



THE GIFT REGISTRY

All newly wed couples know that feeling of despair when they open the umpteenth box of glass bowls. To avoid such eventualities, shops and e-commerce websites suggest that you shamelessly tell your guests what you want for a gift. This gets into a gift registry.

“One of the main challenges here is the ‘what will people think’ mindset,” says Candice Pereira, creative head of Marry Me wedding planners in Mumbai, which recently handled a wish list for a bridal shower. “This was easier as the bridal shower is more intimate. The guest list included the bride’s close friends and immediate family.”

“The concept is well ahead of its time here,” says Aparna Dalal of lamhe.co.in, which is pitched as India’s premier online gift registry service. The store is now planning to launch the service officially. To use it, you have to sign a formal agreement form stating the minimum number of gifts that guests will buy. If you fall short, you pay by way of compensation. “This way, we ensure that our efforts — printing letters and the like — are not wasted,” says Vandana Sarawgi of Amrapali. She has been contemplating an official launch for two years but kept postponing it for the fear that the conservative Indian mindset might not take too well to it. The change, obviously, is here. ■

LOVE IS BLING

An unmistakable trait of a Gujarati is his affinity for diamonds. They are to him what gold is to Bappi Lahiri. The Gujarati proclivity for adding its seductive glitter to pens, coffee mugs, mobile phones, belts, shoes and even pen drives is now being milked by Surat’s jewellers.

“Diamond-studded accessories are fast becoming a rage among the Surtis. They walk into jewellery stores with their gadgets, shoes and spectacles and ask that they be given the sparkle of real diamonds,” says Praveen Nanavati, a leading manufacturer of diamond-encrusted accessories in Surat.

A simple leather belt may cost anything between Rs 500 to Rs 2,500, but when it is customised, the price can go upto Rs 25,000 to Rs 50,000. Bhimji Jewellers at Ghod Dod road is famous for personalising electronic gadgets and fashion accessories. “You could easily spend a few hundreds on a nice pair of designer sneakers but if you really want to make your shoes sparkle and stand out in the crowd, you want diamonds on them. A jewel encrusted shoelace clip adds that extra bit of class and shine to your favourite lace-ups,” says Vikas Juneja of Bhimji Jewellers. ■



DOWN AND ACROSS

Turn bus around to find a port,” reads the first clue of the cryptic crossword she had received from her radio jockey fiancé on her birthday. “USB,” the avid Crossword solver filled in, excitedly, before going on to crack the entire puzzle containing witty clues about herself, her name, her favourite colour among other personal idiosyncracies.

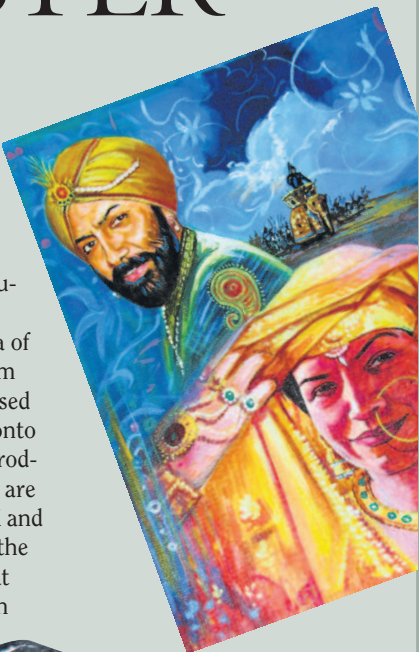
Yazad Dotiwala, who supplies crosswords to newspapers, was the man behind this unusual birthday present. Dotiwala, who started designing

crosswords based on personality traits on a friend’s behest a month ago, is now inundated with such requests four to five times a month. Unlike the standard newspaper crosswords that he designs in ten minutes, these personal crosswords take longer. They entail getting feedback for a set of questions about the person. “These puzzles require client participation. Sometimes people are not willing to spend that amount of time or energy disclosing details. They look for a readymade personal puzzle which is not possible,” says Dotiwala. ■



THE POSTER BOYS

You can now hope to be seen in Amitabh Bachchan’s shoes or Prithviraj Kapoor’s crown, irrespective of your age, height or talent. A Mumbai firm called Indian Hippy offers a range of exclusive hand-painted posters worked on by film poster artists. The venture began with the idea of reviving the traditional art of hand-painted film posters and supporting their artists. Personalised posters in which a customer’s face is painted onto a film poster is Indian Hippy’s most popular product. This combination of portraits and posters are in demand even in countries like Italy, US, UK and Dubai. Hinesh Jethwani, founder and head of the firm, recalls a customer whose eyes welled up at seeing her customised Bollywood poster which featured her late husband. ■



MATCH FIXING

Popping the question is not a small impulsive occasion anymore. It is a full-fledged pre-meditated event, choreographed by invisible professionals called event managers. If you want to engineer a fake kidnapping, shower flowers from a helicopter, propose in a limo or serenade your bride-to-be, there’s an organiser at your service. While some prefer luxurious experiences (yacht rides or air charter services costing anywhere between Rs 60,000 and Rs 3.5 lakh per hour), others are content with relatively inexpensive options (singing telegrams) to mark D-day.

“We do everything and anything,” says Ruchi Chopra of Delhi-based firm Any Surprise Any Place. “Customers can either call in or e-mail us with their requests. Sometimes, people who call in are clueless about what they should do to make their beloved feel special. We help them out by offering them solutions and existing package details. Also, we try to know a little bit about our customers so that we can tailor-make an experience to their liking.”

Recently, the firm had a request to organise a filmi dinner for a couple. “We brought a truck inside a farm house. The dinner table was set inside the truck with dancers doing a typical Bol-

lywood item song. There was a chef who dished out a special something for the duo. The entire event had a very rustic theme and it was great fun to put it all together. Our minimum orders are at Rs 1000 and can go up to any obnoxious figure. We do lot of fun stuff like personalised toilet-paper rolls which aren’t particularly popular. We also have a dedicated team of violinists and guitarists who play for customers,” says Chopra. Mumbai’s Dhawal Oza of Dreamz also recalls arranging a similar proposal. “We had booked a private mini theatre for the couple, screened the girl’s favourite movie and flashed the famous four-word question on screen,” he says. ■



FITS AND STARTS



There are people who believe clothes maketh the woman, and if you will, the man. Among them are wardrobe stylist Varsha Bhawnani, who runs a store called Vinegar in Bandra, and partners of the Mumbai-based XY Personal Shoppers. Bhawnani, who has seen women make many style goof-ups (like head-to-toe monotones) charges at least Rs 20,000 for a wardrobe-styling session. It entails prior consultation to know the client’s requirements and a wardrobe scan. Thereafter, she revamps your entire cupboard, discarding unwanted clothes and making a whole new range of separates.

Women are willing to experiment with styles that flatter them, says Bhawnani. Men, on the other hand, “are afraid to experiment and sometimes need us to push them that extra bit and assure them it’s going to be worth it,” she points out.

XY Personal Shoppers also offer customised corporate grooming and kitty party grooming. “Our customer profile is diverse, just like our services. It depends on the service people opt for. For instance, we have NRI clients who come to Mumbai only to shop for weddings. But we also accompany city couples when they go on shopping expeditions to look for wedding outfits or gifts for their in-laws,” says Rashmi Hemrajani of XY Personal Shoppers. The sex ratio of their clientele is surprisingly balanced. “We have also had times when the man has introduced his wife/girlfriend to us for a makeover,” says Hemrajani. ■



With inputs from Diya Banerjee from Delhi, Somdatta Basu in Kolkatta, Harit Mehta in Ahmedabad and Jagashree Nandi in Bangalore