

A TOUCH OF THE *exotic*

Model, singer and TV reporter — Viva talks to multi-talented beauty Kadambari Raghukumar

ELLE covergirl turned TV reporter may sound like the plot of a Hollywood chick flick, but that's precisely what happened to Kadambari Raghukumar. The *Asia Down Under* reporter grew up in Goa in India, where she featured on the cover of *Elle India*, before moving to New Zealand in 2006.

Now Raghukumar, who is also a singer, spends her time sharing and celebrating New Zealand's diverse range of cultures. She will further this passion by performing as part of People In Your Neighbourhood, a unique musical collaboration of more than 17 local ethnic artists, performers and songwriters. Raghukumar will perform with the rest of the team on March 12 at the Transmission Room in Auckland — which will also be the release party for the self-titled album — as well as at WOMAD on March 14.

What is the best sartorial advice you've ever had?

Tradition never goes out of fashion, it's just re-discovered.

What's your biggest indulgence/guilty pleasure? I'm a real sucker when it comes to buying body oils. . . jasmine, coconut, almond, sandalwood. I want it all! Also, the raspberry cheesecake from the Piha store is by far my biggest guilty gastronomical pleasure.

Your favourite accessory? My Ladakhi turquoise ring. Ladakh in northern India is a very special place and for me this ring embodies the spirit of that place.

Your favourite shop? A grocery shop called Yogiji in Mt Roskill. It looks, smells and sounds like India. It boasts a real eclectic mix, from little clay idols of Hindu deities, rows of spice boxes down to obscure Hindi novels and comics.

Your favourite shop elsewhere?

There's a little antique shop run by a wonderful old man, on the main road in Bluff. Quaint, charming, and it instantly reminded me of *Tintin and the Black Island* — the one where he visits Scotland.

What is the biggest fashion/beauty/hair mistake you have ever made?

I was 21 and two days before shooting the *Elle* cover in Bombay, my girlfriend decided I needed a "radical" change and cut me a fringe, no matter my curly/wavy hair. I turned up at the shoot looking like a flustered rooster!

Who or what inspires you? The underdog who becomes top-dog.

What can't you live without? A healthy dose of the sound of different languages being spoken. It's music to my ears.

Most overrated item in fashion? The little black dress.



PICTURE / BABICHE MARTENS

Most underrated item in fashion? Prints and patterns.

What's the best way to recycle your old clothes? Donate them.

If money were no option. . . ? I'd be travelling and recording music, images and stories from around the world.

What is your personal style quirk or fashion obsession? I seem to have developed a love for collecting turquoise blue shoes. . .

What is your most cherished item? I woke up one morning in my room in Goa and found a beautiful, perfectly formed half-a-metre

snakeskin on the arch of my chair. The snake had obviously come by night, shed its skin ever-so-quietly, and left by morning. I felt privileged in a way, and have kept the skin ever since.

What are you never caught wearing? Red lipstick.

Your best beauty tip? Pull funny faces every other morning — it helps stretch the muscles and gives you a laugh as well.

What's the one thing everyone should have in their wardrobe? It's a cliché for a reason — a good pair of jeans that you could live in.