great contrast with finely crafted and lacquered décor articles.



To make a style statement with your floor, use a large slab of quarry stone and surround it with bamboo hardwood. The sitting arrangement should allow easy conversation, so arrange mats, pillows, or stools accordingly. Eliminate clutter and place furniture to follow a fluid line. The Japanese never stick things to the walls or push furniture against it, thus keeping walls free and clean. Alcoves or shelves serve to display a few simple items such as a big vase or a showpiece. These homes put a lot of emphasis on the flow of natural light. Use soft curtains and zero details around windows. So use simplicity as the key to transform your house into a Japanese tea room.



On the Edge - The Retro Effect

Quirky is the state of mind here; if you've got it, you will totally relate to this way out for your home

By definition, retro design is something quirky that is no longer in production. However bold colours, textural prints, whacky artworks and geometric shapes that ruled during the 60s and 70s have established themselves as essentially retro. You can get this retro look in your house with a modern twist.

How to get it

Painting is a great way to introduce retro touch in your house. Follow general colour rules of pale colours for small rooms and deep colours for large spaces. Brown makes a good basis for any retro colour scheme. To add zing, try infusing orange, lime green, turquoise or yellow colours on a tan wall. Nothing screams retro like paisley prints, daisies and psychedelic shapes on a stark background. Use vibrant colours in bold shapes to make a dramatic statement. The furniture should echo the theme too. Pick designs with sweeping curves and abstract style. Popular shapes during those times were the egg chair and kidney shaped coffee tables. The 60s were when the space craze was in full swing. Use pictures, lamps and ornaments that are reminiscent of the space craze. Use atomic wall clocks instead of regular ones. Pick furniture in mid to dark toned wood. Formica, plastic, fibreglass and plywood were also popular in that era. Use highly polished chrome for ornamentation.

Mirrors are another popular retro accessory. Cover a single wall with mirrors and use a mirrored disco ball



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to reflect light. A relaxed mellow atmosphere recreates the feel of the time. An orange plastic or acrylic lamp shade on a neutral base gives off a warm glow. To counteract the bright walls, the floor should be plain and simple. A white rug with fluffy cushions or black and white chequered veneer strikes the right balance. You can also opt for abstract designer single seater or love duo chair instead of regular couches for a casual feel. Don't forget to include an old rotary style telephone. Round it up with a record player belting out old tunes. A quick tip: The retro look offers a lot of scope for decorating and it is easy to go



wrong with it. Overdosing on the theme colours could end up making your house look shabby. The look works best if you combine a few well coordinated elements to get the groovy feel.

Urban Snazzy - The Contemporary Space

This chic décor trend is sure to fetch you some much deserved compliments

Clean lines and smooth surfaces define the contemporary look. Boxy furniture



Clean lines and smooth surfaces define the contemporary look. Boxy furniture and eccentric decorating give way to a combination of comfortable sophisticated elements that create a fresh feel. The principal elements in the modern style of decorating are colour, metal accents, texture, wood tone and lighting

and eccentric decorating give way to a combination of comfortable sophisticated elements that create a fresh feel. The principal elements in the modern style of decorating are colour, metal accents, texture, wood tone and lighting.

How to get it

The modern look is offset by neutral shades. Brown, taupe, cream or ivory tints work well in modern homes. To prevent the rooms from becoming boring, try infusing bold colours in small splashes. Try painting a single wall with an accent colour or add eye catching accessories like decorative cushions, towels, rugs or artwork. The modern décor uses a lot of metal. To coordinate the look throughout the house use metal accessories such as robe hooks, decorative tank levers,

glass shelves and towel rods. The clean lines should be offset with the use of fabrics like silk, crushed velvet, linen or wool. Natural fabrics add texture to create a warm and inviting atmosphere. Stay away from elaborate patterns or complex details as they clash with the uncluttered look you are trying to get.

While using wood, go beyond coffee



tables and use wood in picture frames, flower pots or shelves. Use the same wood tone through the entire room for a professional feel. Furniture should be simple and without ornamentation. Incorporate metal, stone and glass in décor pieces too. Even though prints are avoided, two toned prints can give striking effects if combined well. Think of zebra print pillow against black upholstery or bold striped rugs on a plain floor. Large plants with unusual leaves soften the stark lines of contemporary interior.

Lighting also plays a major role in this kind of décor. Improper lighting can break the entire effect. Use lights to present structural elements to the best advantage. Lighting fixtures should focus on specific pieces instead of the room as a whole. Use spotlights or statement lighting pieces to grab attention. Lighting helps in enhancing colour schemes to make austere rooms look cosy and inviting. Let each lighting fixture be a work of art in itself. Choose the ones that have clean lines, colours and metallic elements for an interesting look.

Trends are good as guidelines to decorating, but remember that you have to live in the house, and keep in mind that trends are transitory. So, add your personal touch to make it look even more special. ■



Golden, gilt framed mirrors go beautifully with bits and pieces of aqua

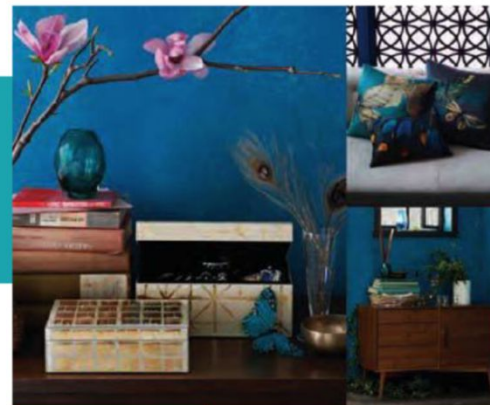


Incorporate the colour into the walls. Go for textured wallpaper or antique tiles. Be sure to choose furniture to go with the walls though



Touch of *Turquoise*

Tap into the hottest colour trend this season, pairing the soothing turquoise with a touch of gold to create a regal feel



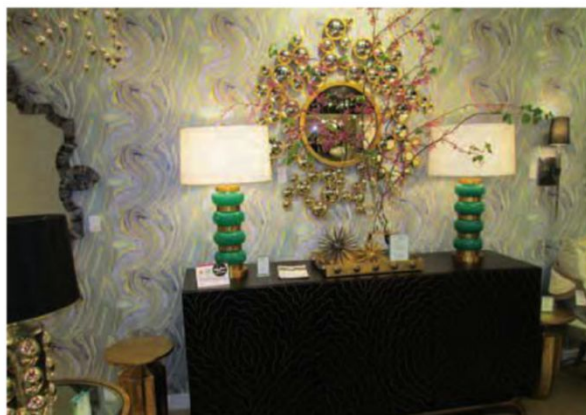
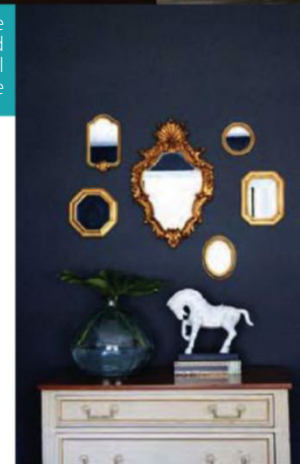
Darker shades make for a more refined and imperial ambience



Repaint old furniture with a shade of turquoise that suits your style and add a little dash of antique gold to get a quaint vintage look



Accessories like lamps, vases and cutlery are an easy way to work this colour trend



Don't be afraid to add in other colours. Just be sure to see they go well together





COLOUR

code your diet

Many of the disease fighting compounds in fruits and veggies are their colourful pigments themselves. Paint your plate with these colours to reap their many benefits, says *Lubna Parveen*

To this day, experts agree that colourful fruits and vegetables are key players in maintaining optimal health. Known as phytonutrients, the colourful compounds in fruits and veggies work to protect genes, aid vision, defend the heart and reduce the inflammation that accompanies common forms of cancer and age related diseases.

In general, the more richly coloured the fruits are, the more they are packed

with phytonutrients making them better allies for preventing and fighting maladies as the colourful compounds provide the body with a host of benefits.

Sole Saviours

Some colours work alone and some in groups. Among the colours that act on their own, red, orange and green lead the way.

Run for Red

Key Player: Lycopene
(Free Radical Fighter)

Red fruits and vegetables get their colour from the pigment lycopene,





a powerful antioxidant that neutralizes free radicals especially those generated from oxygen. Free radicals are unstable, reactive and highly aggressive molecules that react with the cells including the DNA and can cause permanent damage. By trapping these dangerous species, lycopene can protect the body from various forms of cancer and cardiac problems while reducing bad cholesterol levels. It can also prevent damage to the retina. Products with processed tomatoes such as ketchup, tomato sauce and tomato juice have the highest concentration of lycopene. Consuming lycopene containing foods together with a small amount of oil can maximize absorption even more.
 What to eat: Tomatoes, tomato juice, pink grapefruit, watermelon, ripe guava

Opt for Orange

Key Players: Alpha Carotene and Beta Carotene (Cell Protectors)
 The body absorbs the phytonutrients



In general, the more richly coloured the fruits are, the more they are packed with phytonutrients making them better allies for preventing and fighting maladies as the colourful compounds provide the body with a host of benefits



alpha carotene and beta-carotene from orange fruits and vegetables. As antioxidants, they protect the body from cellular damage caused by free radical oxidation, lowering the risk of heart disease and cancer. Both alpha carotene and beta-carotene are converted into vitamin A, an essential aid for vision, a strong immune system, healthy skin and mucous membranes. Orange fruits make for refreshing afternoon snacks while orange vegetables look and taste scrumptious in soups.
 What to eat: Carrots, mangoes, apricots, cantaloupes, pumpkin, squash, sweet potatoes

Go for Green

Key Players: Sulforaphane & Indole (Carcinogen Combatant)
 Green is the most abundant colour





in the plant world. Green foods are packed with nutrients including sulforaphane and indoles that defend against cancer causing chemicals also known as carcinogens. The diverse activities of sulforaphane extend to the prevention of age-related immune system decline. It was discovered that sulforaphane has the capacity to decrease plaque build up in arteries, which is a major cause of heart disease. Indoles themselves have been widely promoted for their antioxidant and anti-carcinogen properties.
What to eat: Broccoli, cabbage, Chinese cabbage, kale

Healing Combos

Most things work best in pairs. The same rule applies to the food world. Combining the chromatic goodness of two fruits or vegetables

can double your disease resisting mechanism.

Snack on Oranges and Yellows

Key Player: Beta-cryptothanxin (Inflammation Inhibitor)

Foods in this category contain beta-cryptothanxin, a phytonutrient that helps the body's cells communicate



with each other and which may help prevent heart disease. Beta-cryptothanxin is found to lower the risk of developing arthritis by inhibiting inflammation at the



The body absorbs the phytonutrients alpha carotene and beta-carotene from orange fruits and vegetables. As antioxidants, they protect the body from cellular damage caused by free radical oxidation, lowering the risk of heart disease and cancer

lining of joints. Like alpha and beta-carotene, it is converted into Vitamin A, thus promoting skin and bone health as well as improving immunity. The foods in this group are perfect for midday snacks, smoothies, and healthy desserts.
What to eat: Oranges, orange juice, pineapple, tangerines, peaches, papayas, nectarines

Eyeing the Yellows and Greens

Key Players: Lutein and Zeaxanthin (Vision Guards)

The two main phytonutrients found in



this colour group, lutein and zeaxanthin, lower the risks of cataracts and macular degeneration, a leading cause of vision loss in those over 60 years old. Zeaxanthin increases the macular pigment that acts as 'sunglasses' for the central area of the eye and is engaged in photo-protective activity. Lutein, a chemical naturally produced at the back of the eye, also has the potential to reduce atherosclerosis (narrowing of arteries). Many of these foods make for great components of salads – if you are feeling extra adventurous, try them in curries, or perhaps even an omelette. **What to eat:** Spinach, collard greens, yellow corn, green peas, honeydew

Make it right with Green and White

Key Players: Quercetin, Kaempferol, Allicin (Health Boosters)

White and green fruits and vegetables contain quercetin and kaempferol



as well as allicin. Allicin is found in onion and garlic – in plants, it is a defence mechanism against attack by pests; in humans, the allicin found in white/green foods has both anti-tumour and anti-microbial properties. The other two chemicals in white foods, quercetin and kaempferol, protect against post menopausal bone loss. These two chemicals fall into a group of phytonutrients known as flavonoids, which possess anti-viral, anti-allergic, anti-inflammatory, anti-tumour and antioxidant activities. Stick to white/green foods found in nature, and avoid processed white foods, like processed sugar, breads and flour as they are devoid of beneficial phytonutrients.

What to eat: Leeks, scallions, garlic, onions, asparagus

Stay Young with Blues & Purples

Key Player: Anthocyanin (Age Delayer)

The phytonutrient anthocyanin is the main player in this category. Anthocyanins protect against heart diseases by inhibiting blood clots.



They may also delay aging and the onset of Alzheimer's disease. Blueberries are believed to slow, and



even reverse, the brain's aging process. Aside from preventing oxidation of the nervous system, anthocyanin's benefits include fighting arteriosclerosis by lowering LDL cholesterol, stabilizing capillary walls, preventing diabetes

complications and improving eyesight. **What to eat:** Beets, eggplant, red grapes, prunes, cranberries, blueberries, strawberries, pomegranates

10 ways to colour your plate

ONE:

Add fruit to a bowl of yogurt or cereal.

TWO:

Enjoy an all-fruit smoothie to quench your thirst. These can include 3-5 servings of fruit in one glass!

THREE:

Top a hot bowl of oatmeal with fresh berries and a bit of brown sugar. Dried fruits like raisins and cranberries, sprinkled with cinnamon, work great as well.

FOUR:

Drink vegetable or tomato juice before meals.

FIVE:

Snack on fresh fruit, trail mix or veggie chips, rather than candy or potato chips.

SIX:

Make your own lemonade or limeade instead of drinking canned juices and sodas. Replace white sugar with honey for a healthier alternative.

SEVEN:

When eating a salad, choose darker greens like spinach and kale rather than iceberg lettuce. A big bowl of greens is also an open invitation to other colourful veggies like carrots, peppers, corn, olives and beets.

EIGHT:

Chop up some grapes, carrots or celery and mix in a chicken or tuna salad for refreshing lunch. Try it in a lettuce wrap for even more vegetable goodness.

NINE:

Mash blanched cauliflower and garlic into mashed potatoes – you won't even know they are there!

TEN:

Incorporate grated vegetables like zucchini, squash, carrots, onions and peppers into red sauces. It is a tasty addition to pasta, pizza or chilli.



Picture courtesy : Susheela Nair

All for a CAUSE

A versatile lady with diverse interests ranging from modelling, dancing, choreography and filmmaking to philanthropy, she works relentlessly to propagate the knowledge of Indian art and culture worldwide. In a chat with *Susheela Nair*, Roopa Iyer shares her early reminiscences, noteworthy achievements and magnificent obsessions

What are your recollections of your childhood?

