

Peddlers of Emotion: Unraveling the Life of Indian Female Model

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Indian Fashion industry has grown at a rapid pace with renowned fashion designers having created a niche for them placing India on the global fashion map. In the era of fashion icons & trendsetters, modeling has ushered like never before. Indian models have won international pageants. They present a perfect epitome of elegance & style. They have enjoyed a lucrative career in India. But surviving in the rocky world of fashion industry with its perils, have taken many Indian models to a doom. This case tries to explore the life of Indian Female Models & their associated struggles & difficulties.

Key words: Emotional Resilience, Competition, Suicides, Insecurity & Eccentricity

INTRODUCTION

India's fashion industry is very young although to see it published and showcased in national newspapers and magazines is hard to imagine. The first professional show was held in this country just 10 years ago. Indian fashion industry is at its infancy at the moment and has great potential to make the mark on the world stage. Fashion industry has grown at a rapid pace with international developments such as India Fashion week gaining popularity & annual shows by fashion designers held in major cities of India. Indian fashion has evolved significantly.

Today there are a couple of hundred Indian designers peddling their designs in the market. Some are very well known and expanding slowly but surely to the international market.¹ But experts opine that India's romance with fashion design has just begun and is bound to grow by mammoth proportion.

Globalization of Indian economy proved to be a great encouragement for the Indian fashion industry and it has risen to leaps and bounds. Fashion in India has thousands of years of tradition behind it. India has rich and varied textile heritage. Each region of India has its own native dress and traditional costumes.

MARKET SIZE

The Indian fashion is expected to touch \$ 400 million in a couple of years with vigorous 10 plus growth over year.² This is not a nut compared to the global industry size. It's not too bad for an industry in this stage of infancy. The reasons for a bright future are very

India is the second largest manufacturer of manmade fibres in the world. Indian fashion is known for its rich diverse heritage, where each province has its own traditional apparel.

¹ *Indian fashion designer - The new age guru of trendsetters.* (n.d.). Retrieved from www.1888articles.com.

² *Indin Industries/Fashion Industry.* (n.d.). Retrieved from www.indianmirror.com.

obvious. India is the second largest manufacturer of manmade fibres in the world. Indian fashion is known for its rich diverse heritage, where each province has its own traditional apparel. Indian fashion designers tweak these various trends in the most innovative ways and give them an Indo western touch. The respective customs & traditions give the designers a huge plethora of ethnicity that worked as a crowd puller in the market. Designers kept the traditional aspects alive by giving it the cutting edge. India has large young population. This combined with increase in consumerism.

Fashion designers such as Rohit Bal, Neeta Lulla, Manish Malhotra, Ritu Kumar, Ritu Beri, Satya Paul & Tarun Tahilani are some of the designers who have made a major mark in the global fashion week. Celebrated designers have leaded the way which has redefined the way akin to international fashion destinations like Paris and New York³, India's two huge fashion house gatherings, 'Lakme India Fashion Week' and 'Wills Lifestyle India Fashion Week' host fashion weeks every season. Young and budding designers are given opportunities to showcase their talents in these events. Buyers from home turf and abroad make it a point to visit the celebrated fashion weeks. This influence has brought Indian fashion on the international map. Besides, there are numerous seasonal shows coming up in every city for the gen-next and emerging designers to prove their talent.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In Indian history, costumes and accessories worn sum to fulfill two criteria – simplicity & opulence. In the Indus Valley civilization (3000- 1500 B.C.) clothing tended to be simple, where men wore loin clothes while women were bare to the waist. Their status was reflected in the kind of jewellery they wore; high ranking women sometimes covered themselves with jewels. It was because of Aryans that India had more complicated clothing consisting of the upper & lower garments.

After the independence, Indian fashion industry witnessed the effects of globalization. Due to this, changes occurred in the dressing style of Indians which led to the fusion of Indian & western Dresses. Indian fashion industry covered a whole range of clothes designed for

³ *Indin Industries/Fashion Industry*. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.indianmirror.com.

wedding ceremonies to sports & casual wear. It even included the traditional Indian techniques of embroidery like chikha & zardosi. These traditional weaves & fabrics are used by Indian designers to create Indo Western clothing in fusion.

