

# Sunday Personality

JASMINE SINGH

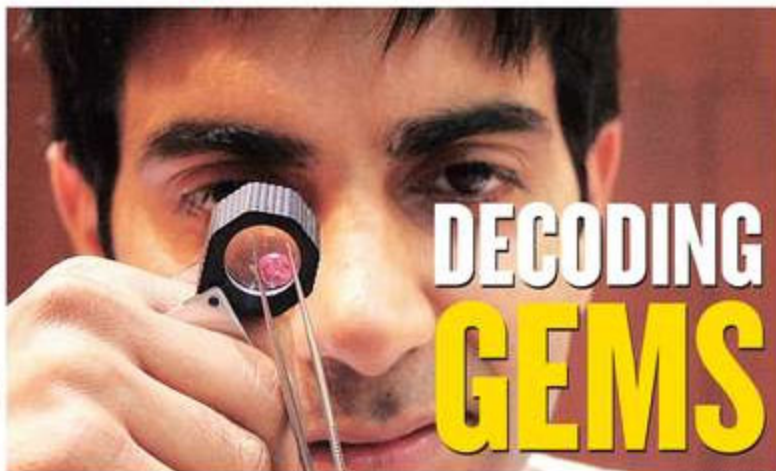
**L**OCKED in the cubicles of modern-day office and stressed by the demands of work, it is hard to find a glimpse of nature when you move your eyes away from work. But something may just help. "Look at your hand. If you are wearing a ring set with a gem, then you are looking at one of the most wonderful creations of nature," suggests Sibi Sethi, the couplet to Kishore Kishore in one of a handful of people in the entire region to have completed not one but three professional courses in gemstones. Every gemstone is a unique crystal deriving its colour from the basic elements studied in chemistry. That includes sapphires, red green emeralds, sunset yellow sapphirine and star bright diamond represent not only beauty, luck and fortune but science.

Sethi Soma Jewellers (Chandigarh), which he owns, is actually this whole world. Dozens of small boxes hold real sparkling, delicate, coloured gemstones and alongside the instruments required for evaluating them.

**What is a gemologist?**  
Let's start with gemology. It's the science, art and profession of identifying and evaluating gemstones. Actually, if you considered a geoscientist and a branch of mineralogy. A person who deals in this is known as a gemologist. Some jewellers are academically trained gemologists and are qualified to identify and evaluate gems. Some gemologists are specialists in various gemstones like Ruby or emeralds.

**In which category are you, trained degree holder or amateur?**  
I am a degree holder. I graduated from gemological Institute of India, Mumbai and I have been awarded the title of Fellow of Forum of Indian Gemologists (FFIG). I have also done the overfilled diploma course for Colour Gemmology from Gemological Institute of America, Carlisle.

**Why did you choose to be an expert in gemstones?**  
Gemology is an interesting field. Can you imagine there are 300 different gems and minerals? From the very beginning, when the earth was just molten rock, gemstones were created in the earth's crust in different forms. Like the crystals of life, a gemstone also undergoes various stages like deposit, mixing, cutting and polishing, to name a few. It's a



## DECODING GEMS

PHOTO: SURAJENDER

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vast and fascinating field. I am completely in love with gems and they seem to have a magical effect on me. They encompass a world and I enjoy decoding their secrets.

**And how do you do this?**  
The skill comes with the right mix of knowledge from various courses and experiences. In gemology, we are trained on various aspects like identifying gems, detection of synthetic and treated gemstones, hold about various

structures and physical mineral and optical properties of gems. This comes the understanding of the colour, clarity and cut of different gemstones. In addition to basic, other aspects are also taught that help in differentiate between imitations and real gemstones. Studies help, but I think a lot depends on natural instincts. I have a feeling for this work. It may sound like blowing a real trumpet, but I can identify a real from an imitation by just looking at

the gem.  
**This sounds interesting, but how do you practically do it?**  
As a gemologist, I have to know how to differentiate and identify synthetic and natural gemstones and colour enhanced or treated natural gemstones. There are various ways by which we do it like general identification of gems, identification by refractive index, specific gravity and identification by spectroscopy and

field tests through magnification. A gemologist takes into account various factors while valuing gemstones.  
**Can you elaborate on this?**  
Of course, although it would be like going back to my student days when I just started understanding the word gemstone and everything related to it. Let me see if I can make it simple for you. Gemological microscopic study helps to determine whether a gem is synthetic or natural by revealing nat

ural fluid inclusions. The spectroscopy in study on the other hand allows a gemologist to understand the spectral structure and measure the wavelength and intensity. And, when the gemstone are in a rough state, a gemologist studies the internal structure, mineral inclusions and natural surface markings.

