

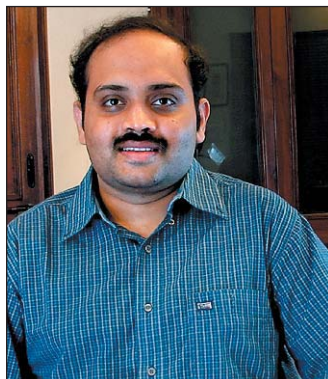
# Living



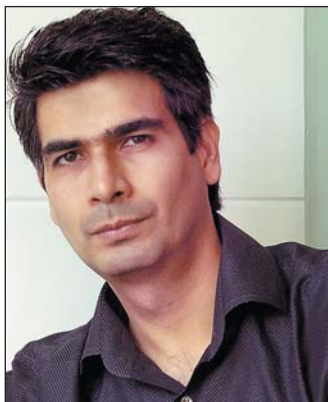
Traditional Indian jewellery has made a grand comeback thanks to a slew of period films. Read more on Page 3

## Bloggers Inc!

Blogs today are spaces where minds congregate to fight for causes. Some blogs mint money, some get more eyeballs than the latest bestseller and some get corporatised. Whoever said blogs were just random personal diaries, asks avid blogger Savitha Karthik



Clockwise from left: Amit Agarwal, Kiruba Shankar and Rajesh Lalwani



Looking at an old blog is today like browsing through an old photo album full of yellowing pictures, innocence written all over them. Blogs in our age are anything but yellowing — they are slick and jazzed up with youtube videos, podcasts and pictures — all of which have turned blogs into neat, professional articles, making the old blogs look jaded.

Checking out blogs has become so much part of our online lives that it is today almost an involuntary action and the most popular online activity after checking mail.

There are blogs of all kinds, and this variety is a reflection of individual tastes and personalities. What people talk of on their blogs is as varied as the stuff one gets to hear as a fly on the wall at a get-together or a party.

The biggest strength, therefore, of a blog is its conversational nature. A blog is effective communication as here, it is always a two-way street. When actor Aamir Khan talks about why he will run with the Olympic torch, people comment. And comment! Just check out the sheer number of comments on his blog! And the actor responds (actually responds) to comments on his blog. The Olympic torch run is just

one example of how blogs are taking up issues of importance. Blogs may never replace mainstream media (MSM), but they certainly are generating more heat, opinions and issues — all of which are being taken up by the mainstream media in a big way.

Not just MSM, companies are also taking keen interest in blogs. The communications team of Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL) actually arranged a trip to the new airport for blogging communities. This was covered by [bangalore.metblogs.com](http://bangalore.metblogs.com)

### Niche is in

When Gaurav Sabnis ([gauravsabnis.blogspot.com](http://gauravsabnis.blogspot.com)) had to quit his job "in principle" for blogging on the IIPM issue, MSM stood up and took notice. Or when Blank Noise ([blog.blanknoise.org](http://blog.blanknoise.org)) organises public interventions on eve-teasing across cities, MSM takes it up. In that sense, blogs act as the Jantar-Mantar or the MG statue premises, where people congregate to support causes! Exclu-

sive foodie blogs such as [saffron-trail.blogspot.com](http://saffron-trail.blogspot.com), [mamma.blogspot.com](http://mamma.blogspot.com) like [mamasayso](http://mamasayso.com), travel blogs like Arun Bhat's [travel.paintedstork.com/blog](http://travel.paintedstork.com/blog) all draw clicks for their niche subjects. As Kiruba Shankar, CEO of Business Blogging Pvt Ltd, a social media consultancy and founder Director of F5ive Technologies, explains, "Earlier, a blog used to be a place where one wrote about random stuff. Now, niche blogs that have a strong focus on a single subject have emerged. These tend to be more popular with their target audience."

Are blogs making a difference to people's lives and careers? Most certainly. There are young writers who have won publishing deals, and are writing books (the compulsive confessor by Mumbai-based journalist Meenakshi Reddy Madhavan, for instance), or there are published authors blogging (marginalien, the blog of author Manjula Padmanabhan and Sonia Faleiro's blog, for example). Not that their blogs talk of their own books, they mostly reflect views and observations of the authors on varied subjects.