THE RISE OF INDIAN FEMALE MODELS

“The fashion business is getting increasingly lucrative for women on top of their game, with some models making as much as Rs. 30- 40 lacs annually”.

Indian models have won international pageants. This has brought in more recognition to the industry. This is the era of fashion icons & trendsetters. Indian female models are known to be most graceful in the world. The ensembles worn by the beautiful Indian models are basically a fusion of Indian and western attires. These ensembles are often a craze among the young crowd and sometimes it tends to become a global trend.

Their body structure is such that any attire looks fabulous on them. No wonder they are the highlights of any designer.

Indian models have enjoyed a lucrative career in India & many youngsters have successfully created icons in the industry. Indian models are known worldwide for their glamour & style. Modeling in India is one of the most fascinating career options and extremely popular among youngsters.

Indian models enjoyed a lucrative profession dominated by women. Good earnings & instant popularity are the main advantages enjoyed of their career. Models often took up this profession to ensure it as a gate way for entry into the film industry subject to various cons & pros. To every achievement the very high level of competition in the modeling career is the biggest peril. Since there is constant demand for fresh faces to launch & promote various branded products, the keynote lies whether the model has efficient public relations.

Today modeling has become one of the most popular career options. Physical attributes are more important in modeling, thus Indian models have strived to keep up a fit & perfect body shape. Indian models have worked for print modeling, television modeling & still modeling, show room modeling ramp & live modeling. Their work spheres include product advertising, live fashion shows, music videos & television acting.

THE X FACTOR & MAKING THE MOOLAH

Fashion is a tough business. Models have a short shelf life, even more so. Modeling essentiate the presence of elusive X factor & the sheer confidence to carry off every look. The Indian female models have justified these traits with elegance & style. Former supermodel Nayanika Chatterjee who enjoyed a modeling career for over two decades, added, “*I earned Rs. 500 for my first ramp show. We modeled in for very little in those days. Now, the pay structure is so much better.*”⁴ Even though top models can earn a lot per show, there are times when they go for months without work. Being a model is huge maintenance. The rise of celebrity culture has too many models out of business.

The modeling industry has never been as magnanimous. A top ramp model can earn Rs. 30 lakh annually just by doing fashion shows. Campaigning with good brands can escalate the figure to Rs. 50 lacs.

Model actor Rahul Dev once opined, “We have moved ahead from the time models were used as models. Models make money from entrepreneurial skills. The longevity of a model is in her hands. Nayanika was my senior when I started modeling & she still rules the ramp. Models have to explore other options. Ramp is just the beginning of a new world”.⁵

WALKING THE TIGHT ROPE: PERILS OF GLAMOUR INDUSTRY

⁴ *Indian Models*. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.indianetzone.com.

⁵ *Models on top*. (2011, July 31). Retrieved from www.timesofindia.com.

“They look like they have it all till their inner demon pushes them to the brink. People who occupy the world of glamour are forced to walk on razor thin rope”.

PEDDLERS OF EMOTION: FASHION’S WORST TREND; SUICIDAL MODELS

Suicides are glamour worst’s trend. Although people from all walks of life tend to commit suicide due to personal circumstances, the glamour industry does fall in the high risk bracket. Celebrity status makes an individual distance himself from others to maintain self imposed dignity. His/her support system too in the form of family & friends are lost in a stress filled hectic schedule with little guarantee of financial stability. Also lots of people subject themselves willingly or unwillingly to mental, physical & sexual exploitation in this field. Besides while periods of struggle & success are smooth, maintaining positions is tough test & downward slopes are difficult for those who are emotionally fragile.⁶ Vogue cover girl Russian model Ruslana Korshunova who hurdled herself to death from her down town house, wrote depressive messages on her computer about how terribly she missed her family & friends.

