

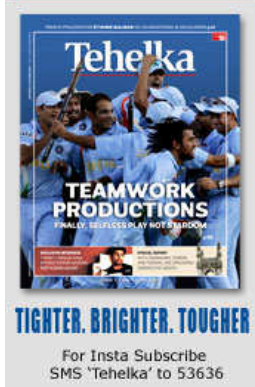
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## VANITY FAIR



**Roopa Swaminathan**  
Author and Filmmaker

## Why high society stinks

Okay. Here's the deal.

I am a Mallika Sherawat junkie. And pray for monster success for this girl. I love her huge silicon-implemented b\*\*bs and even bigger mouth. She puts her money, her hopes and ambitions on the former and says it like it is with the latter. She is unapologetic (I have very little acting talent), in your face (but I am not going anywhere else), present at every Page 3 party for the publicity and painfully honest about it (because I know how to get the attention of people). She is a wannabe who eventually, ladies and gentlemen, will be. And to her I say kudos.

But I hate many a Page 3 regular — which includes an acid-tongued newspaper columnist who is present at every high society shindig in town, attired in the best of designer clothes and pearls and emeralds as accessories. But see... she is there as a writer and wishes to talk about the courage shown by her widowed bai over sips of champagne and scoops of caviar. Our friendly columnist hates actors, directors and 'moviewallahs' because they don't have a quarter of the brain she supposedly has — but hey — call her to any of the film premieres and parties and madam is there. Front row. Front seat. On Page 3. But she is there in her self-anointed avatar as a social commentator.

Huh?

Look... I'll never be invited to any high society party. I don't look the part, I don't act the part and honestly I don't want the part. For that world I'll always be a misfit trying simply to look in. And...that's okay. While they break bread with the Garwares and Singhania's, I boast about having seen Parmeshwar Godrej from a distance a long time back. I've been known to try and pass off a fake Fendi bag as the original. I picked up a 250-bucks-knockoff from a streetside vendor at Colaba who also taught me how to pronounce Gucci and Versace the right way. Obviously, when someone asks I still say Versus. Enough said.

My issue is not that such excesses exist. Especially in India where the cost of one small Fendi original purse would probably be enough to feed a family of four for over a year. I am too much of a freedom lover — freedom of speech, religion, sexual orientation, lifestyle — for that.

My issue is with the hypocrisy that comes with it. The hypocrisy that makes a socialite excuse her existence as one by talking for hours about some pseudo jewellery collection that she has designed. I have issues with those who pass off their everyday appearances by claiming that all Page 3 people are not like 'that'. That even the Narayana Murthys and Ratan Tatas are part of this elite crowd as well. And we are supposed to think of the diamond-dripping, hair-colour changing, unexplainable accent-wielding men and women who have genuinely never worked one honest day's work in their entire lives as people who have 'achieved' something. And therefore belong to the aforementioned high society not by birth or the millions their granddaddies have left them but by the sheer dint of hard work they have put in to reach that place. I have issues because I have yet to figure out exactly who or what this woman Suchitra

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Pillai is or has done. But I am even more concerned by the fact that I know she is a dusky-skinned, long-haired Malayali who has recently married some guy named Lars.

All courtesy Page 3 coverage in major newspapers. And that pisses me off.

Does high society stink? Damn right it does.

But then...for many people I stink too.

I guess then...it's all about perception.

*Aug 06 , 2005*

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