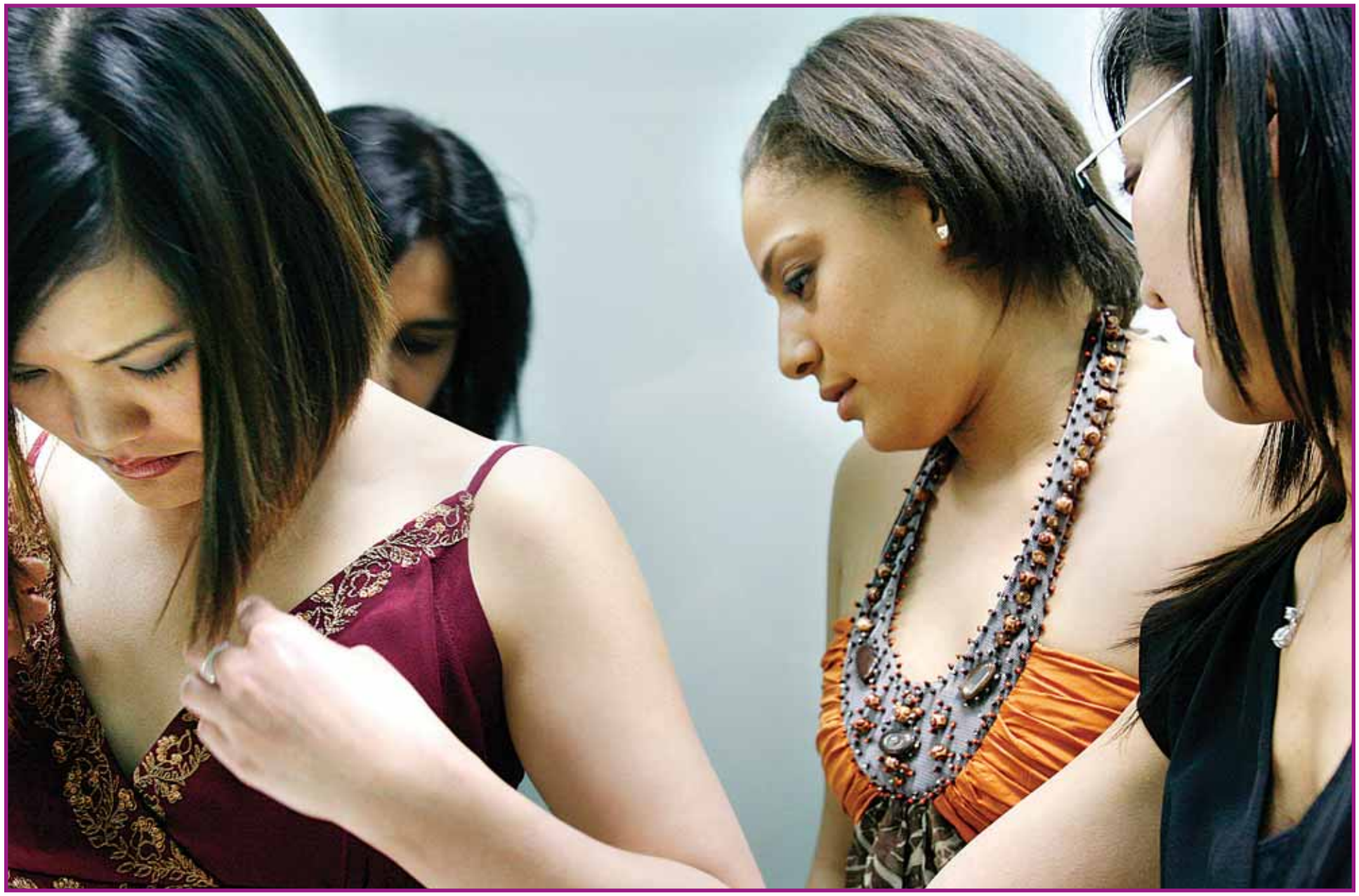


MARJAN SADOUGHI

***Above:*** *Kim Ta has her clothes adjusted by Lekha Srinivasan, owner of ZenTrend, while Christiana Samani and Vanteresa Bui look on. Left: ZenTrend models get ready for their performance at a fashion show held at Filoli Center on March 10.*

# SOUTH ASIAN CHIC

## LOCAL RETAILER SEES BRIGHT FUTURE IN EASTERN-INSPIRED FASHIONS

*By Zunaira Durrani*

A change in fashion isn't just a sign of the times. It can signify a change in attitudes, affluence — or demographics.