**All this sounds very technical. Can a layman differentiate the real gem from an imitation?**

It is not easy. At the same time, it is not an impossible task. For instance, real gems always create deformities and their shapes should be a cause of concern. Next, if no inclusions are seen under a magnifying glass, the gem could be a fake one. On the other hand, fake stones may have peculiar inclusions, unlike the real gemstones. So people should be a little wary when they buy gemstones. There are so many imitations in the market that it is almost impossible to differentiate real from fake.

**Isn't it true that the market is flooded with synthetic stones?**

As I told you before, there are enough people who can pass fake in real and they are pretty good at it. I am equally astonished that the market for synthetic stones has increased by 20% per cent. As per the Gem and Jewellery Export Council, the number of synthetic stones imported in 2007 was 8.5 crore, which increased to 17.01 crore in 2004 and in the year 2006 it touched 22.62 crore. Synthetic stones have their own market.

**Do you think market for gemstones has grown?**

Certainly. Like gold or silver, gemstones are also considered as an investment because they too have a resale value. Besides, gemstone jewellery goes well with all kinds of dresses and on all occasions. This region has a huge potential for gemstones provided it is explored in the right manner.

**You remain an investment that needs an insurance wrap.**

Exactly. This is what we need right now. An insurance cover for the gemstones could actually be very expensive.

**What do you think is the need of the hour?**

The need is to have an organised trade. Hopefully with the right kind of people entering this field, it would no longer be the same story. Also, there should be good laboratories to check gemstones. At our mine in Chandigarh, we get gemstones checked and certified from a New York based lab and IGI in Mumbai. But the region surely needs more labs.

shobha.jain@rediffmail.com

# Completely bindass

She is often in the news for reasons other than her infrequent chartbusters. Here's Hema Sardesai in conversation with ROSHMILA BHATTACHARYA

**Were you supposed to be one of the participants on Mission Udaan?**

I was invited but I never signed up. I was really busy with my album, *Bloom*.

**Wasn't *Bloom* ready a year ago?**

Yes, but we shot the video later. I also had to work on the release. Like the UP-based Mission Udaan, *Bloom* also competes for awards like protecting the girl child.

**Last November, you joined a day-long strike in Goa against the Special Economic Zone. Don't you want your home state to develop?**

I am not working against building the SEZ here. But we don't have so much barren land to develop. The SEZ is the crux of life, and into Goa's green hills and fields. What would that leave the local people?

**Some people believe that your social work is a ploy to be in the news.**

No way. It can never be the self-promotion. For a woman who cares, it is ready to face a little charge and police firing. It is because I believe every child who enters the world has the right to live.

**Were you discriminated against as a child?**

No, neither my sister, neither me. I was never made to feel guilty for who we were. I had a much-loved and secure childhood. That is perhaps why I feel the need to represent against social ills.

**My parent, Sri Sri Ram Shankar spoke eloquently on the power of life in the very end. Nirmala's Convention last year, *Bloom* is dedicated to him.**

The weepy TV serials that perpetuate gender discrimination bring my blood to boil... the girl child in tele-drama may grow up to prove her worth

We hear them playing at dinner tables and yet they take you to a spiritual realm that's way beyond the reach of the regular characters.

**You've retained your second name, Sardesai, after marriage, any particular reason?**

I insisted on it. I love the Hindi ki anyon chhoda ke jao kind of songs. By keeping my second name intact, I just connected with my parents. The weepy TV serials that perpetuate gender discrimination bring my blood to boil.

**Essentially, the girl child in a tele-drama may grow up to prove her worth. But by then, the early episodes inspiring envy**

**Badal pe poor hai for Chak De! India, a movie that also generated massive power.**

It's a happy coincidence. *Chak De! India* is such an inspiring film. God has written travel things so beautifully for me.

**You also had a chartbuster in Hare Ram Hare Krishna from *Alor Bhailo*.**

Well, would you believe it, a journalist who barely knew me recently begged me for singing the song that had Akshay Kumar covering with a boy of scantly clad beauties. I'm okay with a little sex appeal, but *Chak De! India* is a strict no-no.

**As a playback singer, you haven't sang too many songs.**

I was flooded with offers after Anuara's *Lawson* release, where there were about 100 more that I wanted to do as a lifetime being.

There's only so much name and fame that you can acquire. For me, it's more important to be a happy and fulfilled human being than meeting the number of songs. I've sung for movies.

**Also, I'm always roaming around the world. That's made me inaccessible to composers. But that's the way I am. Completely bindass.**

**Does that mean you cut yourself off the market?**

No, I sang a song for *Ekhas* (Bhaskar's) recently. There were a couple of other songs too. I don't remember the names of the film, I forgot it.

**What about a reality show?**

I was a judge on *Alor Bhailo* because I think reality shows are all about *SMMS* and *TKO*'s

