

# BHARAT DARSHAN

India's largest continuing study of socio-cultural changes. An annual insight mining project by futurbrands consulting

Bharat Darshan unearths the fundamental socio-cultural changes in India. It helps us with sharper strategic thinking on brands.

BHARAT  
DARSHAN  
**TECHNOLOGY**

BHARAT  
DARSHAN  
**WOMEN**

BHARAT  
DARSHAN  
**YOUTH**

BHARAT  
DARSHAN  
**HOMES**

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BHARAT  
DARSHAN  
**PEOPLE**

futurebrands

# BHARAT DARSHAN MEN

A Futurebrands Consulting publication

EXPERIENCE

# BHARAT DARSHAN

STRATEGIC PROJECT FOR BUSINESSES

Bharat Darshan is a strategic project for businesses. It discovers unique socio-cultural patterns examining consumers and culture; and creates large opportunities for brands in emerging India. The project provokes newer ways to think and creates compelling solutions for business challenges.

Companies commission Bharat Darshan to:

- Find new growth levers
- New product and revenue ideas
- Shift marketing paradigms
- Develop consumer vision for their future plans
- Create micro-market insights, product and marketing plans
- Build brand roadmaps

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This compilation has been inspired by the experience of our travels across India, undertaken with the ambition of understanding the culture that shapes consumption and the meaning systems that inform brands. Bharat Darshan is Futurebrands' initiative to understand change in India. Every year, the entire office travels across India to spontaneously capture different aspects of the culture. Bharat Darshan is in its third year and over 60 cities & towns have been covered and there have been more than a thousand interactions and hundreds of hours of conversation with people from all walks of life. We have seen and understood people and their lives, because they have shared it with us. Their trust, openness and generous hospitality has made it possible for us to explore their lives and examine what different changes on the landscape really mean. 'In India' is an attempt to share a glimpse of the intriguing observations, patterns and questions that we encountered which made us wonder about the complex set of meaning systems that govern categories and consumers here.

At Futurebrands we believe that culture is the single biggest tutor to understand people and consumption. An understanding of cultural codes and a more pulled out way of framing categories can equip business heads and marketers to develop tools for their brands which are unique and meaningful to create long term equity of their brands in India. Many fortune 500 brands invest in cultural studies continuously to keep alive the ability to think radically about their businesses. This perspective examines consumers and categories in a fundamental way. It may not lead to neatly tied up 'insights' but cultural understanding allows for new principles, new language and new thinking to happen in organizations, leading to dramatic new ways to think about business and brands.

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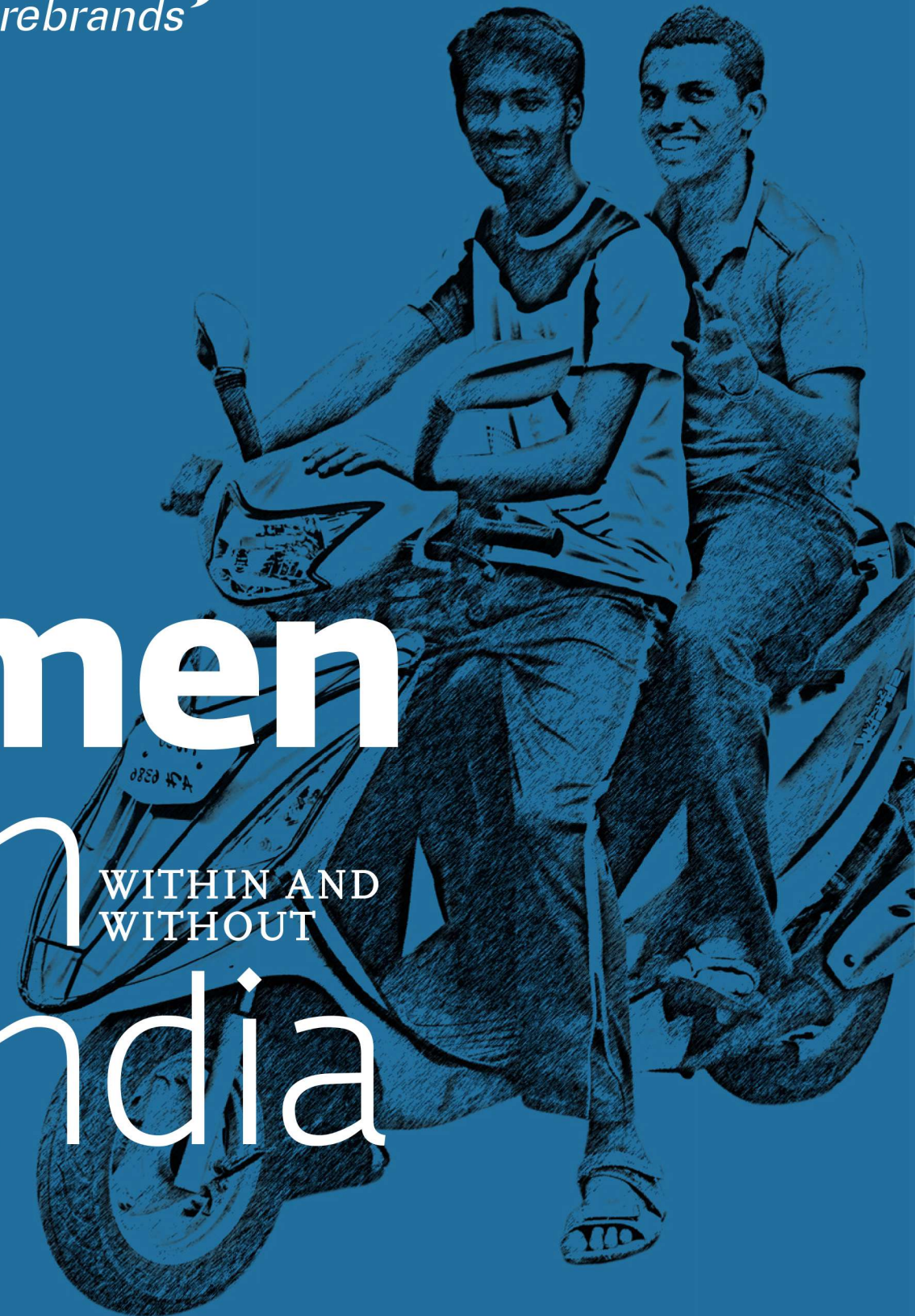