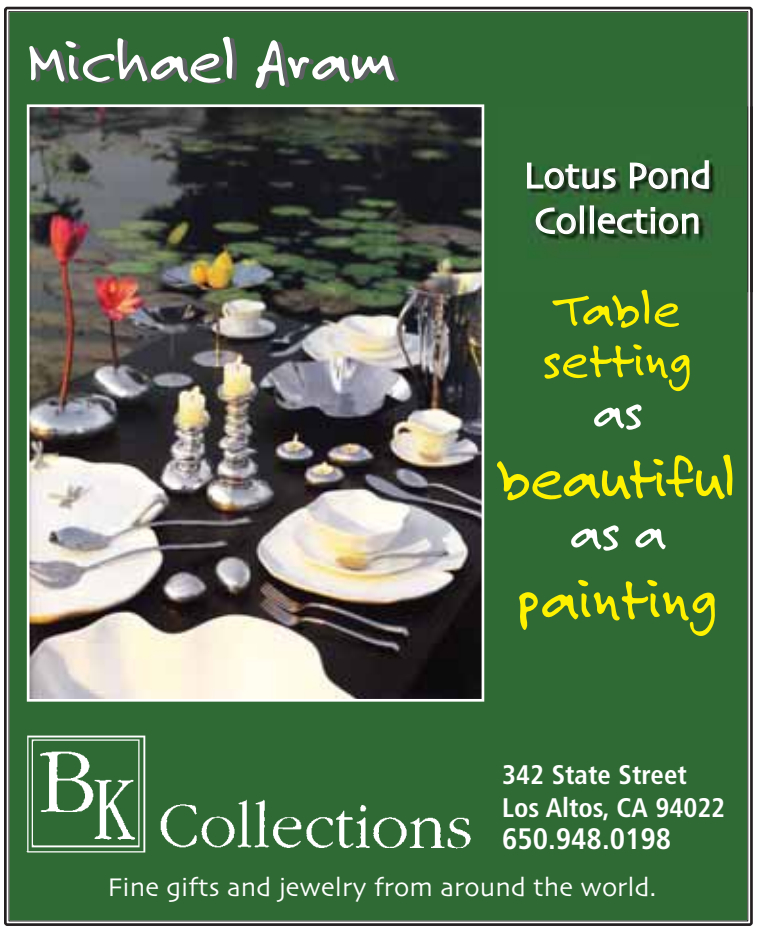
No one watches this last aspect more closely than Lekha Srinivasan, a Mountain View entrepreneur (not to mention mother, downtown resident and former high-tech project manager) who has turned her own savvy for imports and organization into an online clothing outlet, ZenTrend.

Noticing an increasing popularity here in South Asian clothing — kurtas (traditional Indian shirts) and pashminas became widely available a few years back, due in part, no doubt, to the ever-growing South Asian population in Silicon Valley — Srinivasan decided to bring the famously colorful, high-quality textiles of her native India back to California. With the help of her own team of designers, the dramatic embroideries, sexy sequins and brilliant brocades have been given a Western spin.

***The dramatic embroideries, sexy sequins and brilliant brocades have been given a Western spin.***

At first glance, ZenTrend's offerings might seem exotic: an all-silk, gold-embellished block print skirt with a lightly sequined

▶ *See **ZENTREND**, page 32*



MARJAN SADOUGHI

***This dress*** *by ZenTrend was worn by Kim Ta at a fashion show held at Filoli Center.*

## ZENTREND

▶ *Continued from page 29*

top. A halter silk dress in brown and rust with a beaded hemline just above the knees.

But Srinivasan knows that's what fashion trends are all about. Exotic designs are introduced as cutting-edge fashion before they enter the mainstream. Eventually, they become common enough that they don't seem exotic at all.

"Brocade is a heavy fabric and loved in the subcontinent of India and Pakistan, but finding no place in contemporary designs," Srinivasan notes.

> ***"I love the style, but want to avoid looking like I stepped directly off a Bollywood set."***
>
> NATASHA DANTZIG

Just wait — it's only a matter of time.

### Toned-down Bollywood

Several ZenTrend items were just the ticket for Natasha Dantzig, editor of New York-based SheFinds.com.

"Indian inspired clothing is huge right now, and I love the style, but want to avoid looking like I stepped directly off a Bollywood set," Dantzig wrote on the Web site. "The pieces I chose, this silk halter contrast dress, and this stunning

▶ *See **ZENTREND**, page 34*

## ZENTREND

▶ Continued from page 32

silk camisole with silver embroidery from ZenTrend.com, are just what I had in mind. I wore the dress out to dinner, and three different women asked where it was from."

Srinivasan says she had similar experiences — wowing her friends whenever she wore her Indian blouses, with their quality fabrics and embroidery — which helped convince her to start the company.

"I would come back [from India] and people would love my clothes," she said. "But everything you get back home is traditional, and the product had to be contemporary. You have high-end designers in India who are comparable to what I had in mind, but offering $400 to $500 apiece.