The battle of the inner mind can be hard to interpret. The darkness is personal & the void can be overpowering. These stars are living on the edge and emptiness takes over. As it always goes, “When the mind gets used to highs, the lows can be devastating”. Rejection can be tough. People start withdrawing & often overtake the it comes to suicides, seem to be the **When the mind gets used to highs, the lows can be devastating.** build walls. Dark moods mind of geniuses. When model or not relationships biggest culprits. The intent of suicide takes birth long before. It is pre – ordained & never incidental. When a successful women searches for the same kind of success in her personal life and is disappointed, she tries in vain to overpower that feeling by trying to harm herself. Suicide is an attempt to gain control over death which she never had in her life.⁷

⁶ *Peddlers of emotion*. (2011, March 28). Retrieved from www.timesofindia.com.

⁷ *Suicide: Myth & Facts*. (2010, December 20). Retrieved from www.timesofindia.com.

Taking case from the Indian fashion world, Viveka Babajee, a beautiful supermodel was found dead in her apartment under mysterious circumstances⁸. Apart from her, many well known faces of the fashion industry like Nafisa Joseph & Kuljeet Randhawa have ended their lives in similar fashion.⁹ Apart from these names, there have been models who chose death when life left them with no option. For some it was a failed love, while for others it was mad race to survive in the glam world taking them to doom¹⁰.

There is hauntingly high number & ever growing list of models committing suicides in recent years. There is nothing more crushing than lost of hope. The world is fascinated by these stars. Yet their inner world is incomplete & stormy. Even veteran actress Nargis thought of suicide before she met Sunil Dutt. It is said that showbiz is not a place for the weak. You need nerves of steel to survive the highs & lows of this world & remain grounded.

Those with supportive families survive the storm. Insecurity is an overwhelming emotion in any creative profession.

People from the glam world become objects for the society which can be isolating. But what makes extremely successful women find it difficult to identify a true friend from a fair weather friend.

People from the fashion world are peddlers of emotion & there are more emotional wrecks here. There is scandal, exhibitionism & eccentricity, but there is also energy, fatal attraction about the world of fashion that is obsessive. People from the glam world become objects for the society which can be isolating. But what makes extremely successful women find it difficult to identify a true friend from a fair weather friend.

⁸ *Viveka followed her contemporaries*. (2010, july). Retrieved from www.timesofindia.com/life & style/ Fashion.

⁹ *Fashion Worst trend: suicidal models*. (2011, July 12). Retrieved from www.timesofindia.com.

¹⁰ *Death of Indian Models*. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.timesofindia.com/ life&style/Fashion.

Besides being at the top can make you insecure as you have to live up to certain image & perform come what may. People who are emotionally strong are the ones that survive. Depression is yet greater demon than just the agony of a failed relationship. It creeps in & stays on until recognized but it is too late by then.

STRIKING THE RIGHT CHORD

It is not too often that one gets to see the dark, cursed & potent underbelly of the world of gloss & glitter. They look like they have it all, till inner demons push them to the brink. People who occupy the world of glamour are forced to walk a razor- thin edge.

AMAZING PEOPLE, TRAGIC ENDS

These rich, charismatic people are engulfed by their inner darkness. In the world of modeling, where their lithe limbs & bare bodies bask & beam in the spotlight, little is known of what is going on in the minds of the models. Most models are not equipped to handle tough situations & in many cases, it is models who have passed their prime who fall prey to depression.

Indian Female models who have never compromised a single inch when it comes to clothing, accessories or style, which can be altered at one's will but when it comes to their professional & personal life they have compromised with those values and emotions that cannot be altered. However those who are successful they managed to remain tough and keep shining like a diamond.

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of need-hierarchy patterns Indian Female Models follow?
2. Is it the professional life of Indian female models which has affected their personal lives or vice versa. Discuss.

3. Suggest ways & measures for maintaining emotional resilience during downward slopes of the modeling profession.

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