My roots can be traced back to Belakavadi, a small hamlet in Karnataka. I was born into a lower middle class orthodox family. My father was a farmer and mother, an elementary school teacher. I grew up in the village till the age of six when my father died due to a heart ailment. Soon after my father's demise, my family shifted to Bellur, another small village in Karnataka.

At the age of ten, I started a dance academy in Bellur for young girls. I learnt and taught dance and performed at numerous dance programs at that tender age. Five years later, I moved to Bangalore with my family and started Gurukul to impart dance lessons. Side by side, I pursued my academic goal and earned a Masters' Degree in Commerce from Karnataka State Open University. Subsequently, Gurukul extended to include multiple classical disciplines and later I forayed into production and coordination of events.

Tell us a little about India Classic Arts (ICA).

After a world tour, Gurukul evolved into India Classic Arts, a non-profit global fine arts performing production organization, based both at New Jersey, USA and at Bangalore. ICA has many facets. While the main focus has been charitable projects, it also organizes cultural events worldwide mainly as fundraising exercises to support its projects. I am deeply involved in a number of charitable programs focusing on underprivileged and deprived children. I have trained HIV/AIDS affected children, destitute and visually impaired children and have organized several charity dance shows. The most noteworthy of these is the annual Chandamama event, where 120 girls and boys from disadvantaged backgrounds – destitute, HIV and children, inmates of remand homes, physically and mentally challenged individuals – are trained for three months in freestyle dance to perform for an audience.

What is your vision for your trust Namma Mane (Our Home)?

I am the Founding Director of Namma Mane – a charitable trust dedicated to fill a socially noticeable void: helping HIV/AIDS affected children, underprivileged and deprived children and women who are in need of basic life necessities. Namma Mane strives to provide shelter and care, generate an ambiance of mutual love to nurture the emotional need, and provide simple religious and philosophical discourses to satisfy the spiritual yearnings,

At the age of ten, I started a dance academy in Bellur for young girls. Five years later, I moved to Bangalore with my family and started Gurukul to impart dance lessons. Subsequently, Gurukul extended to include multiple classical disciplines and later I forayed into production and coordination of events

creating in totality a cohesive social structure to serve these special underprivileged – young and elderly. My vision of Namma Mane also includes a much broader charter – mobile elementary education for the poor and needy children that teach basic academic along with new technology, moral values, heritage and culture of India and the world, and basic human values that help children to become good citizens.

How does it feel to have been felicitated for your various achievements?

It really humbles me to have been recognised for my efforts through the numerous awards that I have won for my artistic achievement, contribution to charity and my involvement in supporting HIV affected children. Some of my

outstanding awards include Young Leader Award – Vivekananda V-Lead (2011), Indian Achiever – Gold Medal (2010 at UK), Non Resident Indian “Pravasi” Award from British High Commissioner (2008), Natya Saraswathi (2006), Padma Kalaashri (2004) and Indira Priyadarshini (1999). I have been involved with over a dozen movies in various capacities from acting to direction, and orchestrated, organized and performed in numerous musical and dance events in several countries around the world to support HIV

infected children through ICA. I was the lead actress in the award winning Kannada movie Daatu.

How was the Mukha Puta experience?

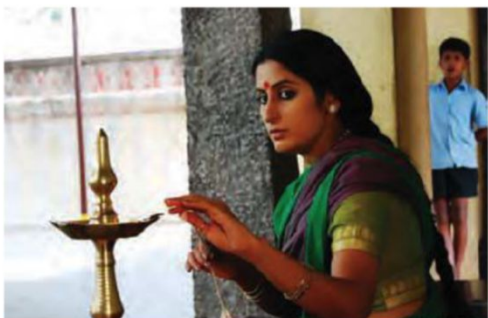
A few years ago, I directed and produced the movie Mukha Puta – The Cover Page and also wrote the story and screenplay. The movie is about a child suffering from HIV/AIDS. Mukha Puta provides a realistic account of the lives of young patients and how they are treated by society. This film was awarded The Best Social



Picture courtesy : Susheela Nair

Concerned Film of the year 2008-09 by the Karnataka State Government as they felt that it educated the mass regarding children being victims of HIV/AIDS which they are affected with even without their knowledge.

I sent this film to 120 different International Film Festivals worldwide and it won The Best Feature Film in 8 different countries. Apart from this, the film was released in countries like America, Hong Kong, Abu Dhabi, London, Singapore, Egypt, South Africa, Ireland and it is still travelling worldwide. This film was also released in different colleges and schools through the government of the above mentioned countries to spread awareness. Also it was released in most of the districts of Karnataka during International AIDS Day.



It really humbles me to have been recognised for my efforts through the numerous awards that I have won for my artistic achievement, contribution to charity and my involvement in supporting HIV affected children

How would you describe your latest movie Chandra?

It is a royal love story, a bilingual in Tamil and Kannada with huge star cast which includes Shriya Saran, Prem, Vivekh, Vijay Kumar, Ganesh Venkataram, Sukhanya, Dr. Srinath and Sumitra. It is about a princess

who lives in the modern world. The theme of the movie is both ethnic and modern and the music is a juxtaposition of tradition and local tapori tunes. I have taken meticulous care of art direction, costume designing colouring, supervising the dance movements and even mastered

the martial art form of Kalaripayattu. I am really happy that the Kannada version released in June last year was a commercial success and won over film critics as well. The Tamil version has been appreciated too. ■



Model Featured: Nivedhitha Gujuva

Photographs rule the planet these days, no doubt. Isn't that why you are always conscious and worried about how good you look in one? Pictures are there to stay forever, it is important you look just perfect in them. Well, perfect means being you. Many factors come into play when you have to look good, and all of that spirals down to how well you pose. By Vidhya Anand

“A picture is worth a thousand words” Being photogenic does not come easily to everyone. It is true that all you need to do is to believe you are a pretty, smart and confident woman and posing will become a natural trait, but these tips will help enhance your ‘photographic appeal’.

Attend to Yourself

Before getting into the details of how to pose, you have to groom yourself a little. It need not be an expensive makeover, but keep your skin fresh, clear and glowing. Cameras these days are powerful enough to capture even the smallest of details. So make sure

you smooth your skin out. A simple daily beauty care regime will definitely do the trick.

Stay Comfortable in Your Own Skin

Keeping up a masquerade is necessary sometimes, but not while you are posing. Remember who you are



and portray just that in front of the camera. There is absolutely no need to be pretentious and be someone else. Breathe easy, let the air out and take control. Being comfortable in your skin is all that matters. A fake picture exposes itself at the very first glance. Try to forget that you are being clicked and be natural.

Be Confident

Being yourself and staying confident go hand in hand. Believe that you are a beautiful and fun woman; boost your self-respect and self-esteem, at least while you pose. This will in turn reflect on your aura when you look at your photographs. You will start believing you look better than you thought.

Emote Freely

Let your emotions show; do not hide



them in the process of being poised. Open up and smile as you usually would. If you are happy smile freely! Do not compress a grin and purse your lips while you want to laugh out. This can be quite awkward in a picture. Every part of your face changes when you smile and laugh. So do not put up a fake grin or a smile, you will not get away with it.

Accentuate Your Curves

Wear nice clothes, those that fit you just right, neither too tight nor too loose. Remember some colours will appear mind-blowing when you look at them. But when captured through a camera, it may not be as good.

Being yourself and staying confident go hand in hand. Believe that you are a beautiful and fun woman; boost your self-respect and self-esteem, at least while you pose. This will in turn reflect on your aura when you look at your photographs. You will start believing you look better than you thought

So choose the right shades, those that will also go well with your skin.

Understand Your Face and Body

Angle your face right while you pose.

Let the camera not be right in front of you, a profile or a 3/4th view of your face can add more angularity and depth. Looking straight into the camera can be too boring. Although your face will be the centre of attention in most photographs, your body matters just as much. Do not have a preconceived pose in your mind, just go with the flow and strike a pose that your body is comfortable with.

The Sexy Look

In case you want to look sexy and sensual try these few tips that models

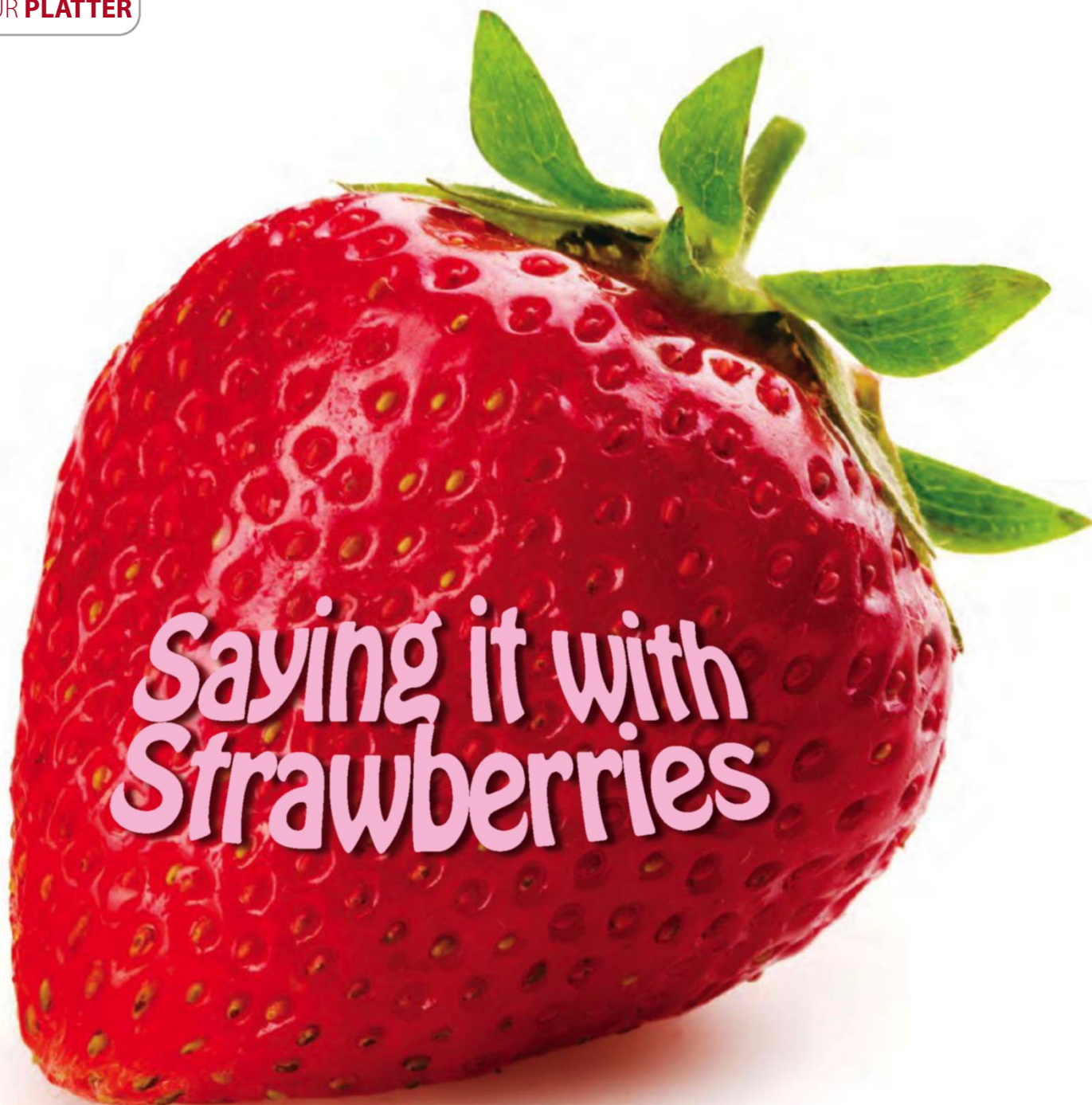


and celebrities always stick to:

- Part your lips, not too much; just a little will

be sensuous. Never overdo it. Also, do not repeat it in all of your photographs; that will make you seem like a wannabe.

- Strike a curvaceous pose; do not be too stiff and statue-like. Bend yourself, wherever possible, without appearing awkward!
- Live the moment, let your face and body do the talking, not your mind. Be natural.
- Smoky eyes and some red-hot lipstick will just add the right dash as well.



Saying it with Strawberries

In this season of amour, express your feelings for your man with strawberries, which symbolize intense love and passion. Hyderabad based expert baker *Barkha Agarwal* tells you how to strike the right chord with her strawberry recipes and cocktails. Her tempting Valentine fare is Indian at heart, but is dusted with international flair



Frozen Strawberry Soufflé

Ingredients

Tropolite (Whipped Cream Topping) 250 ml

Strawberry Crush 100 ml

Fresh Strawberry Slices for garnish

Method

1. Whip Tropolite until light and fluffy with electric beater. Keep aside $\frac{1}{4}$ cup.
2. Gently stir strawberry crush through remaining cream.
3. Cut 4 strips of baking paper and secure around 4 ramekin dishes with tape so that the paper extends 2 inches above the rim.
4. Spoon mixture into dishes and smooth the tops. Place in freezer for at least 2 hours.
5. Remove just before serving and gently remove paper. Decorate with a spoonful of plain cream and sliced fresh strawberries. Serve.

Spiked Strawberry Jelly

Ingredients

Strawberry Jelly Crystals 1 packet

Vodka 60 ml

Fresh Strawberries, Sliced 4-5

Whipped Cream for garnish

Method

1. Dissolve jelly crystals as per packet instructions in 60 ml less water than directed.
2. Very lightly grease jelly mould with small amount of vegetable oil.
3. Once mixture is lukewarm, stir in the vodka. Pour into mould.
4. After 5 minutes place slices of strawberry in jelly and gently press into centre. Let jelly set completely.
5. To serve, invert mould onto serving plate and shake gently to release from mould. Serve decorated with some whipped cream and slices of strawberries.





Giant Cream Puff with Strawberries

Ingredients

For Cream Puff

Water 1 cup
Unsalted Butter $\frac{1}{2}$ cup
Plain Flour (Maida) 1 cup
Salt $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp
Eggs 3

For Filling

Whipping Cream 1 cup
Icing Sugar $\frac{1}{4}$ cup + for garnish
Fresh Strawberries, Sliced 2 punnets

Method

1. For the filling, chill cream in medium bowl. Whip until soft peaks form with whisk. Gently stir through sifted icing sugar.

2. For the puffs, sift together flour and salt.
3. Boil water and butter together in medium pan. Once boiled, remove from heat.
4. Add flour all at once stirring rapidly with wooden spoon. Let cool slightly.
5. Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Electric hand mixer may be used. The mixture will come away from the sides of the pan.
6. Place mixture in piping bag fitted with plain nozzle. Pipe 8 large rounds on tray lined with baking paper, spacing them to give them room to rise and spread. Alternatively, use a large spoon.
7. Bake the puffs for 25-30 minutes at 200°C until golden brown. Let cool for few minutes with oven door open. Cool completely on wire rack.
8. Split in half gently, spoon filling on bottom half, place sliced strawberries on top of cream and place top half of puff on strawberries.
9. Dust with icing sugar and serve.

