



THE NIZAMI TOUCH

*The country's most talented fashion icon from the south, designer **Anand Kabra** shares his sartorial insights as he styles southern actress Tamannaah in his statement looks.*

*Text by MALEEKA KASHYAP
Photographs by GIANLUCA SANTORO*

DESIGNER ANAND KABRA IS UNAPOLOGETIC about what he wants. Creating ensembles that iterate the philosophy 'less is more', south India's most promising fashion artist left behind a conventional career in the sciences to give wings to his creativity. The turning point came amidst the chaos of working a backstage job at a fashion show years ago, and now this vision, combined with the flair for telling stories, master crafting, and texturing techniques has made his designs most coveted by fashionistas and brides alike. **YOUR COLLECTIONS ARE INSPIRED BY WOMEN SUCH AS COURTESANS AND DANCERS. TELL US ABOUT THIS PHILOSOPHY AND ITS APPLICATION IN BRIDALS.** I always find myself trying to champion for the cause of the fallen woman—the unsung heroes, the dregs of the society. Theirs is a story I want to tell. It is not a literal interpretation in my outfits. Rather, I borrow from their moods and merge it with my own to create a story board that is a little biographical, and a little fantastical. Taramati's love, Kumari's divinity, Mandi's binding... the emotions go on. **WHAT FACTORS MATTER TO YOU WHILE DESIGNING A BRIDE'S OUTFIT?** First off, the starting point is always the bride. It is important to understand her personality before creating her D-day outfit. I like to know whether she's a girlie bride, or a rebel at heart, and then I like working in tandem with that. Next is to complement her physical attributes—what would suit her body type, or what kind of neckline would go with her jewellery. Finally, I also work together with the mood of the wedding... the scale, the venue, the colours, et al. **AND YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE NEW ERA OF LIGHTER BRIDAL WEAR?** I am thrilled with this change. Till two years ago, bridal ensembles were typically just a blur of bling. Every surface of the outfit would just be overloaded with embellishments and brides looked like clones of each other. For the first time, there's room for negative spaces, and there's room to let the bride's personality shine through instead of the outfit. I think it is a fabulous opportunity for the designer fraternity to take bridals to the next level. **WHAT EMBELLISHMENT TECHNIQUES**

White magic woman. (From left) On Anand Kabra: **Anand Kabra** kurta and pants. On Tamannaah: **Anand Kabra** blouse and sari. **Krsala by Buntty Bajaj** earrings. Fashion editor: Aastha Sharma.

STAR AND STYLE
"TAMANNAAH WAS GAME FOR ANY STYLE EXPERIMENTATION. I WANTED TO DISSOCIATE HER FROM HER FILM-STAR IMAGE."

ARE YOU FOND OF IN BRIDAL WEAR? I personally like infusing a lot of cut-work in my ensembles, creating a delicate lace and lattice-like effect. Recently, we have also been exploring three-dimensional ways of surface texturing. Using traditional techniques like zardozi, the embroidery stands out creating a beautiful look. Other than that, I always like mixed media—combining three to four embellishments together. **COMING FROM HYDERABAD, LET'S**

TALK ABOUT THE NIZAMI INFLUENCE

IN YOUR WORK. You know, it is an unconscious influence. Or rather, it's something people have pointed out to me about my work. I believe it stems from this city, which is my home. The Hyderabadi influence keeps recurring in my silhouettes and embroideries. **WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON SOUTH**

INDIAN FASHION MARKING ITS PLACE IN THE WORLD OF ETH-

NICS? The South fashion scene sort of loses out to its Northern counterpart due to the fact that this region stands for doing things in a very toned-down way. The Indian South is home to some of the most exquisite, fabulous silks and materials, and this legacy—in spite of not being promoted in the mainstream—will always stand strong. **THEN SHOULD THESE SOUTH**

CLASSICS BE REINTERPRETED OR SHOULD

THEY BE PRESERVED AS IS? I agree to both schools of thought. I agree that it is almost impossible to replicate the classic saris and fabrics of yore, and that kind of craftsmanship is extremely hard to come by. But one must also reinvent the weaves, techniques, and outfits to fit more into a modern sensibility. I believe in making these more user-friendly to the youth, so that they would embrace these fashions. Otherwise, these archival outfits would eventually just become costumes to be admired



at museums. **ANY ADVICE FOR SUMMER BRIDES?** Usually, it is always a riot of colours for the sangeet outfit. Green and yellow shades are favoured for the mehendi. The wedding day is about reds, maroons, and pinks. And receptions are always pastels for summer. I say, go against all of these and do whatever you may want to do. Go against these rules and do not in any way compromise—this is your day and so you must live out your fantasies. Just follow one

pointer, and understand that less is more. And instead of the regular georgettes and chiffons, how about getting your summer wedding ensembles designed in fabrics like mulmul for a change?

HOW WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE STYLING TAMANNAAH FOR

BAZAAR BRIDE? What I liked most about Tamannaah was that she came with an absolutely open mind. She was game for any style experimentation. If I were to dress her for her wedding, I would dissociate her from her film-star image and work on bringing out her heritage and traditions in a glamorous representation. She has a fabulous face and physique—an added advantage. It all fell together fabulously. **TELL US ABOUT**

YOUR PRESENT AND UPCOMING COLLECTIONS. As designers, we always face a dichotomy between our own sense of creativity, and the adherence to commercial viability. It is a constant struggle to create something unusually beautiful and saleable at the same time, and it is this very aim I am trying to achieve. My present collection has revived mirror-work, and to make it relevant for the summers, we have used a lot of soft colours and incorporated delicate fabrics like tulle, georgettes, and chiffons. The lambada embroidery of the Banjaras is given new meaning within these collections combined with cut-work. ■

TROUSSEAU TIPS

“It is important to give a contemporary interpretation to Southern classics, while preserving their integrity and identity.”

“When choosing your bridal outfit, do not be influenced by what your friends and relatives have to say. Work together with your designer and consider your own desires and what would work best for your body and personality type.”

“Less is more. Instead of the regular georgettes and chiffons this summer, why not try fabrics like mulmul for a change?”



A study in scarlet. **THIS PAGE:** Anand Kabra gown. Krsala by Bunty Bajaj belt. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Anand Kabra kurta and skirt. Krsala by Bunty Bajaj maang tika, rings, and bangles. See Where to Buy for shopping details. Photographer: Gianluca Santoro at Anima Creative Management; makeup: Kapil Bhalla; hair: Anupa from Placid Salon; fashion assistant: Reann Moradian. Location: Courtesy Sofitel Mumbai BKC.