CONTACT US

Futurebrands Ltd.  
W4D-204/3 Keshav Kunj  
Sainik Farms, New Delhi - 110062  
Website: [Futurebrands.co.in](http://Futurebrands.co.in)  
Email: [futurebrands@futurebrands.co.in](mailto:futurebrands@futurebrands.co.in)

men  
in  
india

WITHIN AND  
WITHOUT





# men in india

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Santosh Desai who conceived Bharat Darshan as an annual event where everybody in Futurebrands travels across India to understand the cultural codes and how they are changing. Bharat Darshan has been in existence for three years and the team has gathered thousands of images, four hundred hours or more of conversations and some valuable nuggets of wisdom. The data was painstakingly analysed by the teams and patiently supervised by Santosh in an annual workshop, usually at a picturesque location in the hills which helped us to bring out the real insights. So a big thanks to everybody at Futurebrands for all the hard work.

The 'In India' series was conceived and edited by Sraboni Bhaduri. Project consultant. Mayank Mansingh Kaul help was invaluable in refining and coming up with this unique format. Simrat and Avantika of Ferris wheel design walked the final mile with us and their grasp of the content coupled with great design sense has given shape to this series.



**T**raditionally for men in india discharging prescriptive duties has been his reason for being. The dominant narrative is submission to domesticity and being responsible for the collective, whether in the household or in society. Defined more by his role, especially as a patriarch or a dutiful son, other aspects of him as an individual with an inner life have never gained too much legitimacy in expression.

Things are beginning to change.

The expression of the self now displays many facets. Changes in the environment have perhaps necessitated forays into newer territories and freedom to express aspects which were socially frowned upon.

Men in India have certainly donned a new skin. There is a shift amongst the youth today. The body is no longer a blind spot. It is consciously shaped. It serves as a site for self expression. The aesthetic interpretation, however, is varied. The language in small town India is perhaps more vibrant, more voluble. Men in India are now more gaze worthy than they have ever been.

These images collected by the Futurebrands team, explores the emotional narrative underlying different facets of men's life in India. In our travels across India, not only did we get a glimpse of different facets, but we also saw many contrasting images co-existing.

How much have they changed? Is the shift fundamental? Is the shift from a loose limbed body language to the taut, indicative of his taking charge of his destiny? Is stillness and passivity giving way to optimism which knows where it is headed? Will men in India finally escape what has been the inevitable culmination of their identity?



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Design: ferris wheel design

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For more information, e-mail  
sraboni.bhaduri@futurebrands.co.in



## ➡ MEN AT WORK

The outside world has been the man's stomping ground. Congregating over a cup of tea in between work, to discuss the state of the nation, has always been a big part of the man's world. The workspace is where he is comfortable in his own skin and it is a space that he owns.

**H**anging out at the street corner with the boys constitute the first memories of adolescence for most men.

Our travels across India, as we walked down the streets, revealed how much at home men felt in the outside world.

The body language is relaxed, with little sense of self consciousness. He is comfortable and totally oblivious of any gaze that may be evaluating him.

The white collar office space continues the narrative of being at home. ■■



*The pursuit of 'homely comforts' is not inappropriate. The relaxed morning tea, home style lunch, afternoon siesta are all seamlessly woven in. It is warm with the sense of brotherhood and banter.*

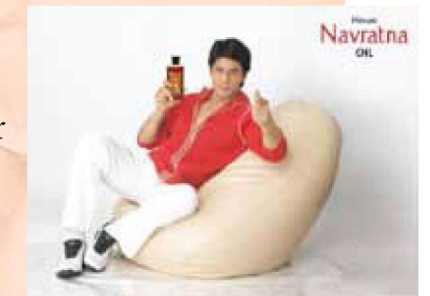


## BRAND TALK

### ERASING THE SWEAT OF THE WORK DAY

Being sweaty or worn out at the end of the day call for further remedial action to reinstate a comfortable state of being. Pampering the bread earner is a cultural truth that has led to the creation of some unique categories.