Strawberrylicious Cocktail

Ingredients

Strawberry Crush 15ml

Vodka 15ml

Soda 60ml

Finely Chopped

Strawberries 2 tbsp

Whipped Cream

Method

1. Spoon the crush into a small cocktail glass.

2. Very slowly pour in the vodka and soda

while holding the glass on an angle so as not to mix the crush and liquid.

3. Gently spoon in the chopped strawberries.

4. Pipe a small rosette of whipped cream.

5. Garnish with a slice of strawberry. Serve.





Strawberry Stack

Ingredients

Ready Frozen Samosa/Spring Roll sheets
Whipping Cream 200ml
Icing Sugar $\frac{1}{4}$ cup + for dusting
Fresh Strawberries, Sliced 1 cup

Method

1. Cut samosa sheet into 8cm x 8cm squares.
2. Deep fry in hot oil until light brown. Drain on absorbent paper.
3. Whip cream until light and fluffy. Gently stir through icing sugar.
4. Fill in icing bag fitted with star nozzle. Place one square on serving plate. Pipe cream. Place strawberries on cream.
5. Repeat twice, ending with strawberries. Dust with icing sugar and serve.
(Optional: Drizzle with chocolate syrup)

Strawberry Valentine Cocktail

Ingredients

Strawberries (fresh or frozen) 2
Crushed Basil Leaves 2
Grated Ginger Juice 1 tsp
Wild Strawberry Vodka 15 ml
Splash of Lime Juice
Splash of Sprite or Soda
Splash of Simple Syrup (mix equal parts of water and sugar)

Method

1. Muddle ginger juice, lime juice and crushed basil in a shaker.
2. Add ice, strawberry vodka, Sprite and simple syrup.
3. Shake well and strain into a cocktail glass.
4. Garnish with a strawberry rings.





Break-Up Boost!

Get out of your shell and keep in mind, this too shall pass

Couples holding hands over a mug of coffee, pecking each other or exchanging smiles is not a sight you would escape, this time of the year. Well, you may not be one of them. Perhaps you chose to be single or you have just broken up and things are not as pink as they used to be. Before you get the love blues, it may hearten you to know that coping with break-ups and being single can be as easy as a cakewalk.

Know Yourself!

Look back and it may surprise you to know how it has always been about people around you, while your likes and dislikes got buried somewhere deep. Right now, it just might dawn upon you that you are missing yourself. This is not self-obsession, but about giving yourself that little extra attention you need! Sit back and trace how your taste in music has changed. Alternatively, make a list of those little things you have wanted to do or buy. It will be overwhelming to find out how much you have stacked up in the past and not taken care of. Once you are done listing, get ready and start materialising them. You might end up buying a pet, landscaping your garden better, or even better, re-vamping your wardrobe!

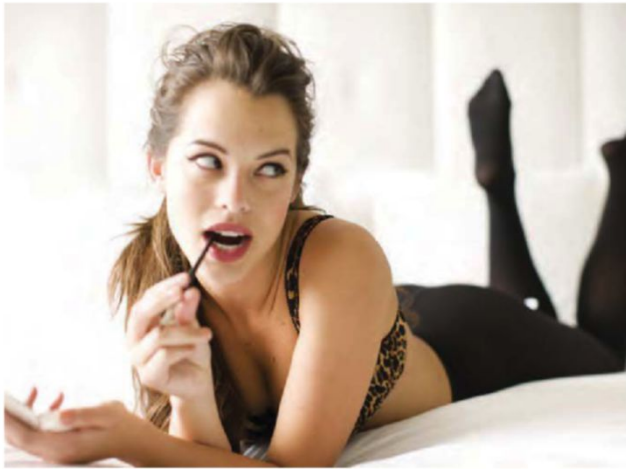
The feeling that will seep in once you finish will be worth the effort.

Art Is Not for Art's Sake

Going with the flow that life blesses you with is wonderful. However, remember, it is crucial that you stop and get things in perspective. If you do not, especially after a break-up, you might be heading somewhere hazy and unsure without realising you are. So, light up that girl power and get active! Embrace your favourite kind of art, be it painting, reading or music. You will eventually discover new areas you thought you might never be interested in, for there is so much to explore. Do not get addicted either; it has to rejuvenate your senses not bind them.

Girlfriend Magic

As Gwyneth Paltrow wisely said, "The best way to mend a broken heart is time and girlfriends." If there is one thing that can make you feel alive as ever, it is some girl time. Give yourself enough! Girlfriends will make you feel happy and loved, like no man can. Remember to be a people's person. Although you cannot force yourself into being so, at least make sure you do not go into a loner phase. Alone time is good, no doubt; however, not round the clock.



10 MAKEUP BOO BOOS TO AVOID

by Lubna Parveen

You spend a good couple of hours getting ready for a romantic night out and turn to the mirror for a last minute preening. But horror of horrors! Who is that pancaked, heavy lidded, droopy lipped girl staring back at you and making a mockery of your efforts? This Valentine's, we give you a quick checklist of common makeup slip-ups to avoid and share some expert advice on how to look picture perfect for that heavy date.

Makeup is an art which boosts your

creativity to come alive every day. It involves tweaking and blending the right colours, knowledge of right beauty products and tools. Practice is what makes you perfect but no matter how perfect you are at it, sometimes even you may need a nudge in the right direction.

Blunder #1: Mismatched Foundation

Wearing a wrong shade may make your face look very unnatural. Knowledge of different shades of foundation is important. Indian skin has a yellow tinge in it, so while picking the foundation, it is important to pick

according to your skin tone. Trying to look fairer with mismatched foundation can lead to disastrous results. So make sure you match it exactly with your skin tone. Pick a light water based soufflé or foundation that is perfect for your skin type and apply it after moisturising with a makeup sponge for that flawless look.

Blunder 2: Mascara laden Eyelashes

At times in an attempt to make defined lashes, you tend to overdo the mascara resulting in clogged distractions. Avoid the faux pas by applying your mascara the correct way. The best way to do this is to remove the excess from the stick gently





with a tissue and then stroke your lashes with it. Now comb your lashes with a lash curling brush from root to tip. If you have thin eyelashes, steer clear of thickening products, as they will only weigh down your lashes.

Blunder 3: Obvious Lip Liner

Most of us tend to highlight and outline our lips making them appear too obvious. If you are guilty of committing this error, put the remedy into effect pronto. Choose a lip liner that matches your lipstick or which is as closely shaded as your natural lip colour. When applying the lip liner, apply strokes gently inwards and concentrate on filling in the colour and shading and shaping your lips, not just tracing around them. A lip liner should be perfectly smudged or blended with the lipstick and then a proper shape should be given to the lips. Proper contouring will help you sport the perfect pout.

Blunder 4: Streaky Blush

At times your cheeks tend to look a little too scarlet. To avoid the blushing babe look, use a good base with a well moisturised and light foundation. Now apply a good quality



At times your cheeks tend to look a little too scarlet. To avoid the blushing babe look, use a good base with a well moisturised and light foundation. Now apply a good quality blush to gently work the colour onto your cheeks

blush to gently work the colour onto your cheeks. Opt for sheer blushes to give you best results. Use circular motions to blend it well. A proper angle for blush application is very important. Visually it gives the effect of high cheekbones. Make sure you blend it and then smudge it perfectly with those circular brush movements.

Blunder 5: Overdose of Eye Shadow

If you are a little generous with your eye shadow application, the eyelid colour turns out to be darker than expected or even weird. To avoid this, use a dab of moisturiser to dilute the colour. Then apply a neutral eye shadow on it. The eye shadow should



be in minimum quantity to avoid the dramatic look. It is always advisable to blend the eye shadow within the D-area of the eye. Use a light eye shadow for a fresh look. For nude makeup, you can highlight your brow bone areas and apply a hint of colour on your eyelids.

Blunder 6: Messy Lip Gloss

To visually enhance your lips, make them shimmer rather than outlining them outside their natural edge. Use a colourless lip pencil or maybe a rose shade to work upon. Now apply the lipstick within the lip liner. Use



7



9



8

a lip colour with matte finish on bold lips and a glossy finish on thin lips.

Blunder 7: Smudged Eyeliner

Lining your eyes can give them a great shape and add definition but it is always best to avoid heavy bottom liner as bold under-eyes can tend to make them look smaller. Make sure you keep the eyeliner thin and natural. This will beautify your eyes in the right places. If the eyeliner does get smudged accidentally, then blend it with a smudge brush.

Blunder 8: Over-plucked Brows

Eyebrows enhance your face. They need a shape and definition. But over-plucked brows can make your face look out of shape and draw attention to it (and not in a good way). It is very important to properly shape eyebrows as they help give the face a sharp and edgy look. Drooping eyebrows tend to make you look clumsy. Head for a professional beauty parlour and have them threaded according to the contours of your face. The experts there will help you understand the shape that suits you best. Only remove the excess, to maintain the brow shape.

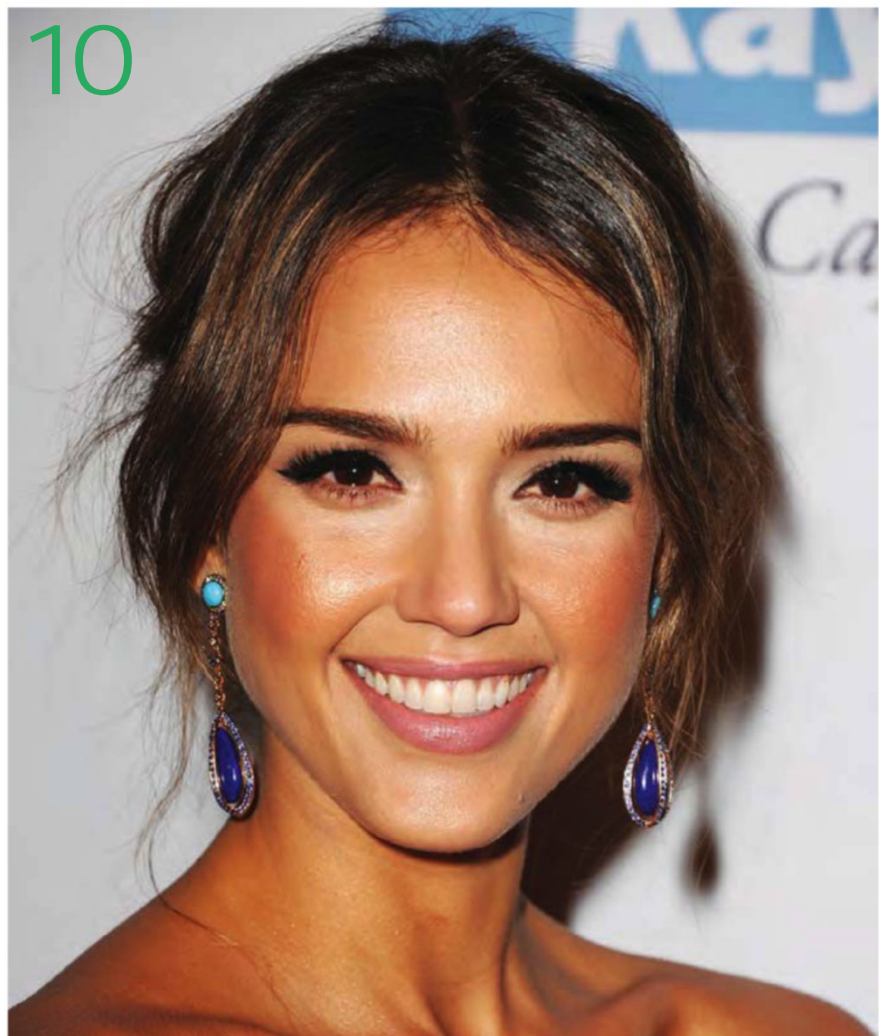
Blunder 9: Flaky Lipstick

Applying lipstick seems easy enough,

just open, roll, smear, but painting the lips perfectly is an art in which many of us stumble and end up getting an uneven coat which looks very tacky. To avoid that flaky lipstick look, just dab your favourite flavour of lip balm before you apply the lipstick. To keep your lips moist and soft, you should use a lip balm every night before going to bed.

Concealers are applied before putting a foundation. Grab a good brand to get the desired effect as they help hide the skin blemishes and marks. When applying a concealer, look into the mirror and blend it evenly with a brush or sponge over the problem areas. This will help you remove the extra and spreading it uniformly will help you prevent the obviousness of the concealer.

Blunder 10: Obvious Concealer



10



Eyes Concealer by **Clinique** ₹ 1000



Concealer Kit by **Bobbi Brown** ₹ 3911

Eternal Sunshine of a *Spotless Face*

Concealer: What would we busy girls do without this clever little invention? From brightening up a weary visage and wondrously covering dark circles to hiding sunspots and sundry blemishes, this makeup magician is every woman's can't-do-without-you pal



Radiant Touch Concealer by **Chambor** ₹ 695



Double Wear Flawless Wear Concealer by **Estee Lauder** ₹ 1500



Ceramide Smoothing Concealer by **Elizabeth Arden** ₹ 1220



Instant Concealer by **Clarins** ₹ 1500



Perfect Concealer by **Inglot** ₹ 500



Pencil Corrector by **Shiseido** ₹ 700



White Intense Concealer by **Lakme** ₹ 450



Studio Finish SPF 35 Concealer by **MAC** ₹ 1500



pressure was normal and I was otherwise healthy. What is wrong with me?

A. You seem to be afraid and nervous about going to work. Do you have a problem with your boss or a co-worker? You may also be feeling overwhelmed by having to manage your office work along with your duties at home. You seem to be suffering from stress. You are not alone in what you are feeling. Stress related complaints lead to 75 percent of physician visits all over the world! Stress may manifest in different ways in each person. You may feel nervous, agitated or anxious. You may feel overwhelmed. Stress works in insidious

Generally, these hormones work with us and enable us to overcome obstacles, to face our fears and to achieve our goals.

When does stress become bad?

There are trigger points for stress. When these trigger points are activated repeatedly, even without the original stimulus, we develop a classic Pavlovian reflex, where all the stress related symptoms manifest themselves **predictably**. Adrenaline and cortisol can **cause symptoms** like palpitations, **stomach pain, sweating** and a **dry mouth**. **When repeatedly released into the system, these hormones can result in hypertension, ulcers, heart**

stress anger



Ask Dr. Gita Arjun

Being healthy does not only mean being physically healthy. Mental health and emotional health play a very strong role in our sense of wellbeing. Women, in the 21st century, seem to be facing more and more stress in their daily lives. Many situations give rise to anger and frustration. All these negative emotions may lead to a feeling of exhaustion, malaise and a general sense of being unwell. Learning to deal with stress is a very important life skill.

