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New-Age Denims

Denims are being given a new lease of life with cuts, designs, colours, and styles, which ensure that they remain an eternal fashion statement. **Bindu Gopal Rao** writes.

Denims are known as the spine of any wardrobe. Trends may vary from season to season; they may come and go but denims stay unaffected by this. Denims have become quite versatile over the years and designing with them has paved the way for bolder cuts and styles.

DO THE NEW

Denim is no longer simply defined as a five-pocket jean, and has seen applications in dresses, jackets, shirts, and even shoes. With market globalisation, denim has become a democratic medium that cuts across looks and price points. From street-inspired styles to luxury renditions, denim is everywhere. Likewise, the shades of denim have evolved drastically. It is little wonder then that Technopak reports establish that the denim market is estimated to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 14.5 per cent and reach ₹39,651 crore by 2021, and ₹77,999 crore by 2026.

Right now, fashion is becoming increasingly vintage and denims are no exception. When it comes to denims, everything old is new again, whether its minimalism of the 2000s or the grunge look of the '90s.

Rishabh Raj, Denim Designer, Gric Clothing, says, "Sustainability is grooving in, inside the sturdy indigo cloth. Knitted denims are in trend right now in huge amounts, in comparison to the 3x1 (woven



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twill) jean in menswear, womenswear, and kids' wear." It is now time for high-rise, high-waist, and chic airy-fit denim styles, which give you a casual yet smart look for any occasion you choose them for.

"There have been revolutionary innovations in the production of denim. Stretching, spinning, and knitting techniques are few among many today," says a spokesperson from Madame. Masumi Mewawalla, Emblaze, adds, "Distressed denims are gaining a lot of attention along with embroidered ones, which are a quick pick for the industry. Denim overalls are making a comeback, and blingy and ripped denims have also begun to be a favourite amid these new picks." The making of the fabric has been witnessing a continuous evolution. While traditionally, denim fabrics are made with 100 per cent cotton, the introduction of Nylon 6,6 gives it flexibility and longevity. Combination yarns for warp and weft of cotton and nylon, spandex, modal, and TENCEL™ are used extensively for women's apparel to create the required stretch. Fibres of bamboo are also being introduced in the making of denims. Lakshmi Narasimhan, Designer and Co-founder, Saha—The Crafters, says, "The latest addition to denim styles would be wide-legged jeans, slit jeans, and palazzos. In the Indian context, denim profiles include introduction of patches with ikat weaves. Experimentation with traditional fabrics adorned with kalamkari prints and *Lambani* antique patches is also in trend."

CONTEMPORARY CUES

The turn-ups at hem and frilled edges are in and so is the use of contrasting colour threads for stitching to give the product an overall appealing look. Patchy denims, without a doubt, are playing a role this season, whether it is an unwashed area doubling as a patch, a denim patch, or printed fabrics working as appliqué. "Tapes applied on



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the sides of jeans are getting permanent in terms of fashion. Denims are now headed towards active sportswear (athleisure), too, which is a very successful step towards getting a foot over fashion in this realm. Even non-denim fabrics are attached to denims for the purpose of tactile textures and versatility, complementing seasonal tones and innovative silhouettes. Corduroy denims, too, are getting handy. Performance-wise, denim is playing a mighty role in athleisure. These styles elevate core basics. Stripes in denim are again in the hunt as they have been impacting collection for a few seasons now," adds Raj. Embroidered denims have made a big comeback in 2019. Women have been expressing their unique taste through the different kinds of embroidered denims that they pick for themselves, be it feminine florals or punk rock studs.



A SINGLE PAIR OF JEANS NEEDS AROUND 11,000 LITRES OF WATER BETWEEN PRODUCTION OF RAW MATERIALS AND THE FINISHED PANT.

GREEN TALK

The denim industry is notorious for its water wastage and the use of chemicals. A single pair of jeans needs around 11,000 litres of water between production of raw materials and the finished pant. This is why brands are opting for eco-friendly options. Sustainable, organic, and khadi denims (handlooms) are some eco-friendly options that are being tested out by brands. Sulphur-based dyes used in the making of denim are now considerably eco-friendly, helping manufacturers in cutting down on the rinsing process; instead, contemporary dyes bond well with the denim by the process of oxidisation. The realm of denims is seeing revolutionary times as all the rules of the past are gone. There is a realisation that the social and environmental impact of the denim industry has to change, and sustainability is driving this transformation.