**Cooling hair oil:** The relaxing massage at the end of a hard day with a cooling oil further erases any back lash from the heat, sweat & dust of the day.

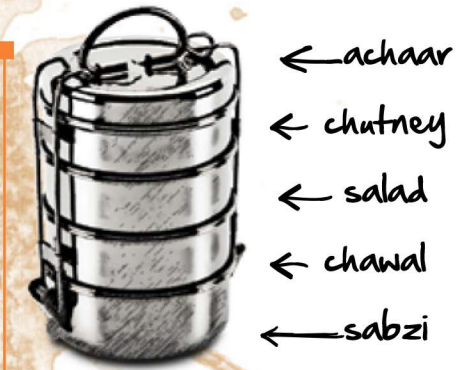


There is little attempt to force the self into donning an unnecessarily uncomfortable, starched exterior, be it in the form of clothing or 'working lunches'.

Traditionally the ethos of the workplace and home are not seen to have hard boundaries. Merging of the two is almost inevitable and natural. ■■



flickr.com



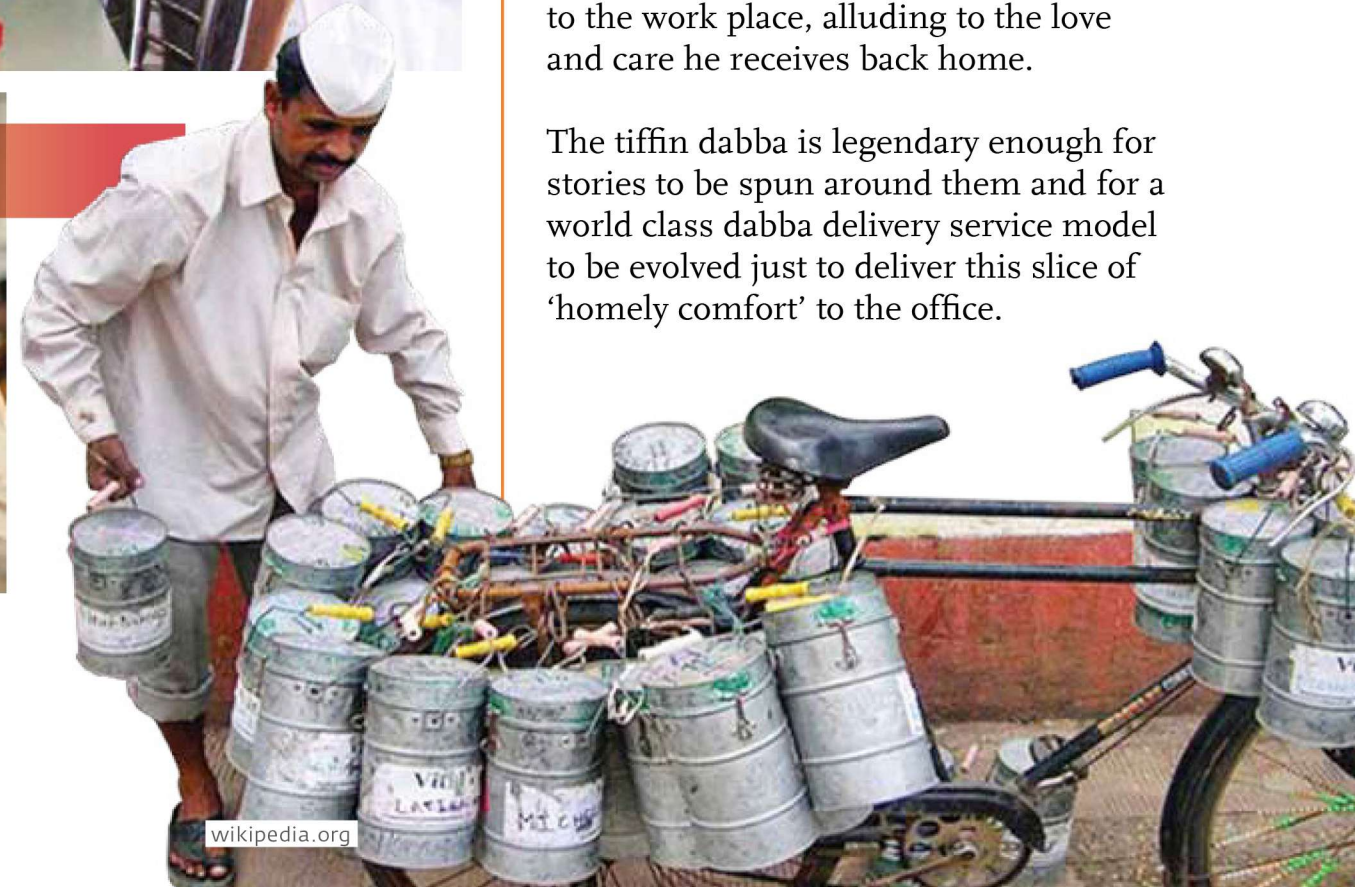
### THE TIFFIN DABBA

The tiffin box is a stacked vertical version of the thali. It replicates it with great fidelity, making space for all the little thoughtful touches of pickle, chutney & salad. Being at work does not call for a curtailed version of a home style lunch. The tiffin dabba brings in the invisible presence of the maker of these delicacies, to the work place, alluding to the love and care he receives back home.