Q. I wake up almost every morning with a mild headache. I have not slept well in the past few days. The prospect of going to office fills me with trepidation. I have palpitations that threaten to burst my heart. I had a full check up done with my doctor and she said that my blood

or overt ways. It can affect us physically, emotionally and mentally. The dangers of unmanaged stress are significant. Stress can bring on symptoms that mimic a heart attack, depression or anxiety. The palpitations that you are experiencing are a classic symptom of stress. If you don't deal with your stress, it may lead to serious illnesses and health problems, including high blood pressure and ulcers.

Why do we get stressed?

Stress is not always bad. When the body perceives physical danger or feels mental pressure, it reacts by producing certain hormones like adrenaline and cortisol. These result in the 'fight or flee phenomenon' which energises the body to either stay and fight or flee speedily.

Stress works in insidious or overt ways. It can affect us physically, emotionally and mentally. The dangers of unmanaged stress are significant. Stress can bring on symptoms that mimic a heart attack, depression or anxiety

disease and anxiety.

Trigger points for stress

Most women share common trigger points for stress. You probably are dealing with one or more of the following stress generators:

Work: Decrease your anxiety at work; success is a two edged sword. To reduce success related stress, learn to be less harsh on yourself. You don't always have to be better than the rest. Give yourself mini-breaks and try stress-relieving exercises. Think about finding a new job where the stress level is not so high. If you have a problem with the boss or a co-worker, bring it out in the open in a non-confrontational way. Maybe another close friend or co-worker can help in resolving the issue.

Children: All parents have a certain amount of stress because of their children at one time or the other. It is important to maintain a healthy relationship with your child and at the same time give her your full support. The biggest hurdle many parents face is learning to let go. Let your children know that you trust them to make the right decisions. Remember, all you can really do is point them in the right direction. Trust the abilities of your children. As kids grow, hand over some of your chores. By doing so, you will ease your load and, at the same time, teach them responsibility. Keep in mind that children learn by example. Don't have different rules for yourself and your children. Encourage cooperation and self-reliance.



Managing the family budget: Ask any couple what they argue about the most and invariably the answer will be money! A major component of family stress is the family budget. Have an annual and monthly budget and try to stick to it. Involve your older children in economic decisions so that they realise that every whim of theirs may not be fulfilled. Work with your husband to manage the family finances. Take decisions about how to allocate the money and stick to it.

Older and infirm family members: Do you have an older family member staying with you? Taking care of them when they become infirm or indisposed can overburden an already tight schedule. Learn to work out a plan to manage time better. Don't hesitate to ask for help – another relative or even a neighbour may be able to spare a few hours so you get some respite.

Stress busters

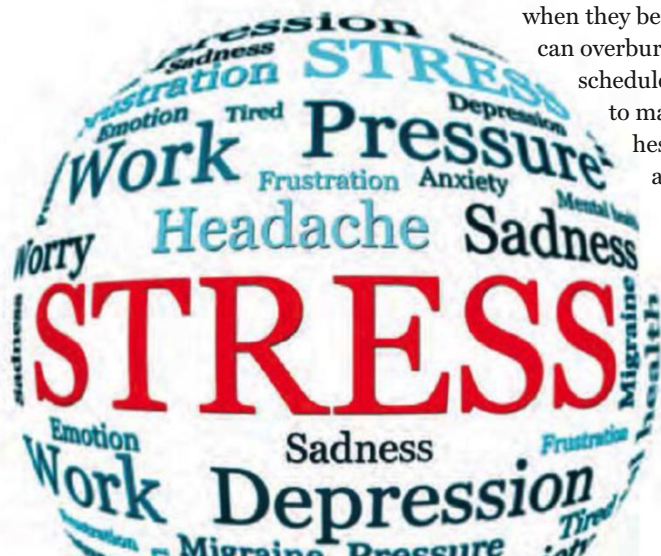
First and foremost, if you want to stay healthy, you have to learn how to

manage stress. The best way is to identify the trigger and analyse it. Then move forward, confront the problem and work out a solution. Take a break from the situation. And most importantly, be forgiving of yourself. Most people get stressed because they blame themselves for something that has gone wrong; the misplaced guilt then gnaws at you and this leads to even more stress. You have to break this relentless cycle.

Specific stress busters include:

- Listening to music
- Meditation/ pranayama
- Setting aside time for yourself
- Exercising regularly
- Going out and having a good time: you deserve it
- Unburdening yourself to someone close to you. Just talking about the stress-trigger to a sympathetic person will lift some of the pain off you
- Sharing laughter with family or friends ■

Mail in your queries to doc@jfw.in (Dr. Gita Arjun is an obstetrician and gynaecologist practicing in Chennai. She is the author of 'Passport to a Healthy Pregnancy'. Visit her at www.passport2health.in.)





7

Steps to being Finance Savvy

You don't have to be a corporate high flier to have financial savoir faire. Homemakers too handle complex calculations and make split second economic decisions on a daily basis. Why then should they not be a part of the bigger picture, asks *Smita Shenoy*

Thirty-something Nidhi Rao is a super wife and a super mom, by her own admission. From driving her children to school and back, tackling the household chores and stocking up on the grocery to maintaining a ledger of her daily expenses and tallying it every fortnight she does it all. But quiz her about the family's insurance cover or the capital

investment plan for the coming year and the Bangalore based mom of two says dismissively, "My husband keeps track of all those things."

Start Now

Studies point out that more and more women are swerving towards financial freedom. So, if you are a core member of every family meeting involving

household budgeting and investment planning, you belong to the growing breed of Gen Y money savvy women. But if, like Nidhi, you have no clue as to how the income-expenditure-savings troika balances itself at home, then update your knowledge starting now. It is always necessary and never too late to be finance literate.

Towards Financial Freedom

Sitting down with a hefty money manual and trying to make sense of heavy financial jargon may be taking things to the extreme but you can always make an effort to learn the bare essentials, details which will help you be ready to tackle iffy situations and emergencies. Our guidelines aim to help you make a positive start.

1 Budget Basics: At the beginning of every financial year, sit down with your spouse and plan your annual budget incorporating monthly expenses under various heads: rent, education, electricity, travel, unforeseen eventualities. Joint planning helps ward off blame games later on if things go wrong but it helps in raising a toast to the combined effort if everything falls in place. Budget according to your needs and not according to your wants. Separate the must haves from those that are nice to have. This will aid you to decide which expenses you can do away with during layoffs, if any. The budget should also record the investments so you know what is being saved and how.

2 Investment Friendly: After you have learnt where the money is being invested make a note of your investments and their performance in their market. There are options on various financial websites which allow you to create a joint portfolio containing all your investments under various heads like gold, debts, property. 'Book' a learning session with your hubby and let him guide you through the site. Explore the various options available to increase your financial awareness. Even if you find this intimidating initially, don't worry. The software will do evaluations as the market changes to help you keep track of things. All you need is a portfolio name and password to monitor where your money goes.

3 Banking on it: If you maintain the petty household cashbook, you are on the right track. Just expand your horizon to include bank accounts as well. The age of 'all money in one bank'

is long gone. It is the era of multiple accounts. Again sit with your hubby and check the balance of each online and keep your personal bank book reconciled. Refer to it frequently to ensure your cheques don't bounce.

4 Insured for Life: Your husband may have scanned the Net, consulted the agents and drawn up policies but just being aware that some random policy is kept locked somewhere in the cupboard will not do. You need to sit down with him and educate yourself on all the details: the nature of the policy (life / term / medical / life / fire /

There are options on various financial websites which allow you to create a portfolio containing all your investments under various heads like gold, debts, property. The software will do evaluations as the market changes to help you keep track. All you need is a portfolio name and password



property), names of the insured and the nominees, value of the policies, location of the original documents and contact details of the financial advisor.

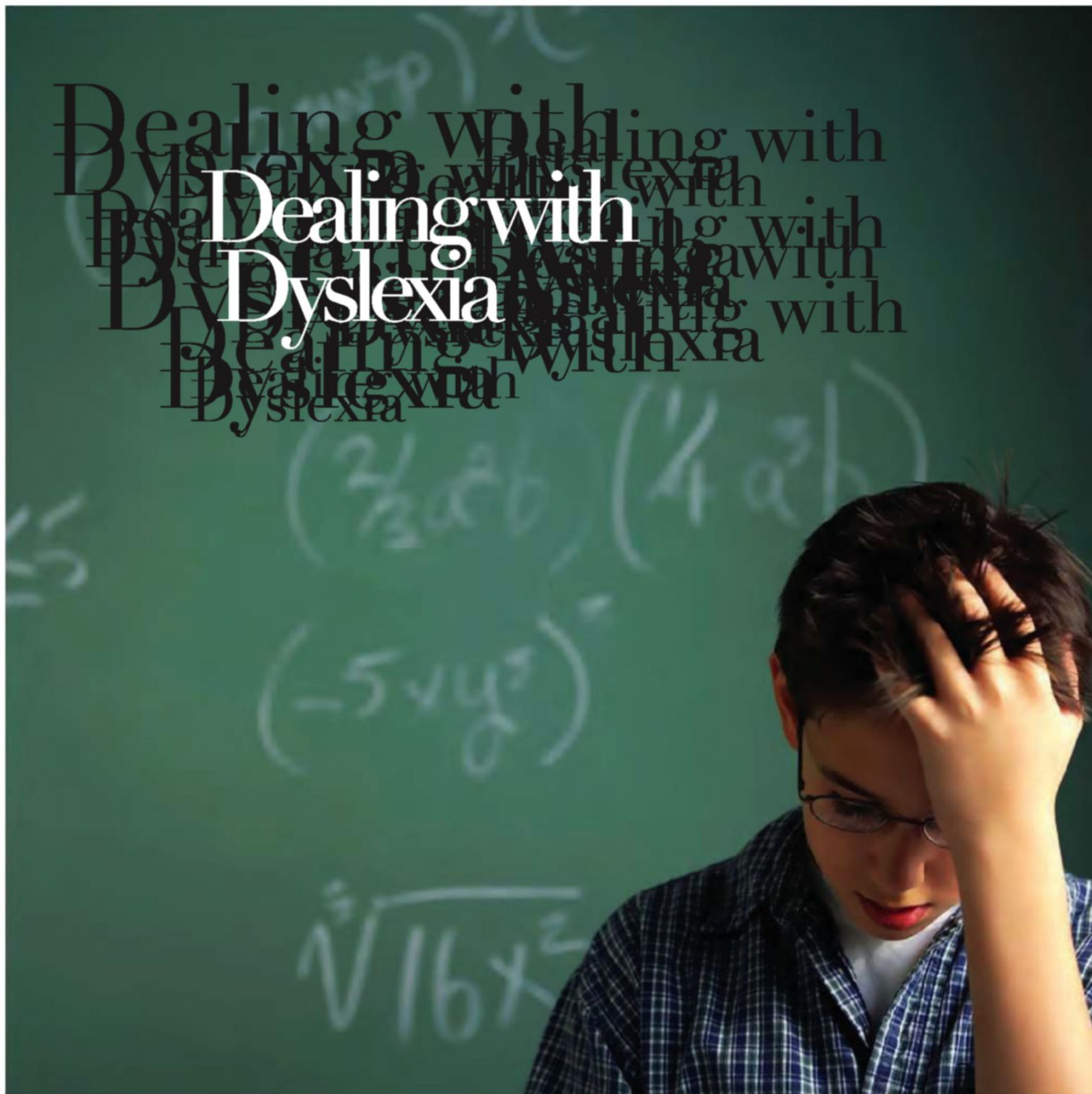
5 Other Commitments: Yet another joint must-do is chalking up a payables schedule with your spouse. Loan repayment schedules for houses, cars (EMI amounts and dates), credit card payment trackers etc.

have to be made and maintained on a regular basis to avoid defaulting as that can affect your credit score. A ready reckoner helps you ensure timely payments even when your husband is not in town.

6 Tracking Personal Loans: Remember the small amount borrowed by your maid for her daughter's marriage last year, the money she was supposed to repay in three months but forgot about? Or, how about the time when your gardener took a 'teeny' advance for a pilgrimage and then developed a convenient memory? It is not just corporate concerns that need a debtors' list. Even at a personal level, having an idea of all the recoverables (money lent by you) is very essential so that you are not cheated out of money that is rightfully yours, no matter how trivial it may seem. After all, every drop counts in the financial ocean. Maintain a simple repayment schedule to keep track of the instalments due to you and explain it to them as well. The best way to recover the money is to deduct a portion from their monthly salaries till the advance is recovered.

7 Safety Net: Finally, in these days of uncertain careers, redundancy is just a stone's throw away. Slowly and steadily help your hubby build up a safety corpus for 12 months and keep the money in liquid assets such as fixed deposits which can be broken easily in case of contingencies. Ensure to include children's school tuition fees and van expenses (if any) on a priority basis to eliminate even the remotest chance of their studies getting hampered.

Rome wasn't won in a day. And finance is a much vaster empire than the historic kingdom. Attempting to learn every nuance and aspect of money in a day will just leave you drained and none the wiser. Resolve to begin today and tackle it in doable chunks. By the next financial year, you may well be advising your man on filing tax returns and looking into that lucrative property deal. ■



More than scrambled letters and sometimes numbers, children with dyslexia struggle to deal with social stigma, parental pressure and loneliness. The need of the hour is to lift the veil of difficulties and discover the intelligent minds behind. With proper guidance and care, nothing can limit the young ones' progress, not even the sky.

By Smita Shenoy and Vidhya Anand

Even after having established himself as a top caterer in Bangalore, Raju* still had to endure taunts of his being “vernacular” and the gibes hurt more than he cared to admit. He had vowed that his kids would not go through

that if he could help it. So he and his wife Asha spent almost all of their savings to get their son enrolled in an elite English medium school. After all, Abhay* was a first generation English learner in a family of cooks

and nothing but the best would do for him.

Initially, Abhay lived up to their expectations. He was a genius at numbers and he could recognise

shapes and was great at drawing and singing. But it all started going downhill when the English alphabet was introduced. His classmates forged ahead in reading and writing sentences in English while he still struggled with cat, mat and bat. His parents were baffled. At the insistence of Abhay's teacher, they took him for a series of tests which ultimately confirmed that Abhay had dyslexia.

