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## Transport Yourself To India With LilaNur Parfums



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I may live in New York now, but I was born and brought up in India—in New Delhi to be exact— and visit as often as I can. The pandemic has brought my regular trips to a temporary standstill and left me panging to go back home.

The new [LilaNur Parfums](#), the first high-end fragrance line from India, transported me there. It's a brand created by scent maker Paul Austin, the former global vice president of fine fragrances of what was then Quest International and is now Givaudan, and culture maker Anita Lal, who is founder and creative director of [Good Earth India](#), a furniture and home accessories line that I've been a fan of for more than a decade. They describe LilaNur Parfums as a fragrance house that marries the rich culture of India with French alchemy and savoir faire- essentially, the scents were inspired by India and use ingredients from the country, but, in keeping with the tradition of luxury fragrance houses, they were crafted in Grasse, France.

LilaNur Parfums launched at [Bergdorf Goodman](#) in September with seven eau de parfum's and three attar absolus which are sold exclusively at the upscale store and through its site. Each fragrance is distinct and divine. More importantly, they all evoke India- I felt a connection to my home with every one I smelled. Rajni Nocture, with its sensual tuberose, is like a warm summer's night in New Delhi or Mumbai, Malli Insolite is laden with jasmine and reminds me of the summers I spent in Kerala by the sea as a child, and Vettiver Monsoon—wow—wearing it felt like being caught in a typical Indian monsoon. But a beautiful one where the coolness of the raindrops is the perfect antidote to the heat.

It's hard to pick a favorite, but you can experience the range with the gorgeous and giftable "Discovery Set" containing all seven eau de parfums. It costs \$35 and is fully redeemable for a full-size LilaNur Eau de Parfum or Attar Absolu."

Below are edited excerpts from my recent conversation with Paul and Anita:

### **What was the inspiration for LilaNur?**

**Anita:** An ancient tradition of the Indian subcontinent that goes back many millennia was its unique scenting rituals using fragrant oils and pastes. Through the creation of modern reimagined Attars, LilaNur Parfums honors and revives this ancient olfactive heritage.

Missing in the Indian scenting tradition is the use of alcohol - a uniquely western development in perfumery that is now an international norm. For LilaNur Parfums, we combined the French savoir-faire with key Indian ingredients to create modern alcohol-based perfumes.

### **How does LilaNur reflect your India and your memories growing up?**

**Anita:** When I smell any international perfume that says jasmine or vetiver, I find that I do not recognize that fragrance from how we know these scents, which are a part of our everyday life. Jasmines, Tuberose, Vetiver, Rose are ever present in our homes in bowls or as garlands or strung together for any celebration.



**There are a lot of high-end fragrances on the market today. How is LilaNur different?**

**Paul:** Due to India's unique biodiversity, it grows and processes dozens of precious natural ingredients used in international haute parfumerie, such as multiple jasmines, tuberose, various spices, herbs, gums and woods and more.

With LilaNur Parfums, our goal was to place these natural ingredients as the starring role.

Most scents today are created in fragrance labs far away from the source of the ingredients from which they're composed. Our approach was to start creation in the fields of Southern India, near Madurai - and to integrate our community of 5000 growers and pickers - and perfumery experts in Grasse - in a transparent and collaborative process spanning cultivation to creation.

For the EDP launch collection, four of France's most revered perfumers - Honorine Blanc, Olivier Cresp, Fabrice Pellegrin, and Clément Gavarry - each with a shared passion for the fragrance culture of India - were invited to compose a scent using iconic Indian ingredients as their muse and starting point.

Our Attar Absolus are a true innovation in perfumery. We've reimaged the tradition of oil-based scents called attars, used for centuries in India. These alcohol-free scents are traditionally composed on a base of sandalwood essential oil, into which the essential oils of flowers, roots or herbs are infused. Working closely with the Naturals Innovation team in Firmenich in Grasse, we developed a modern process which infuses pure, traceable and sustainable sandalwood with the highest quality, single-origin floral absolutes. The quintessential "slow perfume" the infusion process takes many months, and the resulting formulation has a luxurious, luminous texture and a sensuous olfactory bloom.

**Tell us about where some of the ingredients come from in the fragrances, both within India and in other parts of the world.**

**Paul:** India's majestic flora was the starting point for LilaNur Parfums. From the jasmine and tuberose fields of Madurai in the south, to the rose gardens of Aligarh and the Attar distilleries of Kannauj, India is alive with scent.

India grows scores of jasmines, but produces four versions for use in perfumery, including the Jasmine sambac, the iconic ingredient at the heart of Malli Insolite.

Tuberose, known in Hindi as Rajnigandha - is one of perfumery's most expensive and revered materials. Almost all of the natural tuberose used in perfumery today comes from India, where it has grown for more than 300 years. It is key to Rajni Nocturne.

Davana, the key to Davana Cedre is a uniquely Indian herb - and perfumery ingredient - deeply rooted in the Ayurvedic culture of India, Davana is used not only for its deep aromatic scent but for its healing properties.

**Can you talk about how the brand is employing women in India? Anita, this is an initiative you spearhead.**

**Anita:** We believe that community is at the heart of culture, and at the heart of India's floriculture are the communities of flower growers and harvesters. Rosabagh, which means rose garden, is the name of our foundation.

The Rosabagh Foundation is focused on sustaining India's community of rural workers whose livelihood stems from cultivating and processing the country's abundant flora. By creating access to training, social enterprise and improved working conditions, the foundation mission is to enhance the quality of the lives of this community, and in doing so, to help ensure the continuity of Indian floriculture and the vital role it plays in the world of perfumery.

The inception of LilaNur Parfums began in the flower fields of Madurai, home of Jasmine C.E., India's largest source of floral absolutes for the international fine fragrance industry.

Having worked for decades across various projects with Palanisamy Raja and Vasanth Venkatasamy, the proprietors of Jasmine C.E, we have admired their quiet and strategic community development efforts.

Through the Rosabagh Foundation, we support their existing social initiatives and additionally we have initiated two new projects to train women in creating their own micro enterprises.

Our mission is to develop skills-based training programs in the field that allow them to learn and then work from home or in training centers to supplement their income.