The tiffin dabba is legendary enough for stories to be spun around them and for a world class dabba delivery service model to be evolved just to deliver this slice of 'homely comfort' to the office.



bollywoodlife.com



wikipedia.org

*The tiffin dabba – fidelity is a symbol that stands testimony to the bridge between the two.*



# BECOMING BAUJI

For generations, men in India have negotiated their identity **between the binary of being a boy or being a householder**. Will this journey have other dimensions? Will the destination change? Will Generation Z negotiate this transition differently? **How will they look when they are 40? Will they become their father?**





The transition from being a carefree boy to the householder can be marked visually.

The weight of responsibility dulls the edge of youthfulness. The pursuit of fashion takes a back seat. The journey to patriarchy is marked with a more confident body language but an increasing sense of careworn fatigue. ■■



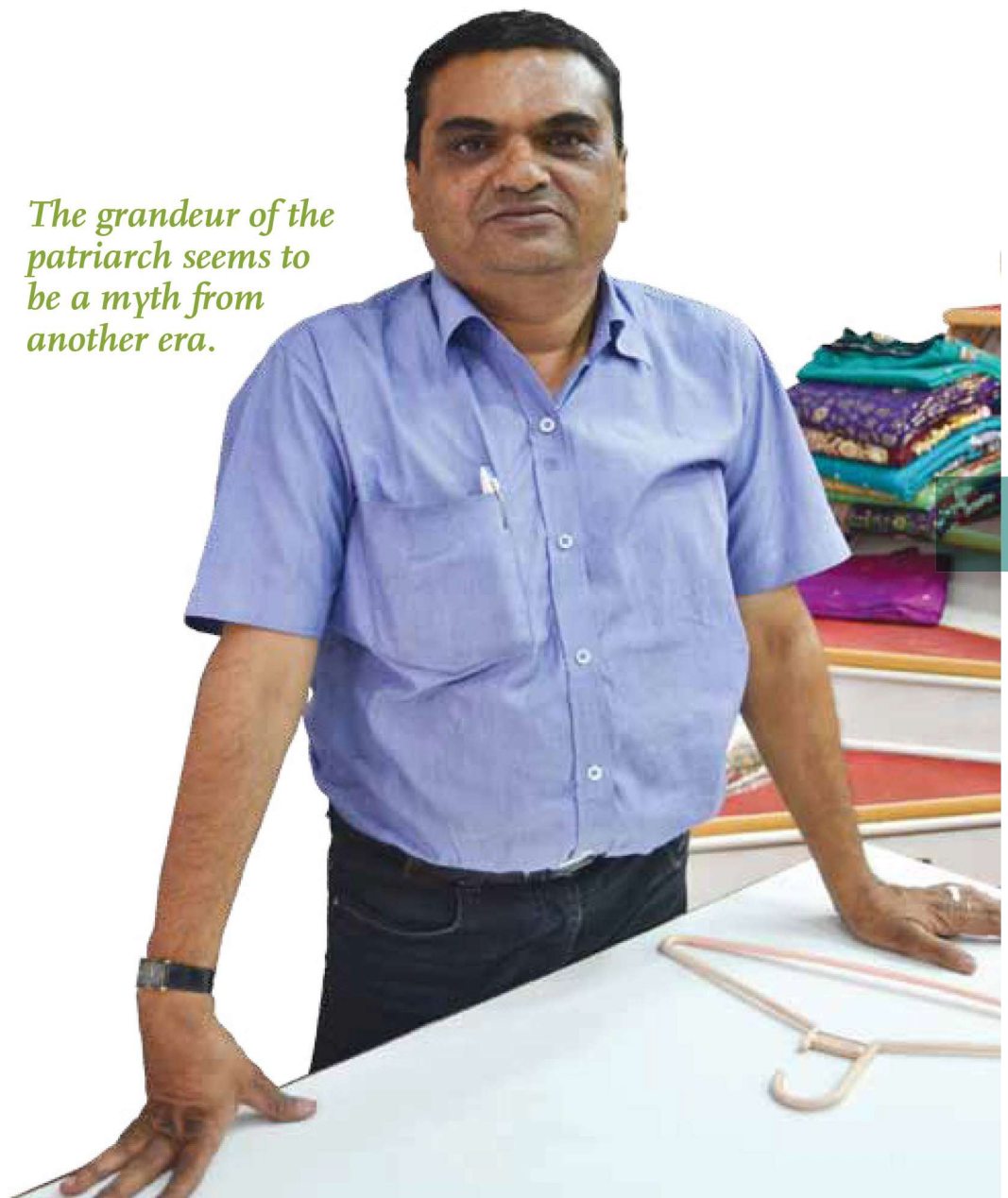
★ MOVIE ★  
MIRROR

A still from the film 'Wake up Sid' shows the sheer contrast of the newbie amongst the seasoned bread earners.

