

Ramp-age! China finds Indian couture hot

Suranjana Roy Bhattacharya

Shanghai: Indian clothes cover too much. Perhaps, it will change for Chinese girls, hopes Li Xiao Yue, a 23-year-old Chinese model, soon after walking the ramp in Sabyasachi Mukherjee's trademark collection at the Shanghai Fashion Week.

Li Xiao may be unsure, but Shanghai International Fashion Centre bosses have no such misgivings. Shanghai hosted the first show by Indian designers on Thursday as part of the Asia Fashion Blooming section. As Kolkata designer Sabyasachi Mukherjee, Mumbai-based Nikasha Tawadey and Hyderabad boy Anand Kabra dressed Chinese models in their saris and jackets, it marked a fashion milestone for Indian designers in Shanghai.

Shanghai has quantum-leaped from uniform grey-blue suits of the Communist era to the boldest fashions from the West. Now, it has reached out to



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India, too. Echo Yao, representative of the Shanghai International Fashion Centre, says, "In recent years, Indian designers have played an important role on the international stage. That's why we invited three of the best designers to open the show here. They are not only the most popular stylists

from India but also have an international appeal. They blend the east and the west."

The blending which comes easily to Indian designers was unleashed in full force. Thursday's show began with Tawadey's flowing off-white lines and ensembles in reds and yellows. The Mumbai designer, however, admits her pieces are very Indian and eclectic. Mukherjee, who has put together his more international wardrobe, is still not sure what to expect from China. "The world wants to be in China, but I am just here to test the waters. I am not sure how trade relations works out between India and China, but if the people here are keen, we are more than willing to come."

Anand Kabra is more excited about the Middle Kingdom. It is important to come first hand and understand the culture, how society has developed and it is essential to figure China out. Kabra says his Shanghai collection

has been inspired by Draupadi and is called She was dark, she was blue.

Sujal Shah, head of fashion, IMG India, also reiterates that it is early days yet. In a new market, it is important to have a physical presence. "This is an exercise in building relationships, a chance to meet our Asian counterparts, the media and interact with the people here," says Shah.

The Indian industry, however, can safely put their faith in Chinese planners, known for their long-term precision planning. Ingrid Yin, executive director, Shanghai International Fashion Center, asserts, "Indian fashion is well-developed internationally. We think there is enough space for them in the Chinese fashion industry."

Riva Ganguly Das, consul-general of India in Shanghai, is also confident that there is a future for Indian fashion here. "I think local Chinese will find their designs very attractive," says Das.