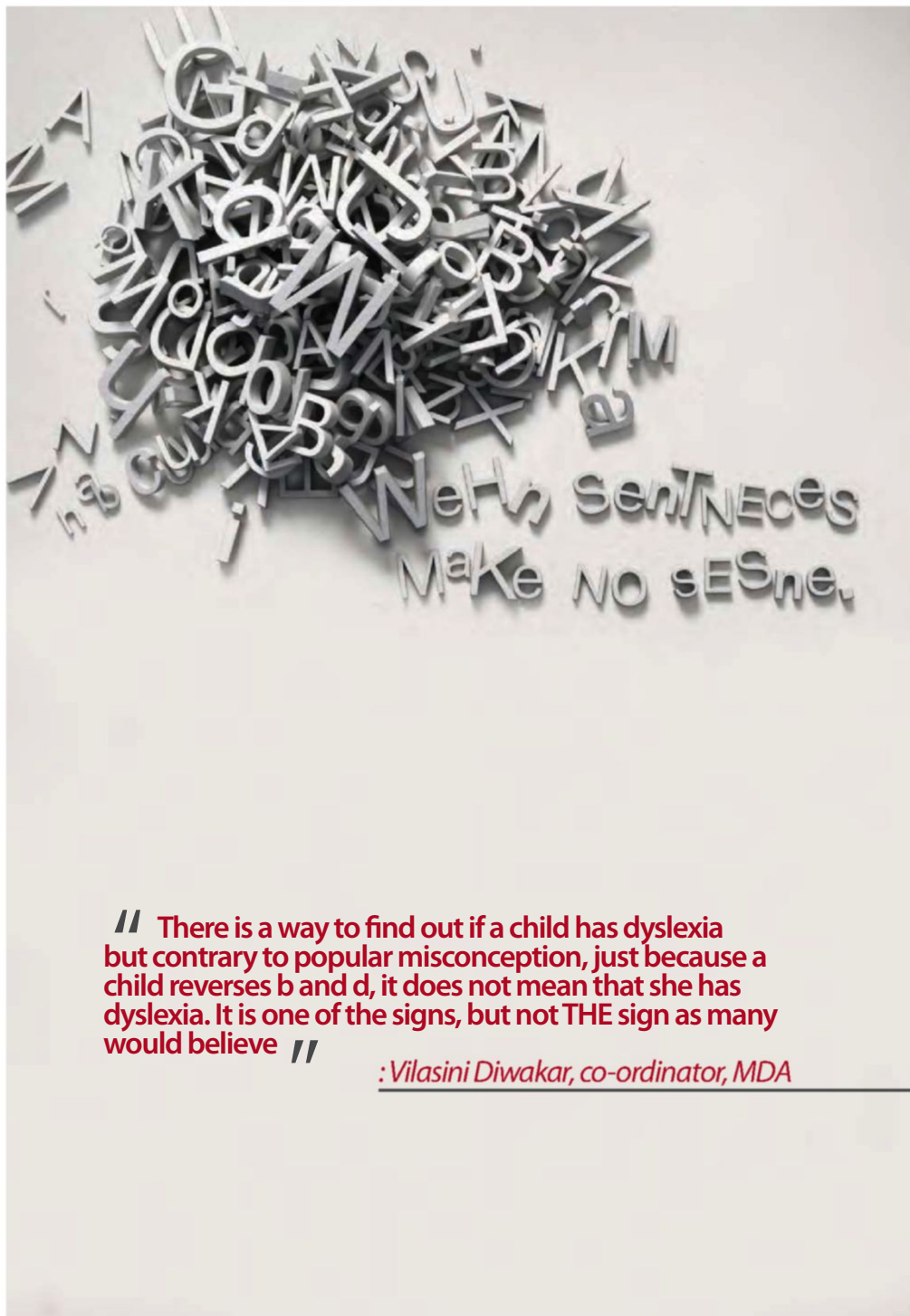
Defining Dyslexia

According to the International Dyslexia Association, dyslexia is a learning disability that is neurological in origin (brain scans can detect it), characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition, and by poor spelling and decoding abilities.

“Let me make it clear at the very beginning that dyslexia is not a disease,” says Vilasini Diwakar, co-ordinator, Madras Dyslexia Association (MDA), Chennai. “It is a learning disorder, yes, and once diagnosed the child probably needs to learn and use coping mechanisms lifelong. However, no one has the right to treat dyslexic children as castaways. They should have as much access to the finer things in life as others and given the ideal opportunity they can outshine anyone.”

Not Just About b and d

Early diagnosis is the key and empowering the child with the right tools to deal with dyslexia is vital. Vilasini elaborates, “There is a way to find out if a child has dyslexia but contrary to popular misconception, just because a child reverses b and d, it does not mean that she has dyslexia. It is one of the signs, but not THE sign as many would believe. If there are other issues like she doesn't know the sounds, she is not able to synthesise the sounds into a word, she is not able to identify the b and d in writing and in sound and that she has issues identifying other letters then she may warrant a closer inspection.”



// There is a way to find out if a child has dyslexia but contrary to popular misconception, just because a child reverses b and d, it does not mean that she has dyslexia. It is one of the signs, but not THE sign as many would believe //

: Vilasini Diwakar, co-ordinator, MDA

With a boom in resources, many like Asha and Raju, who have themselves studied in the vernacular medium, are able to send their child to a top school where English is the medium of instruction. They begin to believe that this is enough to ensure that their child automatically transforms into a whiz. And sometimes this parental expectation-result mismatch leads

to a child being labelled dyslexic. “If ambitious parents of an average kid want to put her in an international school with excruciating standards, the child may not be able to cope; and then she gets tagged dumb, stupid and what not. But parents need to realise that is not dyslexia. That is just difficulties with English as Second/Foreign Language.”



Sensitivity and affection are the two foundation stones on which the success story of dyslexic children is written and support has to come from all quarters. If the onus rests on the parents at home, at school it is the teachers who have to steer the young ones towards empowerment

Pressure Points

Even when a child is diagnosed as dyslexic, it is not the end of the road if timely intervention is given. Unfortunately, in most schools the teacher is also under pressure to complete the syllabus. The little one often gets neglected in a group of 40 children and starts lagging behind. So post school hours, she is bundled off to tuition classes where again she is force fed information without any explanation. Then there are the class bullies who ridicule the child, classmates can be brutal in their taunts too. Parents of other children encourage them to be friends with the topper and ignore a child who cannot cope. At home the parents taunt the child for not trying hard enough. She gets hit from all sides for no fault of hers. Ultimately, it leads to a lot of frustration for the child who says the dreaded words, "I hate studies".

Parental Reactions

A dyslexic child can progress on the corrective path much faster if she gets unconditional love at home but case studies reveal that unfortunately, this does not happen in most cases. Vilasini corroborates this. "I have come across such a mixed bag of parental reactions. Some go into denial mode and declare that 3 months of tuition is all that their kid needs to become 'normal'. Some break down completely, yet others go into depression.

Some reactions are so severe that we end up counselling and guiding the parents more than we guide the child. But not all parents are so extreme or negative. There is another set of moms and dads who acknowledge there is something wrong with their child but nothing that cannot be put right with a little love and guidance. Such parents have taken the initiative and have come to MDA on their own and achieved success in their endeavours."

Teaching Tenderly

Sensitivity and affection are the two foundation stones on which the success story of dyslexic children is written and support has to come from all quarters. If the onus rests on the parents at home, at school it is the teachers who have to steer the young ones towards empowerment.

"Dyslexic children are very inconsistent. On some days they are active, on other days they look at you as if they are seeing you for the first time. The teacher has to be flexible, sensitive and alert. At MDA's learning centre Ananya, trained teachers not only know what to teach but how to teach. The teachers never make fun of or crack jokes at the child's expense; they give them time, they personalise the learning material as per each child's ability level and give them a long rope to catch up. We also have resources for

training teachers at various schools. Even mainstream teachers have to be sensitive to this issue, only then can more tales of triumph be written," says Vilasini.

Mingling with Mainstream

Experts are of the unanimous view that all dyslexic children cannot be shoved under the same umbrella. "There are different types of dyslexia: developmental dyslexia, dyslexia which runs in the family, acquired dyslexia. The disorder can be mild or profound; it can exist on its own or in conjunction with other disorders," says Vilasini.

Elaborating on the methodology she says upfront, "It is imperative to remember that dyslexia is not an intelligence issue. Most dyslexic children don't have problems with maths; very few struggle with numbers per se. It is alphabet that stumps them. They are not able to reproduce the exact image; they produce a mirror image. In a class of 40, by the time a dyslexic child has recollected the formation, associated it with the sound and made the connection, the teacher has rubbed the word off the board. Then begins the vicious cycle of hatred towards studies and lagging behind. What the school authorities need to remember is that sometimes the child can be remedied in the school itself with proper care. Don't neglect

and isolate the child. Give her support in the school, give her resources and see the positive results. These children need a special teaching method. Many a time, tuition teachers and special educators are viewed as one and the same but that is not so. The former will teach academics while the latter will 'customise' a learning programme as per the child's needs. For children who are not able to cope at all, we advise the parents to pull them out of school on a temporary basis and give them extensive remediation.

"At Ananya, we impart multi sensory training where the teacher not only teaches, she learns with the child. We start with basic training in the alphabet and then build up towards the higher level. Children who struggle to stay afloat in the mainstream schools are pulled out for a year, brought

to our learning centre and given adequate training which makes them ready to get reabsorbed into mainstream schools after a year or so," says Vilasini.

At the junior level it is easy to send the kids back to mainstream schools. But at higher levels, it is tougher as the standard is high; however, it is not impossible. "I vividly remember something that happened a decade ago. 2 children were thrown out of a reputed Chennai school when they were in the eighth standard with the comment that they were 'dumb' and could never come up in life. We took them in and gave them the needed education. Now both of them are engineers," recalls Vilasini with pride.

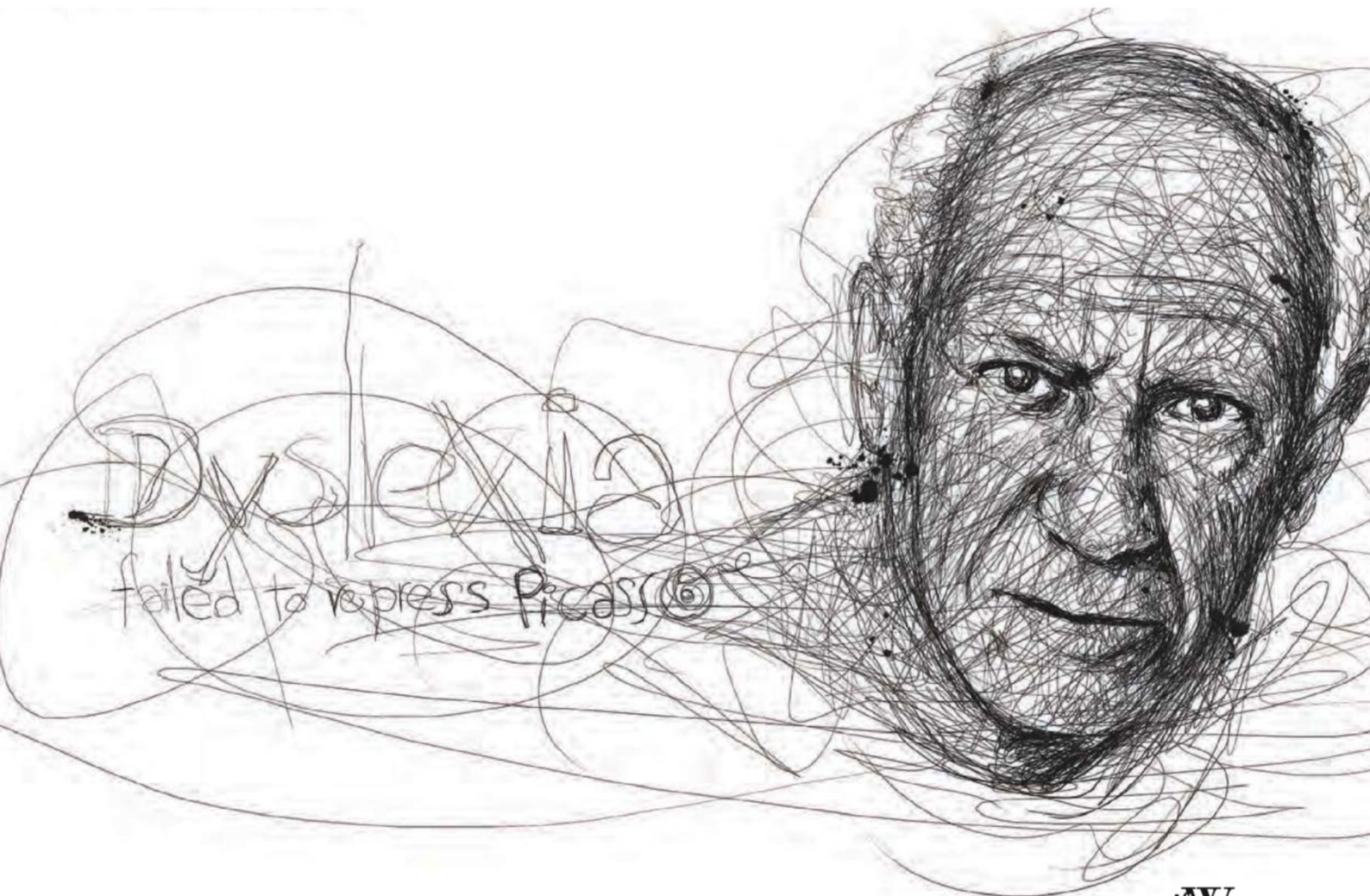
Creative Avenues

Yet another plus for dyslexic children is their creativity. While some are

a whiz with colours, others can make a mean clay model. Yet others are geniuses at sketching designs and portraits.

Academics are not the only option; there are other avenues to explore. Parents just have to let go of unrealistic expectations and steer their kids in the direction which the little ones want to take. From fashion choreography to jewellery making, from graphic designing to food designing, the spectrum is wide.

"There are so many stories where the right guidance has helped dyslexic children realise their dreams. Now they are placed not only in finance, multimedia, engineering but in diverse creative fields as well. Besides imparting academic learning, we need to build up their self confidence and let them pursue their dreams. Only then will they achieve their potential."



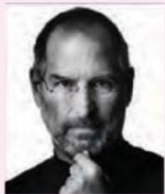
Symptoms to Look Out For

Children may have dyslexia or a learning disability if they have one or more of the following symptoms:

- Letter or word reversals when reading (such as was/saw, b/d, p/q).
- Letter or word reversals when writing.
- Difficulty repeating what is said to them.
- Poor handwriting or printing ability.
- Poor drawing ability.
- Reversing letters or words when spelling words that are presented orally.
- Difficulty comprehending written or spoken directions.
- Difficulty with right – left directionality.
- Difficulty understanding or remembering what is said to them.
- Difficulty understanding or remembering what they have just read.
- Difficulty putting their thoughts on paper.

(Source: <http://childdevelopmentinfo.com>)

Achievers with Dyslexia



STEVE JOBS: This man revolutionized technology; he left an impression in the pages of history.



ORLANDO BLOOM: Amazingly talented, and having received several awards, he is a winner.



ABHISHEK BACHCHAN: One of the most renowned actors of Bollywood, he is an achiever in his league.