**M**id life crisis of making a last ditch attempt at flamboyance is an idea that the average householder perhaps has little life space to entertain.

He is engulfed by more real though mundane everyday issues of taking care of a family. Self, vanity, joy... are not adjectives that describe the middle class householder. ■■

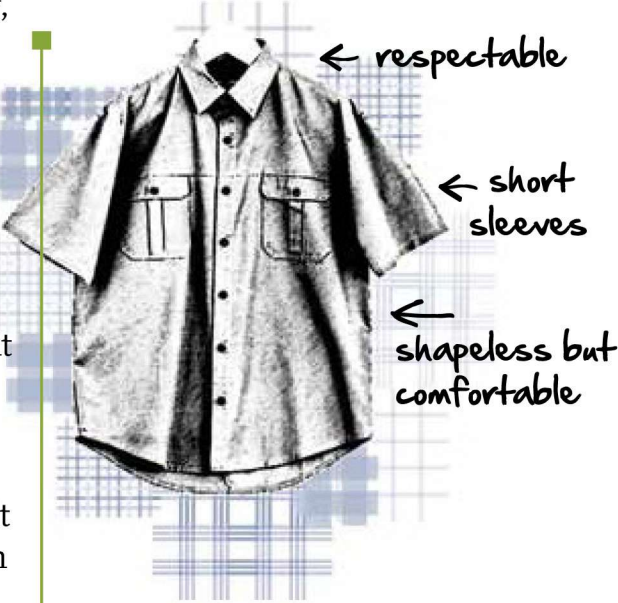
*The grandeur of the patriarch seems to be a myth from another era.*



# THE BUSH SHIRT

For anyone in a position of responsibility, the pursuit of fashion is almost taboo. Somewhere form fitting clothes that accentuate the body and highlight youthfulness are associated with being frivolous and irresponsible.

Those who can be trusted to take care of the collective, should have left any pursuit of attractiveness far behind. The Bush shirt is just such a sartorial device. Shapeless and short sleeved it performs the task of masking the body & keeping it comfortable as the wearer addresses high order tasks. Most importantly it is a symbol of respectability.



*Some of our freshly minted political icons representing the middle class have made the tucked out bush shirt and loose trousers a symbol of middle class representation.*



08/04/

Once the children are 'settled' a new phase begins. As an aging patriarch he finally gives expression to his softer side.

Once patriarchy has been handed down, life seems to come a full circle. The aging patriarch, if all goes well, is a happy, relaxed creature, ready to be indulged by his children and grand children.

Relieved of his duties as a householder, he finally has the time and space to finally reflect on what he has perhaps missed out in life. It is time to make good the missed opportunities of romance, indulgence and sheer playfulness. ■■



## BRAND TALK



*It is only in India that old age brings with it privileges and enjoyment that other life stages deny.*



A film for the jewelry brand **Tanishq**, showing an aging patriarch buying jewelry to surprise his wife. His ineptness and the wife's tears are testimony to the probability that this happened after a life of time of waiting



# RAHUL, RAJ... SIMRAN

For the first time, the man has to 'earn' his mate. Even the arranged marriage market now requires him to pass the test of being attractive. Money in the bank is necessary but not enough. It is a long hard trek to happily ever after.

Developing yourself for the mating market includes many parameters.

Your peronality, language and soft skills are the first visual cue of how well turned out you are. This is the first barrier to cross before the rest even comes into play. ■■



