

From the Editor

Looking down at my bowl of gazpacho at dinner one recent night, I realised that I do not own a single moustache spoon, with guards, so that guests with resplendent whiskers could eat soup and not leave any trace behind – the kind made for Maharaja Ganga Singh of Bikaner around 1900. Nor does my wife possess the 34.64-carat Golconda diamond hanging from a necklace made by Van Cleef and Arpels for Maharani Sita Devi of Baroda in 1960. When I brush my clogs, the monogrammed canvas Louis Vuitton case for shoe and linen cleaning kit made for Maharaja Hari Singh of Kashmir is not even a glimmer in my eye.

It is sobering to think, when a gleaming yellow Lamborghini roars past you on a crowded Delhi road, or you watch a foppish young man spooning caviar on to a piece of tandoori roti, or marvel at a very young couple dropping wads of cash at a Tarun Tahiliani boutique, that we are really looking at the results of India Arrested and Released. For about forty years from the 1960s, money was a furtive pursuit. Many of us had it but couldn't flaunt it. I remember as recently as the late 1990s owners of Mercedes-Benz cars in Mumbai were running for cover from extortionists.

It is worth remembering that rich Indians, a.k.a. the "royals", defined luxury for more than a century and a half from the early 1900s (that is if you subtract the Mughals and their fascination with things *farangi*). They kept the jewellers, courtiers, saddle- and suitcase-makers, painters, glass-throwers, horologists, and potters in England and Europe gainfully occupied. *Everything* they wore, ate from, slept in, rode in, and flew in was adorned with their monograms or coats of arms. Everything was bespoke. Everything was unto the manor made.

Sad to say, good taste only raises its timid head as money explodes around us. We confuse luxury with fashion. The two are not the same. Luxury is ethereal; fashion is a following and what we hope will bestow elegance on us. Fashion is ephemeral; luxury is corporeal.

"Luxury must remain invisible, but it must be felt. Luxury is simple; it is the opposite of complication. Luxury is a necessity that begins where necessity ends. Some people think luxury is the opposite of poverty. It is not. It is the opposite of vulgarity. Luxury is the opposite of status. It is the ability to make a living by being oneself. It is the freedom to refuse to live by habit. Luxury is liberty. Luxury is elegance," writes Karen Karbo in *The Gospel According To Coco Chanel*, she of the small black dress. And fashion? Diana Vreeland, editor of *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue*, put it her way: "In a Balenciaga you were the only woman in the room – no other woman existed."

So it was with a fair dose of trepidation, but also exhilaration, that *Business Today* embarked on its first Luxury Special. It was a vast and varied quest for both the business of luxury and the reasons for that business to survive and grow in these troubled economic times. We threw out all our stereotypes and stencils and filled this capacious edition with a cornucopia of rich writing, photography and design. It starts with our cover – it does not shriek, it purrs, but below the hood is a powerful assemblage of collectible writing, starting on page 30, not only from the BT team but also colleagues within the India Today Group – *Harper's Bazaar India*, *Cosmopolitan India*, *Men's Health India*, and *Robb Report India*, as well as a few outside experts. Your breath will be taken away by what you see, read and savour on the following pages. This was a crowd-sourcing exercise in the finest sense and it is crowned by psychologist and behavioural economist Dan Ariely's pointillist comment on page 172 about the "true and interesting complexity of luxury".

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