Blogging did make a huge difference to Amit Agarwal of Digital Inspiration, a popular technology blogger ([labnol.org](http://labnol.org)). A professional blogger, he earns his daily bread by way of blogging. Agarwal explains that he quit his software job in the US, to take up blogging. "At that time, I was just looking for freelance work through a blog.

Luckily, that didn't happen!" he says. And he attributes his new car (a Honda CR-V) to blogging! Ad-revenue generated from the blog wins him his income.

Random personal diaries on the net? That definition is long gone. Also, during blog infancy, a lot of bloggers preferred anonymity. Not any more. If you check out the blog of Chennai-based Kiruba, you will know. He has his phone number, address, all up front on his blog. Blogs are increasingly being seen as an effective platform to showcase your skills. More and more recruiters have started blogs, more and more companies check out employee profiles, and now blogs are part of the broad spectrum of Web 2.0. Tweets, scraps, wikis, podcasts are all part of the Web 2.0 experience. 'About pages' on blogs have become increasingly important, in that sense. It complements your Facebook profile, or your twitter presence. Explains Amit Agarwal, "In the early 90s and mid-90s, people went to sites like Geocities or Tripod to set up home pages. Now that concept of home page is dead."

### Micro-blogging

Not only are home pages dead and blogging in, micro-blogging is very much the thing to do, it seems. Micro-blogging, for the uninitiated, is about conveying your thoughts real quickly, while on the move. Being on Twitter, for instance. According to Kiruba, "The biggest advantage of Twitter is its 140 character limit. It means people have to convey their point in 20 words." While contending that for many, it is much easier to tweet (no, not like the bird, but what you write on Twitter), Kiruba explains that blogs will now be a place to write more detailed, well-analysed posts.

However, at the end of the day, a blog is merely a tool for communication. As marketing communication professional Rajesh Lalwani of Blogworks puts it, it makes more sense to talk of the future of communication and marketing, rather than the future of blogging. "It

becomes more important to see how blogging can be used as a tool in businesses," he explains.