“We are seeing a multitude of innovations starting from the supply chain around stretch, performance, and sustainability. Brands are seeking to lower environmental impacts by reducing water usage and introduce concepts of circularity. Using TENCEL™ Lyocell in denim helps to curb environmental issues to a certain level. Factors like responsible wood sourcing, closed-loop manufacturing, and compostability

make for perfect ingredients for a lower carbon footprint. TENCEL™ Lyocell with the REIFIBRA™ technology brings forth circularity by upcycling cotton scraps to make new fibres, which are strong, soft, and traceable,” explains Tricia Carey, Denim Segment Head, Lenzing AG.

Brands have been closely engaging with their patrons and have increased storytelling around denim. Through social media, brands connect with customers in ways that traditional retailing cannot. While denim is still dominated by the right fit, digital marketing is key when it comes to conveying the attitude of the brand. There is a surge in recycled cotton in denim production and some brands are advancing in sustainable fashion by setting standards for recycling cotton. Lenzing uses TENCEL™ Lyocell with the REIFIBRA™ technology to fuse recycled cotton with denim. Major mills and global brands—namely Levis, Reformation, DL1961, Country Road, Boyish Denim, and more—are already using the REIFIBRA™ technology in denim. While it is quite tough to push denims under the eco-friendly list of fabrics yet, there is a need to know that traditionally, jeans were made of 100 per cent cotton, and this makes them an inherently



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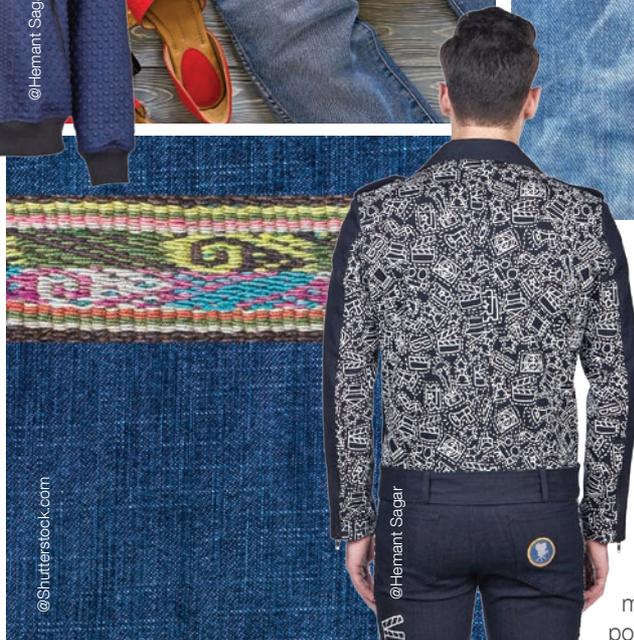
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TREND TALK

DENIM-BASED TIE-DYE HAS MADE A COMEBACK WITH BOHEMIAN SKIRTS AND JACKETS ALONG WITH MOTIF-BASED PATTERNS.



by designers to create accessories such as bowler and hobo bags. Designer Hemant Sagar opines, "Pintucks down the center of trousers is a prominent streetwear trend this year, which is being adapted with denim as the base. Denim-based tie-dye has made a comeback with bohemian skirts and jackets along with motif-based patterns. Denim weaving and macramé techniques have gained popularity in the accessories category. Bubble denim and bold prints on denim

are futuristic techniques being used by industry disruptors." For women's fashion, trends such as high-waist and flare styles, perfectly running parallel to the comfort and drape offered by TENCEL™ denim, and for men, multipurpose denims with ease and comfort, are in.

eco-friendly fabric to a certain extent. "There are factories and brands that try to make a cut in this category in many ways, including the use of less water with foam-washed denims, reconstructed jeans that are upcycled from old stocks, denim made out of bamboo and hemp, 100 per cent cotton denims, and even factories that use recycled water and solar power for running their machines," avers Narasimhan.

IN VOGUE

Brands are experimenting with this classic trend to enhance its versatility. Mid-rise jeans with lace hemlines and tie-knot ankle detailing are trending. Denims are also being heavily adopted

"We are seeing new application methods for indigo and garments finishing. Indigo applications with foam dyeing are modernising the denim industry and we expect that there will be more innovations for indigo applications in the coming seasons. Advancement in garments finishing with laser, ozone, and combined treatments are reducing the environmental impact, while also being safer for workers," adds Carey. ■