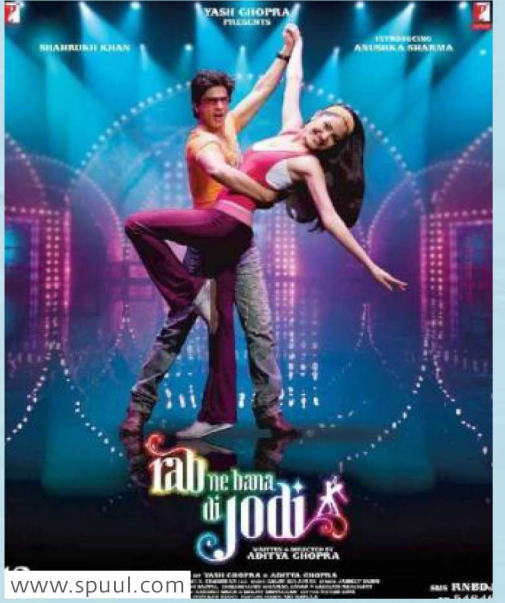
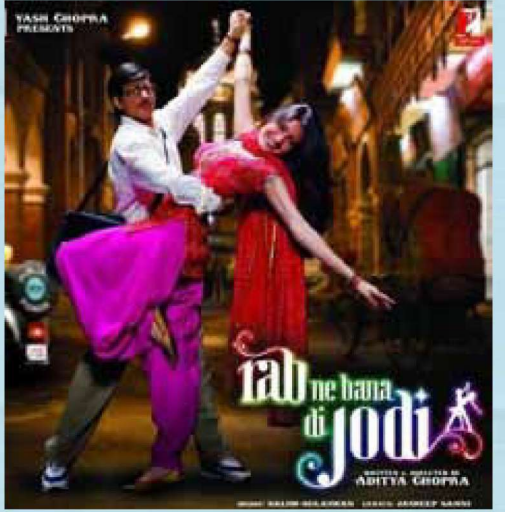
### ★ MOVIE ★ MIRROR

This still from the iconic film 'Dilwale Dulhania le Jayenge' is the archetype and inspiration for all love stories in India. The 'happily ever after' takes a lot of forbearance besides a vivacious and endearing manner.



www.india.com

### ★ MOVIE ★ MIRROR



The film stars Shah Rukh Khan and movie debutant Anushka Sharma. Khan plays a mild-mannered office worker, whose love for the beautiful and vivacious Sharma causes him to transform himself from a bespectacled fashion agnostic husband into the trendy boyfriend 'Raj.'

Just following the trend is not good enough. The ambition is to synthesize your own trademark style.

When we spoke to apparel shop owners in both small towns and in metros, we got a sense of what goes on when they are faced with the weighty question of what kind of clothes to buy.

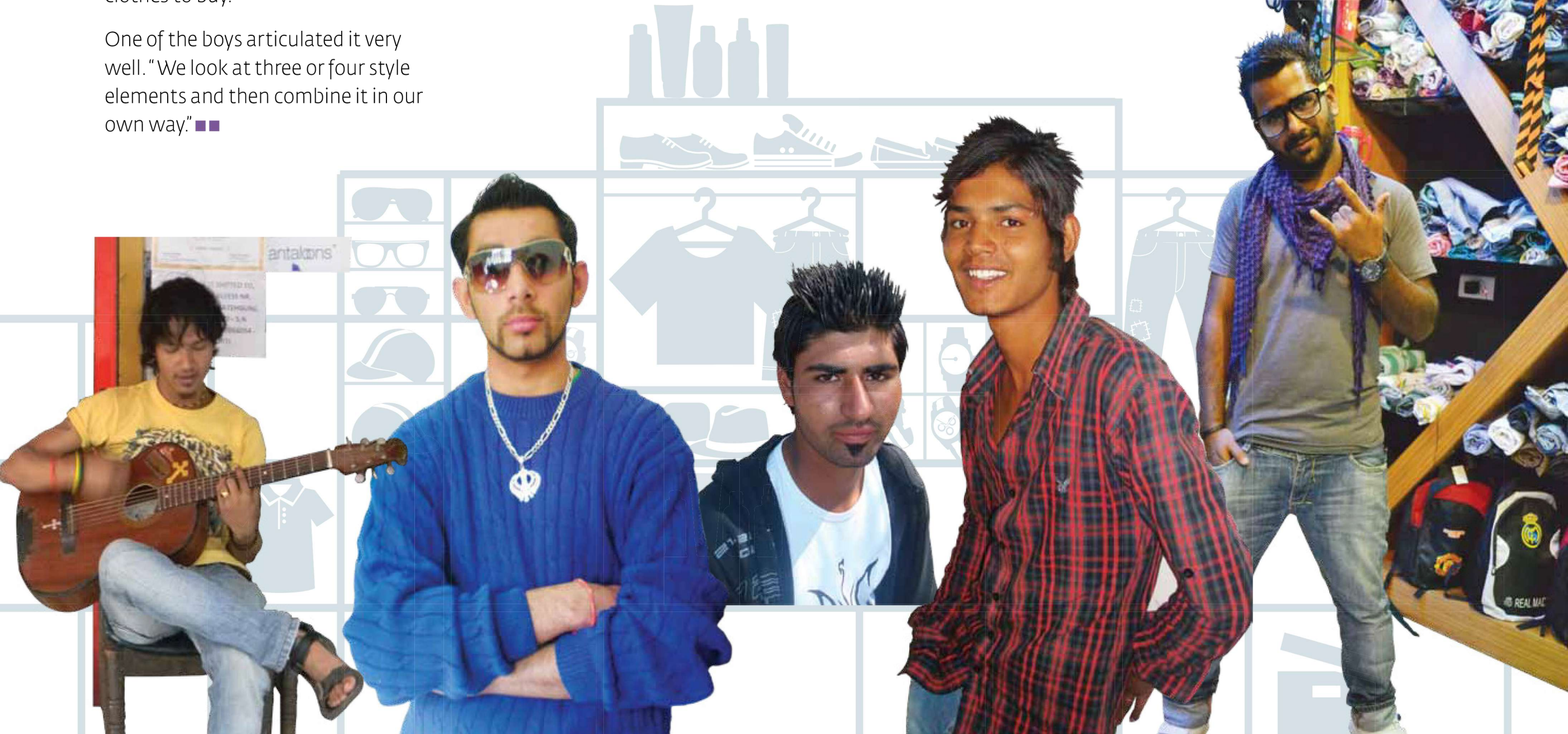
One of the boys articulated it very well. "We look at three or four style elements and then combine it in our own way." ■■