KEIRA KNIGHTLEY: This Hollywood hotness got into acting after she was diagnosed with dyslexia. She struck a deal with her parents who agreed to hire an agent for her if she was able to read and write. Therefore, she did that summer, and her parents kept their word.

“Persistence and Patience Pays” A Parent Recalls

There is no sugar-coating this: my 10 year old daughter Rashmi’s* educational journey was extraordinarily tough. Right from when she was in preschool, studies were an uphill battle for her. It was perhaps worsened by the fact that she went to great lengths to hide her ‘flaws’. Outside, she would laugh and sing and dance but inside she was dying a slow death as she kept being haunted by and ashamed of one thing: she thought she was an idiot. Initially, I did not help things at all. I had this vision of a perfect child who tops her class and gets straight A’s and refused to see the obvious signs and symptoms that reared their ugly head: her inability to recognise letters, her struggle with word-sound associations, her b and d, p and q reversals. I used all tricks in the Big Bad Book for Mommies:

cajoling, shouting, threatening, bribing, to drum information into her head. I saw my child slide further downhill in front of my eyes but still I did not budge from my path. Then one day something happened: I was relaxing in the garden when Rashmi came and stood beside me and said just one sentence: “Mom, do you regret giving birth to me?” It was such a profound statement from someone so young it shook me to the core. I realised that instead of teaching her something of value, I was just pushing her away. It was time to acknowledge she had dyslexia and do something about it.

I immersed myself like a maniac into the research on dyslexia: poring over books, meeting special educators, surfing the Net, until I learnt one thing: the misunderstanding that

dyslexic children suffer from diminished intelligence damages their psyche beyond repair. My daughter may not have known how to spell blue whale but she knew it was the largest mammal. It was about devising a method which would help her make connections, understand concepts and develop her writing skills. As I said, it was not easy. There were nights of frustrations and dejections, but my daughter was ready to accept she was dyslexic and I was ready to accept it too. Now she is in the 5th standard, and has learnt to live and cope with her condition. She is doing so well at studies now it brings tears of joy to my eyes. There is no need to sugar-coat this: she is a happy child and I am a proud mom.

Abha, Coimbatore*

[* Names changed on request to protect identity]



Firefly BY DESIGN

She has followed in her illustrious mother Arundhati Menon's footsteps and opened her boutique, Samasta, in Chennai which has become the latest address for chic couture. Designing is not her only passion though. *Shibi Kumaramangalam* meets the multi-talented Mridulika Menon Madiraju

Designer Mridulika Menon Madiraju's radiance could be due to the fact that her latest collection is inspired by the glow of the firefly and also because this lovely collection at her Chennai boutique Samasta is selling out almost instantaneously! The pretty Chennai girl, who is well-known amongst city fashionistas for her stylish Indo-Western clothes, says her work is inspired by Indian textiles and by her travels abroad. "This has always been a dream of mine," smiles Mridulika. "I try and incorporate a more global sense of design in the clothes, while using hand-woven Indian fabrics and embellishments," she says of her design aesthetic in a nutshell.

The Global Citizen

The thirty-something who grew up in Chennai, travelled and lived abroad for study and work. "My sister and I went to school here (Sacred Heart, Church Park) and I completed my Bachelors degree at Stella Maris. But I lived in Washington DC for close to a decade after that and my time there influenced the way I design," she shares. At Washington, her work of convening round tables on telecommunications, media and Information Technology gave her the opportunity to meet inspiring personalities from the political and business worlds. "Our participants included Former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, New York Times owner Arthur Sulzberger Jr., YouTube founder Chad Hurley, NIIT's Vijay Thadani and Indian politicians Kapil Sibal and Shashi Tharoor."

Amongst her accomplishments Mridulika is credited with starting the US-India Round Table on Communications which included dignitaries from both countries. "Even while working in Washington, people of various cultures would appreciate and admire the Indian fabrics and clothes I used to design and wear."

Block Party

"Our move back from the US in 2008

gave me the opportunity to pursue what I loved," she says about her foray into designing. Mridulika's mother Arundhati Menon who started the acclaimed Shilpi boutiques, obviously serves as a tremendous inspiration to her. "I grew up surrounded by our beautiful Indian crafts and textiles: different colours, different textures and weaving and embroidery techniques, and I loved it all," she tells us of her formative years.

"My love for design and fabrics definitely comes from my mother. She instilled in us a deep rooted appreciation and need to revive and promote hand-woven natural fabrics. I have even done a bit of block printing as a child. We would be able to design our own clothes as children, of course with our mother's final inputs."

Chic Travels

Design and love for the loom is clearly in the Samasta owner's blood. "While I don't have any formal training, I feel I have an inherent sense of design.

I officially started Samasta in 2009, after my daughter Maahika was born," says the young mom. "But I also love to travel," she shares. "In fact, we all love to travel; we get that wanderlust from my dad." She reminisces that her father even with an IIT engineering degree set out to start his own travel company.

The peripatetic Chennaiite has travelled to the U.K (where her sister lives), to Sri Lanka, Bali and Thailand and extensively across Europe. "Amsterdam and Brussels on work, Italy, France, Vienna, Lisbon and Barcelona, Greece and to Sweden." she recites. "And to Mexico, Egypt, Costa Rica, Buenos Aires, Jamaica, Canada..." and if these weren't enough to satisfy one person's bucket list, she tells us she would love to visit "Turkey, South Africa and Kenya next."

Her inherited designing sensibilities and her globetrotting inspirations have left an imprint on her work; both these influences are evident in her versatile clothes handcrafted from fine natural

fabrics. In a palette of vibrant hues, the global citizen says, the best thing about her clothes is that they can be worn by anyone in any of the countries she has visited. "The outfits from Samasta can be worn by anyone from a college girl to a busy executive, to a world traveller. Pure hand-woven cottons for spring and summer and matka, tussar and georgette for autumn-winter. While the college girl can wear it to parties as a dress, or to college with skinny jeans, the CEO can wear it to a board meeting with a stole and tights."

In the Family

Thanks to its creative tour de force's good taste, Samasta is also becoming well known for its exhibitions. Mridulika has a keen eye for spotting good work from other clothing, jewellery and accessories designers. "But what I am most excited about is the launch of my mother's collection 'Abha.'" she tells us. "My mom has worked with craftspeople across India for over two years on a fabulous new line of handloom phulia, matka silk and tussar sarees."

After boutique hours, Mridulika makes sure she spends time with her daughter and her busy MNC executive husband who is a great support to her. "Shrikar

"My love for design and fabrics definitely comes from my mother. She instilled in us a deep rooted appreciation and need to revive and promote hand-woven natural fabrics. I have even done a bit of block printing as a child"

has been wonderful. He even directed the Samasta Firefly collection short film last month which has garnered over 10,000 views on YouTube," she smiles happily. In the future, the petite Chennaiite says she would love to have her stores across South India and an online store. But for now, she is happy showcasing her unique and beautiful global-Indian line of clothes. ■





HANDLING YOUNG LOVE

The teenage years of a child are a time of many trials for any parent. Of the many perils that accompany (and follow) the first pimple, teenage romance is the trickiest to handle. Raging hormones and torrid tempers make for very troubled waters indeed. *Malini Gopalakrishnan* fishes around for ways to put off the fire

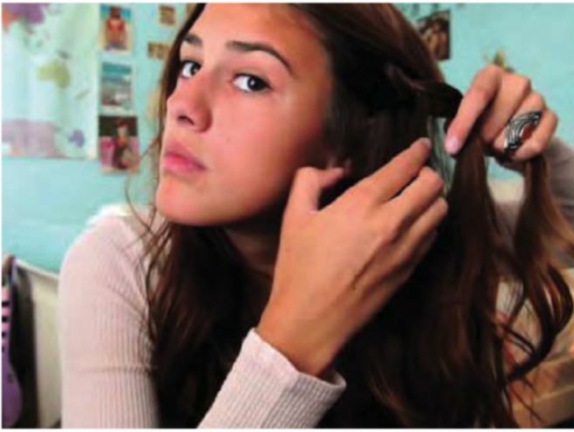
Once upon a time, a guy and a girl met in college, exchanged glances, blushes and even (drum roll) strolled in the park together. Sounds like a yesteryear movie? It might as well be one. In the current scheme of things, romantic ties between teenagers are starting off at the word 'go'. As your parental radar sets off alarm bells, it is all you can do

to not swing into full on panic mode. Taking drastic measures to protect your fledgling however, could end up worsening the situation and alienating your child. Romantic feelings are a natural part of growing up and dealing with blossoming sexuality. While it is definitely not to be taken lightly, with an open channel of communication and

lots of tact it is possible for you to be able to ward off the nasty aspects of this phase.

Open relationship with Child

Romance or no romance, it is essential to have an open relationship with your teenager. It is an age that comes with so much change and so much confusion it is very easy for a parent to suddenly move into a circle outside their trust. Keep an open eye for changes in behaviour, dressing and attitude. Establish yourself in your child's inner circle as soon as possible. Children have the tendency to forget that parents were also children once. It is much too often that the parent becomes the 'enemy' at this stage. Try not to be too preachy. Preaching will only get you shoulder shrugs and eye rolls. Spend as much time with them as possible just talking about their interests. Don't frown at their tastes; display an attitude of interest instead. This helps establish the belief in your child that you are approachable and that you will not 'freak out' if they talk about a crush.



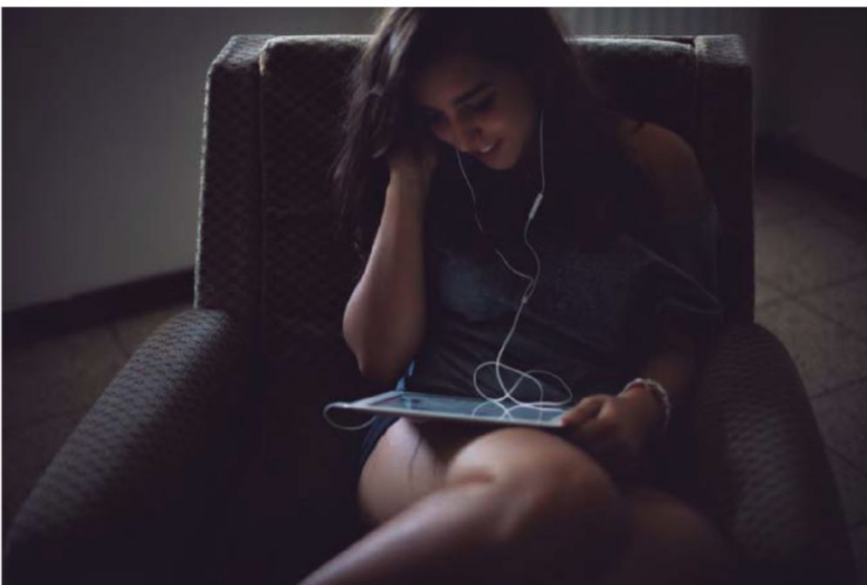
Remember that a child finds this experience as confusing as you and that they are not deliberately trying to rub you the wrong way. Just don't stay 'mum'!

Relate to Personal Experiences

Having been a teenager yourself at some point, try to remember your own experiences as a teen. You are sure to have your own



Try not to be too preachy. Preaching will only get you shoulder shrugs and eye rolls. Spend as much time with them as possible just talking about their interests. Don't frown at their tastes; display an attitude of interest instead. This helps establish the belief in your child that you are approachable and that you will not 'freak out' if they talk about a crush



crushes or that of your peers to draw upon for guidance. Have a heart to heart with your children about your own experience and how it ended. Your children may be surprised that you did some things, but may also reconsider some of their own actions. Don't be afraid of being seen in a bad light. Teenagers need their parents to be good friends more than anything and this is only possible if they relate to you. What is more they might feel less scared about approaching you instead of sneaking behind your back and landing in trouble.

Open Communication

Keep the conversation casual but keep a track of what is happening in school or with their peers. The immediate environment that a child is exposed to goes a long way into shaping their choices. Keep telling your child that you are available if they want to talk to you about anything that they cannot figure out on their own. Try not to overreact about small indiscretions as this could lead to a feeling of resentment in your child. They might not want to approach you about anything else for fear that you will get angry. If your child confesses to having a crush, try to remember it is only a natural part of growing up and do not blow it up out of proportion. If they tell you they are dating someone, ask them what this dating constitutes.

Remind them of Responsibilities

Usually the most problematic part of young romance and infatuation is the fact that it is very distracting. Talk to your child about what is expected of them in terms of following the school curriculum and encourage them to stay connected to their usual group of friends. They should understand that even if they want to be interested in 'someone special', they have to study hard and not be completely obsessed with one person.

Have the Sex Talk

Parents have to open their eyes to the fact that a majority of the youth today is sexually active. Usually media

influence, peer pressure and curiosity are the factors responsible. Keeping silent on the issue of sex will not help things. Talk to your children about sex. Educate them about sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS and the issue of teenage pregnancy. Don't feel awkward about talking openly. Also discuss the fact that sex is a very big step to take, emotionally as well as physically. Emphasize that it is important to wait for the right person to come along.

Have an Open Mind

After you have opened the proper channels of communication and armed your children with the proper knowledge, there is little to do but sit back and watch. Try not to be too judgemental about the one that

your little one is infatuated with (as long as they are the same age, not involved in drugs or such dangerous behaviour). Make it clear

Not being pessimistic, most teenage love stories end in heartbreak for one or both parties. Be prepared for this. Instead of ploughing down your children with a cynical "I told you so", comfort them. Listen to them speak and address the self esteem issues that might follow as a consequence of the break up

that there are boundaries. Keep a not too close eye on the children when they are at your home. At the same time make sure that they are in a chaperoned environment outside the house too.

Broken Hearts

Not being pessimistic, most teenage love stories end in heartbreak for one or both parties. Be prepared for this. Instead of ploughing down your children with a cynical "I told you so", comfort them. Listen to them speak and address the self esteem issues that might follow as a consequence of the break up. Once the young ones have poured out their feelings (and most of their tears), try and distract them with some activity that you both enjoy. Remember children are fast healers; your child will bounce back in no time!





How to Up Your Romantic Rhapsody

Getting the attention you deserve from the love of your life can be an overwhelming task sometimes. Perhaps, your relationship is not as fresh and crazy as it was once. But when you understand his wants, things will definitely perk up. *Vidhya Anand* tells you how to cast your love spell, when it is needed the most

1. Play the mystery mistress

Curiosity is the key to human survival. Keep him guessing with that hint of mystery lurking about who you are. A man loves a woman who makes him inquisitive. All that matters is how well you pull it off. But beware! It can also be a turn off for men if you are too stuck up in your ways. After all, he is only trying to figure you out.



So be open, yet hold on to that little part of who you are. It will keep up the excitement and make him extra eager to know you more than ever before, for you will be the chick who is hard to get!

