

Models display creations by designer Sabyasachi at the India Couture Week 2015 in New Delhi on Wednesday. The event also saw creations by noted French footwear designer Christian Louboutin.

ELEGANT REBELLION



On the RAMPAGE

By Radhika Bhalla in New Delhi

ACE FASHION designer Sabyasachi Mukherjee opened the Amazon India Couture Week in the Capital with a remarkable milestone- as he became the first Indian designer to collaborate with noted French footwear designer Christian Louboutin.

Rather than old-world charm and vintage glory that the Kolkata-based couturier is famous for, 'Sabya' as he is fondly called, decided to divert from expectation for his 'Bater Couture' show that was based on the theme of 'birds of prey' and royal hunts from the past.

The show began on Wednesday night in a palette of black and gold, with ensembles including beautifully embroidered overcoats, tulle saris with high-neck lace blouses and leather belts with his new logo of the Bengal tiger strategically nipping the waist in for men, there were *achkans* with large botanical motifs embroidered on them, plain black shawl drapes with *churidars*, and laced shoes.

As the show progressed, it got sexier in spirit. Beautiful embroidered, tulle and sequin laden capes hung gracefully off the models' shoulders which were teamed with extremely low-cut blouses and high-waisted *lehenga* skirts. In the beige colour theme that followed, glittering skinny pants were teamed with cowl neck tops, and *lehengas* became more diaphanous with tulle skirts

and embellishment.

While most would expect Sabyasachi to be mindful of every thread and seam of his creations, he challenged his own status quo by adding layered of frayed material as a statement piece to the garments. A red embroidered ensemble with frayed strands on the right shoulder created a stir amongst the audience, inviting a round of applause. The finale walk took place to the tune of *Jeena*

The five-day India Couture Week will continue till August 2



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Yaha Marna Yaha from the 1970 film, *Mera Naam Joker*, and Louboutin was called up on stage to take a bow.

In a special tête-à-tête with Mail Today, Sabyasachi said, "There are times when you just need to push and tell yourself that you're still alive. I didn't do it for business relevance; I did it to see how much I could push myself. I wanted to have fun, and I really had a lot of fun designing the clothes."

Commenting on the presentation, he stated, "I didn't want to make it too sugary and too greasy. I wanted to do something that has a lot of opulence but a lot of restraint at the same time."

Sharing his views on the theme - 'birds of prey', he said, "Every time I do a show people say 'same-old', which is absolutely fine because it's the perfect logic to brand building. But there are times when I want to play cat-and-mouse and tell them I'm beyond what you think I am."

As a special collaboration for the show, Christian Louboutin created an exquisite range of 80 towering heels and lace-up shoes for both men and women with the iconic red sole under each.

Adding an ethnic flavour to the designs, the iconic shoe of 'Devibroda' by Louboutin which pays homage to Sita Devi of Baroda has been made with quintessential Sabyasachi embroidery of acid-dyed burnt sequins and tea-dyed cotton threads. Similarly, the signature 'Victoria' heels by Louboutin were embellished with burnt *zardozi* and vintage Parsi *gara* for the collection.

Sabyasachi opens India Couture Week

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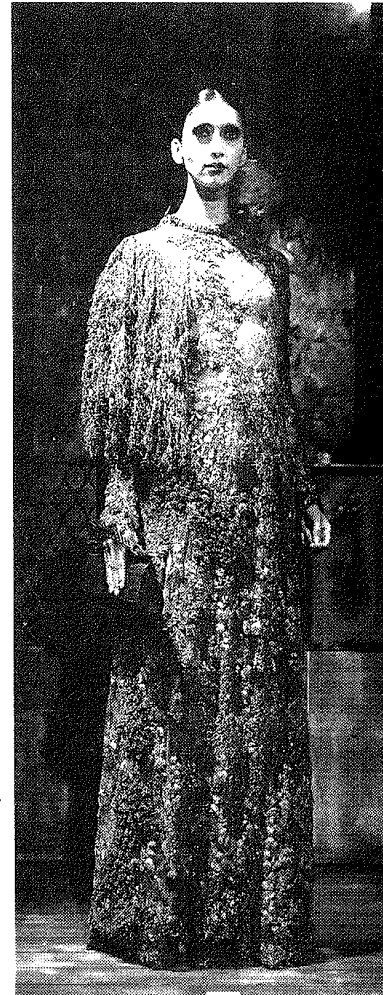
Tension between the possible and the seemingly impossible is what makes fashion so captivating, and Sabyasachi Mukherjee's opening act titled "Bater", on Day 1 for Amazon India Couture Week 2015 was a pure reflection of the same.