*A host of fashion hand holding industries have come up to address this need.*



## ★ MOVIE ★ MIRROR

Bollywood's superstar Salman Khan's trademark bracelet





# DOSTI AUR DOSTANA

‘College ke din’... always evokes warm fuzzy memories. Hanging out with the boys continues to be essential even later. Is this the only space where men in India feel unselfconscious? Are the emotional expressions most spontaneous when they are with their buddies?



With women changing and widening their range of domains, men do feel a little displaced from their familiar environments. At this point in time they have been caught a little off balance.

Hanging out with the boys has never been more important. For the last ten years or more there have been a slew of films which are around the metaphor of journey, that a group of friends undertake at the cross roads of their lives. During college before they step out into the real world, or before marriage, are usually the junctures where questions of identity and discovering yourself become important.

Resolutions and neat answers take place on screen. Lived out journeys are still in the making. ■■



*With the boys, is where they perhaps feel most unselfconscious and least judged*

★ MOVIE ★  
MIRROR



‘Sholay’ the all time classic made in the 70s, celebrates the duo Veeru and Jai (played by Dharmendra and Amitabh Bachchan), whose friendship endures through many adventures and adversities.



Friendship codes between boys especially through college are always special.

Many firsts are lived out together along with many embarrassing moments. Before exiting college is perhaps the last time they were boys, just having fun.

Tale of two friends is an age old phenomenon, but there is a spate of films around three friends undertaking a journey to find answers to key life questions, before the true test of life takes over.

Dil Chahta Hai 2001, was one of the first films to explore this theme. ■■



*A typical 'placement season' moment shared by two friends*

★ MOVIE ★  
MIRROR

india-forums.com

This still from 'Dil chahata hai' was the first of the road trip films. By the end of the journey, the boys reconcile with reality or make their kind of trade offs, as they transit to becoming men.

★ MOVIE ★  
MIRROR

protista.org

'3 Idiots' another cult classic is a coming of age comedy drama, which recounts the story of three friends who negotiate questions of identity before stepping out into the 'real' world outside college.



*"Pehle committed hona cool tha,  
ab single hona cool hai"*



flickr.com

*"Aj kal ladkiyan hi pay  
karti hain... ladke jeb  
mein haath nahin dalte"*





# MEN AND THEIR MACHINES

The relationship with the machine is an old one. Folklore has it that the wearer takes on a lean, mean look.



The classic western imagery has never quite coincided with the Indian notion of masculinity, which has less to do with physicality and more to do with values.

Classic western imagery of masculinity is of the great outdoors and the rugged man taking on the elements and the wilderness.

Men in India are no longer content with just being the hardworking householder. Machines and technology currently provide the symbols that can be worn like fashion accessories. ■■



## MOTOR BIKES

Bikes are trophies of masculinity. Just standing next to one is to reference the urban legend of deadly bikers in their leathers. For the young man, it is a brief window before the householder's logic of fuel efficient bikes kicks in



# SALOON & SALON

The old style Saloon has dropped an 'O', married the beauty parlour and given rise to rampant experiments with 'the look.'

How is machoness holding up in this non traditional territory?

The traditional classic men's saloon was just a basic barber shop, dedicated solely to hair cuts and containing facial hair.

The salon culture clearly makes for brisk business on the streets. And it is not limited to the elite. As we were told 'Malls don't manage to sell a single Prada sunglass. We sell thirty five pairs in a month.' ■■■



*'Today nobody wants to be plain vanilla. Little bit of gel to style your hair, lends a bit of shine to your personality.'*

## BRAND TALK



### **GARNIER MEN/ PONDS MEN/ NIVEA MEN**

Prefixing 'Men' allows brands to create equivalent products for men which mirror the women's range. It just requires an reference to the legendary toughness and outdoorsy life of men.



*Fashion toh geeli baraf  
ki tarah hai..aaj hai,  
kal nahi*







# JAI HANUMAN

What is a good body? The answer to that reveals what is believed to be the source of masculine power. The wrestler's body celebrates strength and sees discipline and abstinence as the source. What does the worked out body with a six pack, believe is the source of masculine power?