"I realized I knew what it takes to manufacture the outfit and I could create something stylish in an affordable price range."

ZenTrend tops start at $45, and dresses at $65, in a variety of shades and colors that are combined to accentuate traditional motifs and embroidered prints. Shirts are made in sizes 6 to 12, while skirts are available from small to X-large.

Lately, Srinivasan has been showing off her spring collection in small gatherings, and looking forward to her new lineup. "My summer collection will be added within the next 1.5 to 2 months," she said.

### The modern outlet

Besides the clothes themselves, Srinivasan, 41, found other ways to break the mold. For one, she decided to do away with the brick-and-mortar retail model, and her wares are offered online only at www.zentrend.com.

Her method of obtaining ZenTrend's designs — bringing the textiles and inspirations from India and having the clothes created by Indian designers — is another atypical approach.

From her home here (she now divides her time between Mountain View and New Delhi), Srinivasan contacted suppliers and buyers using an Indian trade Web site. Getting the supply-chain process in place took six months of sample testing and finalizing a team of budding designers, she said.

Happy with her team of designers, Srinivasan exchanges ideas on new pieces with them, keeps an eye out for the newest Indian fabric, and otherwise spends time with her 9-year old daughter. She said styling outfits is proving to be the easier part of her new venture.

"The biggest challenge is marketing. I thought getting the supply chain in place would be tough, but you are in a market that is very, very competitive — it's a trillion-dollar industry," she said.

Srinivasan says she now has a cross section of shoppers — whom she identifies as students, working women and housewives — visiting www.zentrend.com. There is a 30-day money-back guarantee for online shoppers, and Srinivasan is currently seeking a small boutique to stock her clothing. ■

*E-mail Zunaira Durrani at zdurrani@mv-voice.com*

MARJAN SADOUGHI

***Lekha Srinivasan** talks about her fashion line, ZenTrend, with Jessica Aguirre from ABC Channel 7 during the fashion show at Filoli Center.*

### ■ INFORMATION

ZenTrend's clothing is available online at www.zentrend.com. More information is available on the Web site, by calling (866) 936-8763 weekdays between 8:30 a.m. and 6 p.m., or via e-mail at info@zentrend.com.

For another peek at the clothing, watch "Showbiz India" on KTSF Channel 26 between 10 and 11 a.m., where Reshma Dordi regularly wears ZenTrend fashions during her broadcast.

ROBERT L. CULVER D.C., D.A.C.N.B.

***Dr. Culver has recently opened a new facility in Mountain View where he provides natural healing processes utilizing modern chiropractic neurology and new biomechanical techniques that produce lasting results.***

- Recent recipient of *America's Top Chiropractors* Award
- Over 40 years in practice
- Board Certified Chiropractic Neurologist
- Applied Kinesiologist
- Pettibon Practitioner
- Certified in Neuro Emotional Technique
- Chiropractic Sports Physician
- Spinal Decompression
- Nutrition

CULVER CHIROPRACTIC
THE NEW CHIROPRACTIC

480 San Antonio Road
Mountain View, CA
650.559.7500

DR. CULVER'S
CASE STUDY OF THE WEEK

**Bulging Disc**

*"My back and leg are killing me. Every time I try to lift a roll of carpet, it feels as though someone is driving a dagger into my hip and pouring hot lead down my leg."*

Ernie was a carpet installer, and years of lifting and working bent-over had taken their toll. His MRI's revealed massive disc and joint degeneration. The surgeons he consulted were not optimistic about the outcome of surgery, given the extent of damage to the discs of L4 and L5 that had protruded and were pressing against the nerves causing his pain.

This was clearly a case for Spinal Decompression, a method of reducing the pressure on the disc, reducing the bulge and allowing the nerves to heal.

The outcome? Ernie was able to return to his work with zero pain. He lifts and installs carpet, water skis, surfs, and feels *"Fabulous!"*

*Call to schedule a no-charge consultation. Feel free to bring any MRI's, X-rays or lab studies you may have. Please mention MV-10.*

CHIROPRACTIC / REHABILITATION REINVENTED



CITY OF MOUNTAIN VIEW

**BECOME A VOLUNTEER MEDIATOR FOR THE MOUNTAIN VIEW MEDIATION PROGRAM**

The Mediation Program, sponsored by the City of Mountain View, is now accepting applications from volunteers who live in or work in Mountain View, or who own property in the City.

Typical cases handled by this program include:
Tenant - Landlord
Neighbor to Neighbor
Consumer

The program seeks applicants representative of the ethnic and economic diversity of the City. Bilingual applicants are particularly encouraged.

For more information, call the Mediation Program at 650-960-0495

Deadline for submitting an application is April 16, 2007.