2. Take control!

Always remember that you have some girl power within, and it can manifest



itself when he is around you. Take control of the situation. Letting a man choose the eatery all the time can make you look vulnerable. Voice out your views. Make him realize that you have another side that he is not aware of. Don't get too dominant either; it is about being comfortable in your own skin.

3. More than just a spouse

Be a little more than his wife or girlfriend: have conversations like normal friends from time to time. Discuss sports and politics, be his

is a pride for any man. So make him proud!

4. Be a Lady

Although it is brilliant to be frenzied and loud, for life is all about fun, sometimes your man would like to see the lady in you. Be composed when required. Find the



“Your clothes should be tight enough to show you're a woman but loose enough to show you're a lady.”

5. Break the rules

Get out of the box and be the protective one, than the one being protected. Sometimes, men expect to be looked after, although they might try to put up a tough show. The idea of him watching over you and being your guardian angel is most definitely true. Yet you could



intellectual equal. Men enjoy wit in women; it shows depth in your character. A clever girlfriend or wife

balance between being turbulent and tranquil and blend them in the right ratio. As Marilyn Monroe said,



tweak it a little bit and reverse roles. As much as it is very hard to accept, every man has a baby within.

6. Groom Girl

Yes, it is about inner beauty. However, you would do well for yourself and him by paying a little attention to how you look. Just that little extra grooming will make all the difference.

7. Sweep him off his feet

Beyond everything, connect to him from within. Talk about the silliest of things, for conversations are what define the two of you. Get funny, laugh, and let your energy reverberate. Dance to rough music or waltz whenever you can with an old bottle of wine, and spruce up the mood. If you have been the one waiting for him to make the move, for once get out there and be the woman you are!

All said and done, keep in mind not to lose yourself and to stay original in the process of making things pink and happy. You are at your best when you are yourself!

WHAT DOES YOUR FAVOURITE COLOUR SAY ABOUT YOU?

Just like sun signs and stars, your favourite colour can reveal a lot about the kind of person you are. Each colour has a personality tagged to it, which is why some of us love the passion of red while others prefer the simplicity of white. Read on to find out what your favourite colour says about your personality

1. **RED:** Red stands for passion. You believe in pursuing your dreams and are brave-hearted. Patience is not your cup of tea. You are aggressive and get angry in a jiffy, but cannot hold grudges. You are extrovert, optimistic and over-ambitious.

2. **BLACK:** Black signifies class, power, prestige and dignity. You are non-emotional, sophisticated, strong-willed, independent, methodological and hate being pessimistic.

3. **PINK:** This is the colour of love! You are loving, kind-hearted, generous, calm, sexy and romantic and love being loved. Everything about you is calm and simple. You enjoy small things in life and are a firm believer of 'love all, hate none'. Pink lovers are perfect for serious relationships and are not commitment phobic.

4. **BLUE:** You are a neutral person. You hate being the centre of attraction. You are sensitive, emotional, genuine, sincere, make for a faithful marriage partner and a trustworthy friend. You are over-cautious and at times worry about petty things.

5. **YELLOW:** You bring along cheer and vibe with you. You are very creative, take impulsive decisions – which you regret later; you are sharp-tongued, selective in choosing friends, good at networking, stubborn and analyse a bit too much.

6. **GREEN:** You are practical, down-to-earth and strong-willed and like to win arguments and you are a faithful friend. You are not a risk-taker and not action orientated, rather more of an observer. Details bore you.

7. **PURPLE:** You are sensitive, compassionate, gentle, overly caring and creative (even with dressing) and dislike responsibilities. You are a good judge and can read others well. People who don't understand you think you are eccentric.

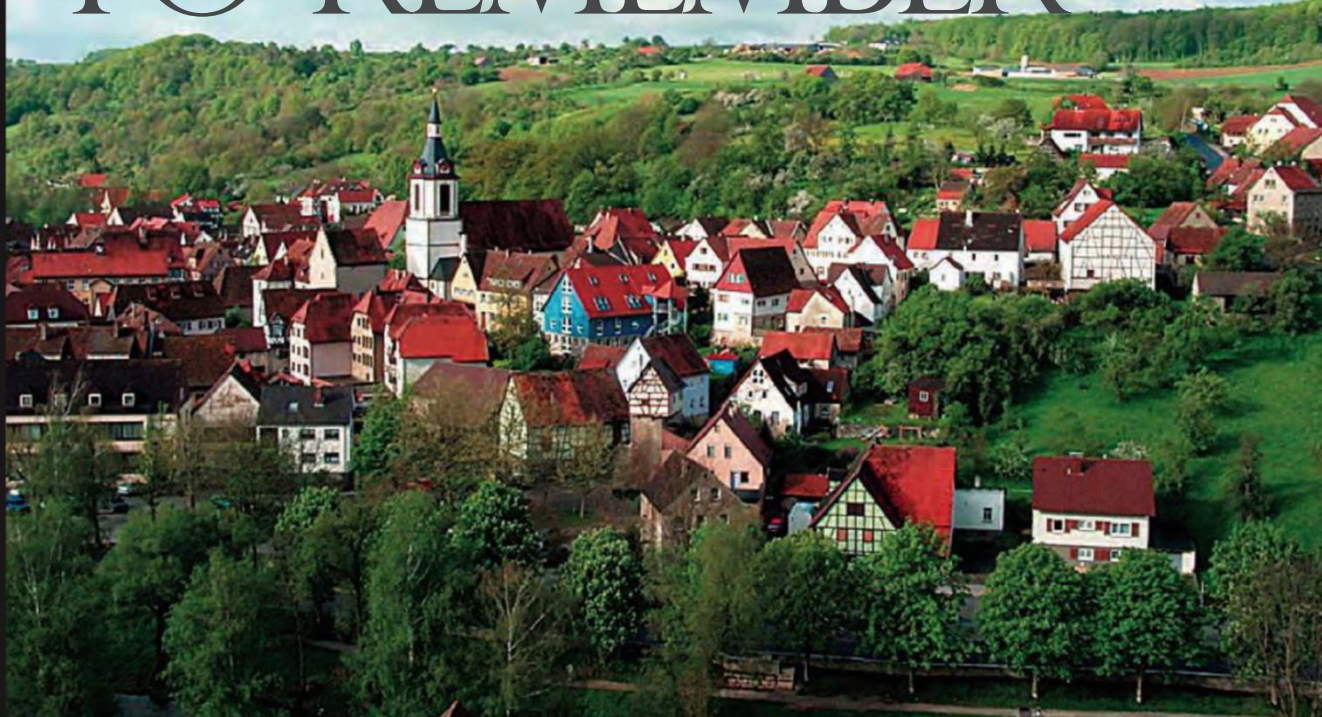
8. **WHITE:** The colour stands for cleanliness and politeness. You are very particular about your appearance, confident, well-balanced and self-sufficient but you are a loner.

9. **BROWN:** This colour is often associated with the earth. For brown lovers, it is family first! You are down-to-earth, extremely reliable, confident, sensitive, love to live in your own little world, sensuous, warm and supportive. You tend to be quite frugal - you hate wasting money or time unnecessarily.

10. **ORANGE:** Orange is considered the boldest among colours. It signifies courage and wisdom. If you tend to favour the colour, you love to be around others and get joy from those you love.



AN AFFAIR TO REMEMBER



Explore a piece of history that has stood still – The Romantic Road (Romantische Strasse) in Germany, which even today reflects the quaintness and idealism of the 19th century. By *Divya Ananth*

Imagine a world where it is spring always; where the flowers are forever in bloom and a pleasant breeze wafts by at all times. Horses and cows meander through acres of green... all is quiet, all is peaceful. The tinkling of cowbells, the clip clop of horse hooves, the rustle of leaves, the warm glow of sunshine on cobbled roads, and the lush country side... this is what poetry is made of.

Rooted in the Past

Back in the 19th century, Europe, tired of the ravages of war, sought to withdraw itself into romanticism. Poetry and arts abounded. Castles and empires flourished. Paintings

mirrored the mood of the times. Not a single one of the paintings had even a little droplet of blood. All was apparently well with the world.

The Romantic Strasse, a 353 km long route on the German Landscape links some of the most picturesque towns and cities across Bavaria in Germany, and culminates in Fuessen, home to the grandiose Neuschwanstein castle. These little towns stand frozen in time, echoing the romanticism of the 19th century – a far cry from the hustle and bustle of the present day.

Means to Explore

Primarily, The Romantic Road

highlights a few key towns. Besides them, numerous sweet little hamlets and villages dot the countryside. The ideal way to traverse the road is by car, which offers maximum flexibility. However buses ply through the tourist season, from April to October.

Wurzburg

The starting point of the route, Wurzburg, stands proud, as if flaunting its perseverance towards rebuilding itself after the war. History records that it took only about 17 minutes to entirely bomb the city. About 1300 years old, Wurzburg is home to the finest white wine. Besides, Wurzburg is a pilgrim



Wurzburg

centre, a bishopric.

The Residenz, a symbol of wealth and prestige for the bishops of Wurzburg, is a UNESCO world heritage centre. Sprawled out in the centre of the city, The Residenz is well worth a visit. Stunning paintings, baroque architecture and vast halls abounding in breathtaking canvases and frescoes are sure to transport you to another era.

Festung Marienberg, a symbol of the city, was the residence of the prince Bishops. A lovely 20 minute walk up this hillock offers stunning views of vineyards. Wurzburg is best tackled on foot. Wander around, sip on home grown wine, pause at the cafes, and breathe in the air of the era. And move on to the next quaint town.

Rothenburg Ob Der Tauber

A town of exceptional beauty, Rothenburg Ob Der Tauber lies concealed within strong walls. This is precisely why this town is so charming. As you drive down at a speed of about 20 kmph through the arched fort that leads to the cobbled roads of the town, all you have to do is imagine that you are riding a horse carriage, donning a cape or gown and a hat.

Interspersed with bewitching half timbered houses and sweet little



Rothenburg Ob Der Tauber



Heilige Blut altar

fountains, winding cobbled lanes and sudden bursts of flowers down the lanes, Rothenburg Ob Der Tauber is the most visited spot on the Romantic Strasse. Conservation rules here are the strictest in Germany. The town square boasts of a quaint clock tower where the mechanical figures enact a story from the town's history. The darker side of the town lies in the creepy prison, where prisoners were tortured during the Thirty Years War.

A must visit is the Jakobskirche with the Heilige Blut altar – the holy blood altar, said to contain a drop of Christ's blood. Dolls, puppets and carousels will steal your heart at the Spielzeugmuseum – Doll and Toy museum. As the chimes from the town clock remind you that you have to carry on with your journey, here's saying



Jakobskirche

The Residenz, a UNESCO world heritage centre, is well worth a visit. Stunning paintings, baroque architecture and vast halls abounding in breathtaking canvases and frescoes are sure to transport you to another era

“Bis Später!” to Rothenburg Ob Den Tauber.

Augsburg

Drive past Dinkelsbuehl and Nordlingen and arrive at Augsburg – the next major destination on the Romantic Road. Busier than most towns, Augsburg is a tad influenced by the 21st century. A Mac Donald's

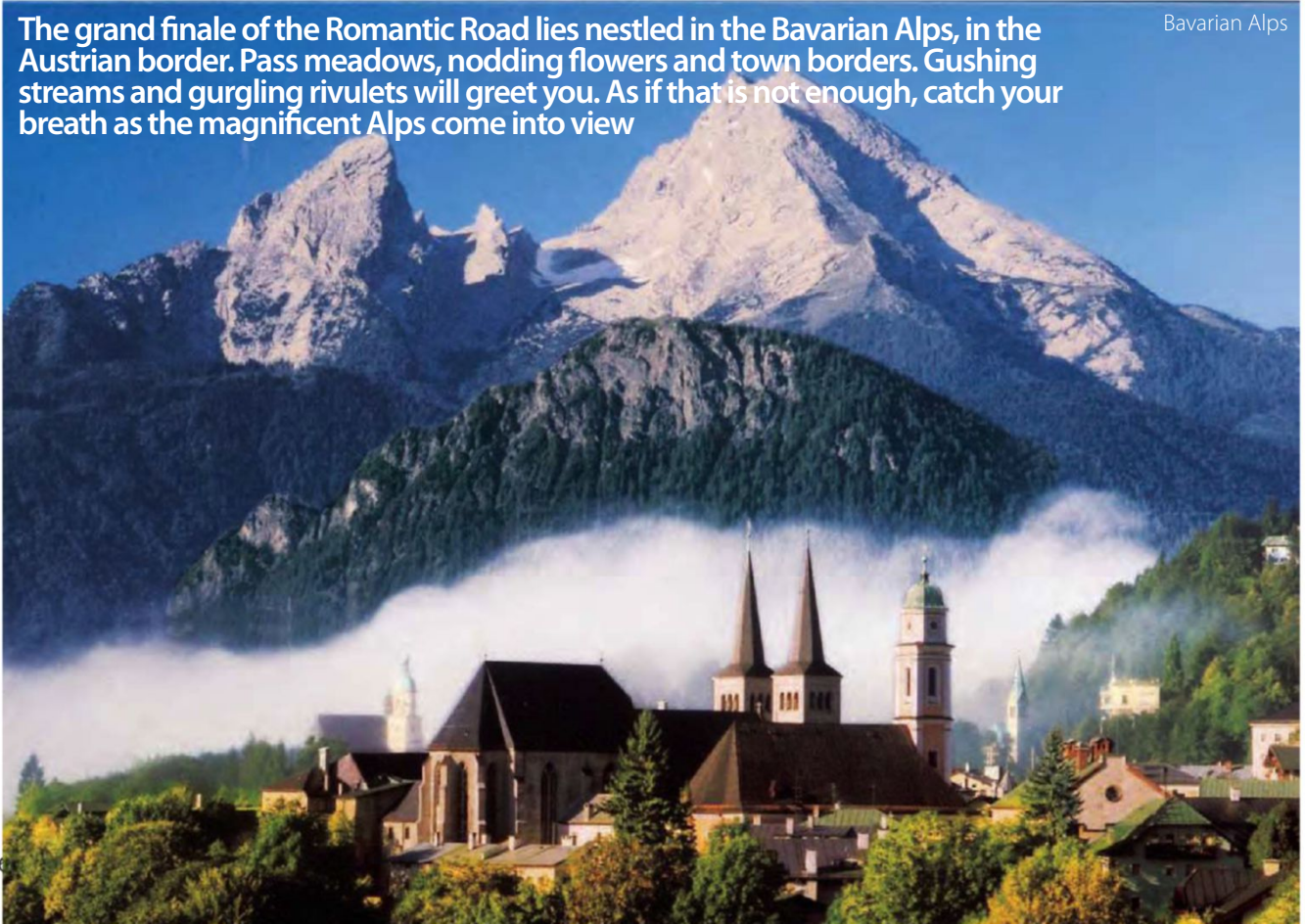


Augsburg

on the sidewalk takes away from the mood of the 19th century. Nevertheless, a bit of meandering inside the town will reassure you of the quaint mood that you started the journey with. The Dom, embellished with bronze doors, showcases scenes from the Old Testament. The Rathaus in the heart of the city punctures the sky with its twin onion shaped dome spires, a symbol of the city. Strolling through Maximilian Strasse will complete your brief stopover at Augsburg. The best is yet to come.