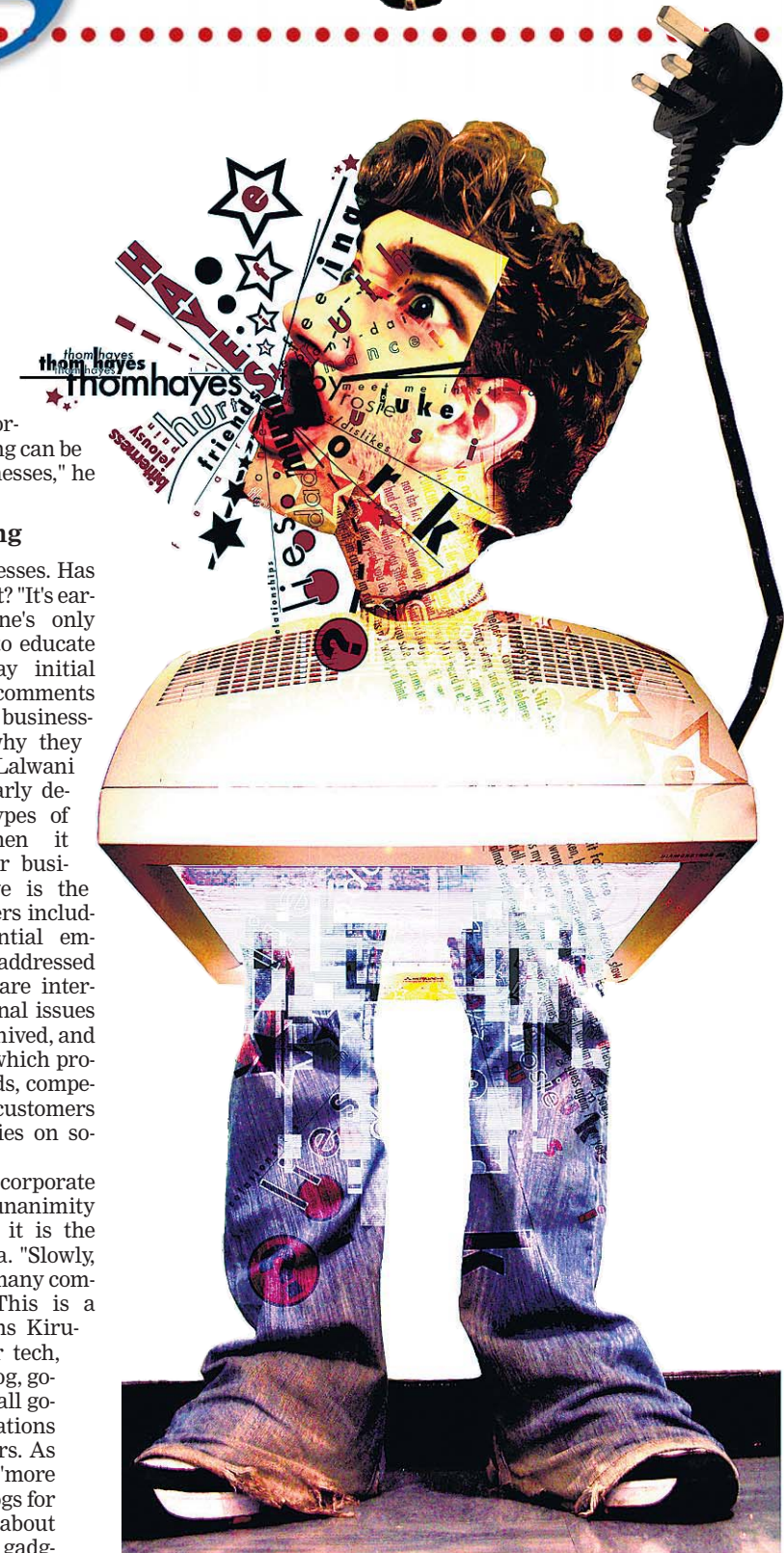
### Corporate blogging

Blogging for businesses. Has it taken off in India yet? "It's early days and everyone's only learning. The key is to educate the market and allay initial fears over negative comments from customers. Also, businesses are still asking why they should set up blogs," Lalwani explains. He also clearly delineates the three types of blog initiatives when it comes to blogging for businesses. One initiative is the blog where stakeholders including customers, potential employees, investors are addressed directly. Then, there are internal blogs where internal issues are addressed and archived, and blogs for marketing, which provide insights on brands, competition, and also see customers setting up communities on social networking sites.

On the issue of corporate blogs, there is near unanimity among bloggers that it is the next big thing in India. "Slowly, but surely, I'm seeing many companies start blogs. This is a healthy sign," explains Kiruba. Corporate blog or tech, cricket blog or food blog, going forward, they are all going to see more innovations and draw niche readers. As Agarwal points out, "more people are going to blogs for frank opinions on just about anything, be it buying gadgets or restaurant reviews. It is also emerging as a great way for people to connect with family and friends. Private blogging (where blogs are open only for a select few) is also a huge trend."

As for trends, Kiruba feels blogs will start to incorporate a lot of audio and video podcasts regularly. A great blog will be one which encompasses text, photos, audio and video, he feels.

So, what are you waiting for? Go revamp that blog of yours. Who knows how it could change your life!



### Blogroll this!

- [desicritics.org](http://desicritics.org)  
Part of the blogcritics family of sites, desicritics has some of the best desi writers, and covers a range of topics from politics to cinema to food to sport and literature.
- [desipundit.com](http://desipundit.com)  
This blog brings a compilation of the best posts in the Indian blog circles, on a daily basis. Desipundit just pointed to a link on April 18, which tells us the big B has started blogging too. ([blogs.bigadda.com/ab/](http://blogs.bigadda.com/ab/))
- [unofficialipl.com](http://unofficialipl.com)  
We can't give the IPL's T20 matches a miss, can we, when it's the flavour of the season? Catch up on the IPL action on the Unofficial IPL blog.