With elaborate and regal attires celebrating hand embroidery from different parts of India and the added glamour of French footwear maestro Christian Louboutin's famed red soles, models with glossy hair pulled back into a bun and dark wine lips, strutted the runway donning Sabyasachi's trademark silhouettes in deep hues such as forest greens, burgundy, beige, blacks and maroons.

The embroidery was visibly edgier, feral and gothic and the collection entailed saris with heavy appliqué and zari work draped over coats and jackets with belts, short and long asymmetrical dresses, saris with embellished full-sleeve blouses, capes, coats and vests with zardozi and resham work, shimmery long maxi dresses, skirts and trousers, capes, bandhgalas teamed up with contrasting shawls, sherwanis with intricate handwork and Nehru jackets.

After the show, Sabyasachi revealed that there had been no fabric involved in this collection and everything had been hand embroidered and tooled to create fabrics. And an average garment took about 365 man-hours of labour.

"It was a basically a modern and eccentric travel line. We used a lot of hand embroidery from different parts of India. There was zardozi, Badla ka kaam, intricate resham ka kaam and



Models display creations by designer Sabyasachi Mukherjee at the India Couture Week 2015 in New Delhi on Wednesday night.

— BUNNY SMITH

many more. So, all sorts of old Indian embroidery was interpreted in the modern way of geometry and flat lines. For us, it was a kind of new expression," the designer added.

Louboutin, 52, who was visibly awestruck by the line, too spoke of the designer's eye for detailing and complimented him on his work. "It was a beautiful collection and I had a great experience working with Sabs (as he usually refers to the designer) and I absolute-

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ly loved the set and outfits. Of course, I knew a lot about his work, but I had never attended any of his shows. So, for me it

was an amazing. I have barely attended any Indian fashion shows but this was special and I really loved it," said Louboutin.

The show saw no show-stoppers and when asked about why he had not got a Bollywood diva to walk the ramp, Sabyasachi said, "Christian Louboutin and I have a lot of friends from Bollywood. He has dressed up some of the most gorgeous women in the world and, I think, for me he was my showstopper."

Trade body expects cotton stocks to swell

Cotton Association of India blames CCI for sluggish sale of fibre

OUR BUREAU

Mumbai, July 30

The Cotton Association of India expects India to pile up huge inventory of cotton just like China, if the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) does not take measures to offload its stock swiftly.

Maintaining the cotton output at the last estimated level of 38.27 million bales (a bale is 170 kg), Dhiren N Sheth, President, CAI, said the Corporation had procured about 8.7 million bales from farmers as part of the Government's minimum support price commitment.

Unfortunately, he said, looking at the pace at which CCI is selling the cotton, it is expected that it would be left with a sizeable quantity of cotton by the end of the season (in September).

This does not augur well for the country with apprehension of a major support price operation looming large at the start of next cotton season, he added. India's cotton inventory is expected to

surge 25 per cent to 7.39 million bales by October from 5.89 million a year earlier. The faulty policy of China led to it holding huge cotton stockpile equivalent to its two year consumption. Though China has stopped procuring cotton from farmers and switched to distributing direct subsidy to farmers from this year, Sheth said it is still sitting on a huge stockpile which it finds hard to dispose.

"India needs to learn a lesson from China's mistake and dispose of the cotton lying with CCI quickly, to avoid getting into a China-like situation," he said.

According to the latest Government data, the acreage under cotton is marginally lower at 9.9 million hectares against 10.05 million hectares in 2013-14 as farmers shifted to other remunerative crops due to low prices of the fibre.

Though the demand for cotton has improved marginally, the prices are almost flat with occasional spurts. Going by trends in commodity futures markets, analysts expect cotton prices to range between ₹4,200 and ₹4,400 a quintal in the coming season. This is slightly higher than the minimum support price of ₹4,050 fixed by the Government.