The akharas (wrestling schools) have been the traditional model for producing icons of masculinity, which expressed itself through physicality but had its root in discipline and abstinence. Character and values were the source of strength both metaphorical and physical.

The body was a mere vehicle of strength, not an object of vanity.

The world of gyms produce hyper masculine physicality. The over defined muscles are perhaps defensive protests against the underlying feminine motive of vanity. It is also the acknowledgement that the male body needs to prepare for the female gaze. ■■



*As one of the dedicated body builders emphasised; 'It is very important to build a good body. Only then will the shirt fit well.'*





# HERO WITHIN

What are the selves that men in India wish for? In their break out moments what are the fantasies that stand revealed? What do message tees, profile pictures say?



There is an inherent shyness in expressing desires, fantasies or even emotions. Mediums that offer enough camouflage and safe distance for men to take awkward first steps towards self expression, become the canvas that they want to paint.

Message Ts, Facebook, holidays and night out with the boys are opportunities to vent the way that they wish to be seen. Some how these are the times that they feel that the social gaze is not upon them and they can afford to be playful. ■■

*Messages convey attitudes which don't need to be owned up to. It is couched in half seriousness. They can be laughed off. The message is at best covert.*



abbey ek  
du kya?

Smiling  
outside  
bleeding  
inside

devil  
inside

already  
taken

Jail  
house  
rock

too  
for school

generations  
now or never



*Geographical shifts  
offered by vacations  
offer freedom to  
explore different  
ways of being... free  
of self conscious  
scrutiny*



*Main mard houn  
apne puri akad  
aur aibon ke  
saath (spirit and  
in action)*

**I ♥ CID JOKES**



*“Truth is, everybody is going to hurt you; you just gotta find the ones worth suffering for..”*  
BOB MARLEY

M a guy wid lots of dreams and i no i cn make them true....  
M/DPS/17

“\*\*I @M nOt T#@T K!nD oF pErSoN wHo Pr@!SeS #!MsEIF @nD !f u VeRy KeEn 2 KnOw @Bt Me “By MeEtInG U c@N jUgDe Me BetTeR\*\*\*” ???????”

“Nobody’s Perfect ..  
I’m Nobody  
M/MODERN/17”

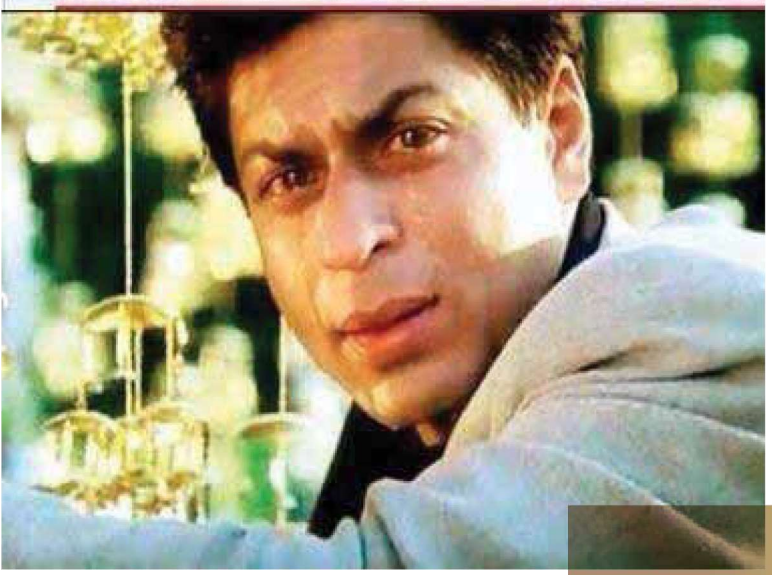
“m not as handsome as.. Tom cruise or Brad Pitt but i do know i’m the best lookin guy you’ll ever see..”


There is a simultaneous inclination towards mush and darkness. Pictures of Hollywood/ Bollywood stars, pop singers, and models are often used for profile pictures. ■■



ABOUT JAVED  
m goofy ♥ m serious  
♥ m crazy ♥ m intelligent ♥ m very friendly ♥ sometimes funny ♥ sometimes grave ♥ so sometimes hilarious  
♥ In short :- ♥ i am just ME ♥ and isliye mujhe jo pasand hain main wahi karta hoon  
♥♥♥♥

FAVORITE QUOTATIONS  
either FOLLOW or SURRENDER





The indian man may be out of his comfort zone but he is realizing that he has inadvertently stumbled upon freedom. There are many more shades to masculinity now than just being the monochrome domesticated householder.

There are attitudes that he is exploring. He is trying on the more macho biker stance. He is preening and indulging his vanity with full societal acceptance and grateful industries cheering him on. His forays into feminine territories and motivations has its moments of over compensation and hyper masculine style statements. But he is sure that he is not a passive follower of trends. As he hangs out with the boys, there is a collaborative effort to find an unique way and to put together a new meaning system and vocabulary for masculinity.

After so many new beginnings will he become his father?

Perhaps not.