Bavarian Alps

The grand finale of the Romantic Road lies nestled in the Bavarian Alps, in the Austrian border. The journey to Fuessen is as captivating as the destination. As Augsburg diminishes from sight, drive on. Pass meadows, nodding flowers and town borders. Gushing streams and gurgling rivulets will greet you. As if that is not enough, catch your breath as the magnificent Alps come into view. A rambling canvas



Bavarian Alps

The grand finale of the Romantic Road lies nestled in the Bavarian Alps, in the Austrian border. Pass meadows, nodding flowers and town borders. Gushing streams and gurgling rivulets will greet you. As if that is not enough, catch your breath as the magnificent Alps come into view



Hohen Schwangau



Neuschwanstein

of grey, white and blue, the towering mountains set the backdrop over winding roads and inexplicable scenery. This is where you could park, get off, take in all that your eyes and heart can, breathe in the crisp pure air, and think to yourself, “Am I part of another world, another time, another plane of existence?”

Fuessen

Together with Schwangau, Fuessen is fondly called the Koenigswinkel – the Royal Corner. It is home to Germany’s

finest two castles – Hohen Schwangau and Neuschwanstein, built by King Ludwig – II. Ludwig spent his childhood days in Schloss Hohen Schwangau. Fascinating and utterly beautiful, Hohen Schwangau is a castle that has been trodden by kings and knights. Guided tours of the castle, its gardens, and its stunning views of the Alps, seem to satiate the mind. Yet, more treasures and surreal beauty lies in Neuschwanstein – the castle that Ludwig II planned and crafted himself.

The castle offers a peek into the king’s eccentric mind. The construction of the Neuschwanstein castle began in 1869. And like many of Ludwig’s initiatives, it was never completed. For all the efforts and resources that he lavished on this one of a kind castle, Ludwig lived only 170 days in it.

The completed corners of the castle include Ludwig’s bedroom, complete with ornate and intricately carved spires, and the Throne Room. The mosaic floor of the Throne room is awe inspiring, as is the throne itself. Wooded hills frame the castle, and give it a dreamlike feel.

Here is something you cannot but be awed about – one of the water faucets in the king’s chamber has been so designed that even in winter,

As you gaze at the Neuschwanstein castle from afar, it will seem oddly familiar, like a face you have almost grown up with. Rack your brains a little more and you will realize the castle is the Disney logo that sets many a child (and adult) in raptures!

the flow of water from the source to the tap flows, without getting frozen. In the Alps, at a time when electric heaters were nonexistent, these wow moments make Neuschwanstein worthy of a visit! As you gaze at the castle from afar, it will seem oddly familiar, like a face you have almost grown up with. Rack your brains a little more and you will realize the Neuschwanstein castle is the Disney logo that sets many a child (and adult) in raptures!

As you walk down the castle, finally bid a heart-wrenching goodbye and set off on the Autobahn, driving towards the portals of the 21st century, let your heart be laden with the sights, sounds, smells and emotions of a bygone era – an era of romanticism, idealism and sheer beauty. ■

Learning is Growing

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PRESENTS



ye Shaam mastana

– A Rocking Evening of Melodies

RD Burman fans were treated to a collection of his memorable hits in an event organised by Options Live in Coimbatore recently

He burst on to the music scene as a breath of fresh air all those decades ago and his tunes have remained immortal and ageless. His songs were so trendy and unique that they have not only stayed on in the memories of old timers but appeal to the younger generation as well, being played with equal relish at formal dos and at clubs and pubs. Award winning playback singer Srinivas, Anuradha Sriram and Sharanya Srinivas came together and brought back the era of R D Burman as they crooned *Pancham da's* songs in a tribute to the legendary music director at the Sarojini Nataraj Auditorium, Coimbatore last month. The audience loved every bit of the nostalgic evening, as their favourite numbers were rendered one after the other.

Anuradha Sriram kick started the evening with her melodic rendition of Asha Bhonsle's *Bheeni Bheeni Bhor Aayi* and then went on to set the tempo with *O Mere Sona Re*. Srinivas made his entrance with *Ye Shaam Mastaani* and followed up the hit number with yet another chartbuster, and his personal favourite, *Musafir Hoon Yaaron*, penned by the inimitable Gulzar. His daughter Sharanya, a budding playback singer, joined in and sang a number of duets with her father. The audience enjoyed various familiar numbers including the upbeat *Saamne Yeh Kaun Aaya*, *Raina Beeti Jaaye*, *Ek Main Aur Ek Tu* and *Roop Tera Mastaana*. The highlight of the evening was the trio's finale number *Jai Jai Shiv Shankar* that met with rapturous applause from the audience.

The event organized by Options Media's event division, Options Live, was presented by The Park Group of Institutions and powered by JCS Jewels Creations. During the event, Ms Anusha Ravi (CEO of The Park Group) and Mr Arvind (MD of JCS) presented Srinivas and Anuradha Sriram with mementos.



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Tarot Forecast

February
2014



ACHARYE NANDITA PANDEY,
(Astro- Vaastu - Tarot consultant,
spiritual healer and PLR Therapist)



ARIES (22nd March- 21st April)

Matters of heart shall be pleasant and romantic throughout the month. Professionally, you will hear good news and help from your juniors shall come in handy at the right time. Financially, this is an average month for you when your needs are met with and gains are yet to register. Emotional anxieties are on the higher side which may affect your health. A woman in your family helps you in your endeavours. **Lucky Colour: Orange**

TAURUS (22nd April - 21st May)

Financially, you shall benefit from your investments and shall enjoy the attention being diverted towards you. Legal matters shall be favourable and you shall be able to overcome obstacles in life easily. Clinging on to the past does you no good, being futuristic in your approach is the key to professional success in life. Matters of heart require you to be firm in your decisions and take courageous actions. Decide on what you want and then go all out for it. Minor health issues might crop up and the health of a child might be a cause of concern. Travel during this month shall be favourable. **Lucky Colour: Peach**



YEARLY FORECAST FOR AQUARIUS

Good news related to your love life in the beginning of the year sets your mood for the rest of the year. Children bring in immense happiness the whole year through. Love, romance, nurturing of relationship and harmony is all on the cards. Financially you will reorient your focus more towards investments concerning your family. Responsibilities will increase and thoughts about buying a property or investing in one will be high on your mind. Professional situations ease out and growth is subtle. Family is a strong support system and helps you overcome most of the hurdles in life. Wedding celebrations and family gatherings shall be memorable. A lot of improvement on the work front is predicted in the latter half. Keeping a reality check on your health is the need of the hour. Abdominal problems and problems related to liver/kidneys/pancreas shall bother you during this phase. Travel anxieties are on the higher side and any travel plans should be made after a lot of consideration. A lot of situations resolve for you though a bit subtly as the year progresses.



GEMINI (22nd May- 21st June)

Professionally, a man with a dominating personality helps you in your endeavours. Patience and wisdom are the keys to financial gain. Investments will be prolific and rewarding. Health issues might crop up especially those related to bone/muscle aches or minor gastric problems. Health of a woman will be a cause of concern. Extra effort from your end helps in improving your love life.

Lucky Colour: Pink

CANCER (22nd June - 21st July)

Focus is the key to professional success during this month. Travel and proactive decisions towards your projects gives you an upper edge on your work front. You shall be in comfortable situations regarding this front as the month progresses. Matters of heart are pleasant and any outings, holidays or changes in lifestyle patterns turn in your favour as the month progresses.

Lucky Colour: Blue



LEO (22nd July - 21st August)

A woman helps you in your professional endeavours. Financial benefits shall be rewarding. Matters of heart shall be pleasant and romantic. You will think of your relationships seriously and would want to take it to the next level. Health keeps you fit as the month progresses. Travel shall be favourable though it will have a sense of adventure attached to it.

Lucky Colour: Blue

VIRGO (22nd August- 21st September)

Matters of heart shall be pleasant and enjoyable. Financially, you shall be in celebratory mode as the investments starts giving you expected returns. Health keeps you jovial and happy. You might be interested in a number of health activities during this month. Wedding celebrations in the family are a strong likeability. Travel shall be favourable and a fatherly figure helps you on this front. You might receive gifts by the end of the month.

Lucky Colour: Emerald Green



LIBRA (22nd September- 21st October)

Professionally, strong transitions take place in your life. New work patterns emerge and bring in success and growth for you. Financially, investments will move northwards in a subtle yet steady manner. Being too possessive about your love life might create a sense of claustrophobia for your partner. Giving enough breathing space and letting love flow on its natural course helps in retaining peace and harmony in matters of heart.

Lucky Colour: Green

SCORPIO (22nd October- 21st November)

Financially, you gain from two or more resources. Things will shape up as per your expectations and new investments made instinctively help you consolidate your gains. Health keeps you fit and any joint health activity rejuvenates your mind, body and soul. Matters of heart need better communication skills and more love and nurturing in your love life. Professional restlessness will be on the higher side and any activity away from your comfort zone might cause you further anxieties. A youngster in your family might turn out to be very demanding as the day progresses. **Lucky Colour: Orange**



SAGITTARIUS (22nd November- 21st December)

Financial transitions that take place during this phase give you an edge and also turn out to be rewarding. A woman with a dominating and aggressive streak helps you in your work and in finishing your targets on time. Matters of heart shall be disappointing and issues related to children may get highlighted building up unnecessary stress. Possible news related to your loved one may create a sense of insecurity. Health keeps you fit and brings in positive reflections in life. A balanced outlook helps you in enjoying your travel. **Lucky Colour: Pink / Peach**

CAPRICORN (22nd December- 21st January)

You will be showered with love and attention throughout this month especially in matters of heart. Legal matters turn in your favour and you will benefit from your pleasant and harmonious nature. Financial setbacks are high as there might be some sudden property related stress or disappointments related to shifting or renovation. Being careful about your finances is the best way to deal with your downward slide. **Lucky Colour: Electric Blue**



AQUARIUS (22nd January- 21st February)

This is the time to take a backseat and enjoy the progress of your projects. Matters of heart shall be pleasant and harmonious. Hard work is the key to success in financial matters; a woman with whom you share excellent rapport helps you in creating inner peace and harmony and this helps in improving your health as the month progresses. Your family shall support you in your thick and thin. **Lucky Colour: Peacock Green**

PISCES (22nd February- 21st March)

Professionally, this is a great phase for you to indulge in fresh projects and new avenues. This is an excellent time and a partnership shall shift you to a higher level of happiness. Office matters resolve easily and thoughts about redoing your office shall become the highlight of the month. Finances indicate ups and downs but still show an upwards movement by the end of the month. Health might be a cause of concern. You might undergo minor gastric problems or problems related to muscle aches or bone aches. Matters of heart shall be demanding and require more nurturing and love. A family member helps you in your endeavours as the month progresses. **Lucky Colour: Magenta**





JAI HO

Director: Sohail Khan

Cast: Salman Khan, Danny Denzongpa, Daisy Shah, Tabu

Jai Ho can be summed up in one sentence: A true blue Salman Khan movie, where sense takes a hike to Timbuktu, trying to make a noble point but missing the target by about a country mile or so. However even with 'all ye faithful' in full attendance this movie falls short of the box office target.

The movie revolves around a pay-it-forward theme. 'Aam Aadmi' ex-army officer Jai is a man on a mission to send out a chain reaction of good karma into the world. He believes in being good and just and expects in the way of gratitude that people carry on the chain with good deeds. He believes that the common man can make a difference, this unfortunately a reminder of SRK's 'don't underestimate the power of the common man/ halwaayi'.

Now while the macho and extremely uncommon looking Major Jai Agnihotri walks around like Superman without the uniform, there is trouble stirring with corrupt Home Minister Dashrath Singh hatching his own plans. When the baddie finds the messiah-like Jai to be a thorn in his side, he does his best to uproot him. Whilst the hero flexes his rippling muscles, showcases a million pouts and delivers one

too many impassioned speeches about how one person can change the country, the minister targets the mother and sister in a typical Bollywood-esque move. The enraged hero then takes off into a one man battle against the tireless waves of handlebar moustache bearing cronies. Sohail Khan's direction allows his beloved brother the action sequences he loves to deliver. With more than enough shirt tearing, jaw/nose breaking, iron fist-meeting thug faces, to bore you to tears, the common man gives power back to the general public who surprisingly take up for this unsung hero and join him in his battle against the evil forces.

Not to forget (for it is very forgettable) is the romantic angle in the story with debutant Daisy Shah, who sashays in and out of the movie with a couple of elevator music worthy songs playing to her zealous performance. The movie also stars a number of forgotten actors trying desperately to make a comeback. With so much riding on the movie it is indeed tragic that a noble message should have been lost in this unseemly and sometimes ridiculous plot.



AMERICAN HUSTLE

Director: David O. Russell

Cast: Christian Bale, Bradley Cooper, Amy Adams, Jennifer Lawrence

In the pre Oscar fever, director David O. Russell's *American Hustle* comes as the perfect appetiser. Served in Russell's inimitable style (remember *Silver Linings Playbook*?) the movie whets your craving for the full Academy Awards menu. A word of warning though: you may not quite like it if edge-of-the-seat retro dramas are not your style.

Based on the late '70s Abscam scandal in USA, the story revolves around con artists Irving (Bale) and Sydney (Amy) who are blackmailed by FBI agent Richie (Cooper) to help him execute a small sting operation. But Richie's impatience and greed to strengthen his position blows things out of proportion and the seemingly trivial plan becomes a major, messy web of intrigue and deceit which threatens to entangle big names.

Though the story and screenplay are brilliant, it is the ensemble acting that lifts the movie a dozen notches. Christian Bale is in vintage form. From the clothes to the bling accessories and from the unabashed paunch to the ghastly toupee, he gets the devil-may-care look of the late '70s down pat. A shrewd con artist by day and a perfect



lover by night, Bale works on his moves, expressions and voice modulation to bring Irving to life. Amy and Cooper do justice to their roles but it is Jennifer Lawrence who corners the applause and accolades. This twenty-something is just amazing in her two bit role as the gregarious and seemingly imbalanced wife.

Con seems to be the flavour of the season. After Leonardo Di Caprio's smooth acts in *The Great Gatsby* and *Wolf of Wall Street*, Bale just ups the ante in *American Hustle*. Of course, the biggest con may just have been pulled by O Russell: as the audience take in the film's opening caveat "Some of this actually happened" they wait for reality to unfold only to find out in the end that fiction obscures fact. None of this, however, can take anything away from the fact that it is a brilliant piece of cinema.

Vanishing road under feet,
no sign of stopping, atleast those
designer sneakers found its match



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