

Dressing up bébé

Clothing the little ones stylishly, especially in these times, is a tall order. In her mission to populate her children's wardrobes, **Priyanka Khanna** discovered these women-founded labels

This story came out of personal necessity. During the months we spent in lockdown, my children, blissfully unaware of the logistical issues, were outgrowing their clothes by the minute. In the past, most of their wardrobe was built through our travels. But given the scenario, it seemed essential to look local—from a philosophical as well as practical perspective. Through my research, I discovered brands that also found their origins in the needs of young, enterprising women, most of them mothers, who found a gap in the market for conscious, quality children's wear and have made it their mission to ensure that India's younger set is well-turned-out.

FOR INFANTS

MALABAR BABY

Where: Hong Kong, New York and London

THE LOW-DOWN: The label was started by Hong Kong-based mum Anjali Harjani, who named it after Malabar Hill, the neighbourhood of her family home in Mumbai. "I moved to Hong Kong from New York and couldn't understand why there were no affordable, sustainable and stylish children's brands. Our designs blend traditional Indian techniques with new technology. We started out as a linen brand for kids, but quickly evolved into a lifestyle label for the whole family."

THE USP: "Every collection has a personal story."
THE TIPPING POINT: "When Meghan Markle took Archie out for his first public outing wrapped in our mustard gold Erawan Dohar receiving blanket."

THE HIT: "Watercolour-sketched muslin swaddles, block-printed XL towels and family loungewear."
Malabarbaby.com



Masilo



Malabar Baby



ANJALI PALMA STYLED: REBECCA DENNETT; HAIR: BRIAN BUELA/VENTURA; MAKEUP: ANNE GEORGE/CHANEL LES BEIGES; MODEL: CAMILA COSTA/IMG; MODELS: CHERIE, MARINA COSTA, BABY RIO COSTA; PHOTO: RAINSTAD; PHOTO ASSISTANT: FERMINO ASSUNCAO; DIGITISATION: MATT TOWNSEND; FASHION ASSISTANT: TABITHA SANCHEZ; PRODUCTION: NICK ELLMENTHAL

MASILO

Where: Mumbai

THE LOW-DOWN: Eisha Maskara Sheth, a Central Saint Martins graduate, founded Masilo in 2015. She roped in her brother Ankit, a University of Warwick alumnus with experience working in the family business of textiles, to help scale up.

THE USP: "The fabric that touches your baby's skin matters. Most of our products are made with certified organic cotton and eco-friendly bamboo muslin."

THE TIPPING POINT: "We've delivered organic essentials to over 10,000 babies in 18 countries. Through Impact India's maternal nutrition project, we send baby boxes of newborn essentials made from upcycled fabrics to less-privileged mothers."

THE HIT: The Nestilo.
Masilo.in

FOR CONSCIOUS PRACTICES

BORN BY ELODIE LE DERF

Where: Mumbai

THE LOW-DOWN: When Elodie Le Derf was pregnant, she began to look at baby clothes with a



Aria + Nica



Born



The Story Brand

fresh eye. "In 2015, there were hardly any options in organic cotton clothing, and definitely none for boys, so I started making clothes with my tailor. I wanted to create a brand that fused French style with my respect and love for India and its craftsmanship," says Le Derf, who also started the label Les Fées De Bengale in 2005.

THE USP: "Muted and gender-neutral colours, prints created in-house, hand embroidery, GOTS-certified (Global Organic Textile Standard) organic cotton, and a twinset line for mom and kids."

THE TIPPING POINT: "Our boutique in Bandra, Mumbai. We created a space where mothers can shop while kids can draw and play."

THE HIT: "Leela, a maxi-length dress and our loose-fit Gustave trousers."
Worldofborn.com

THE STORY BRAND

Where: Mumbai

THE LOW-DOWN: Mayana Rajani, a former banker, started her label with the aim to employ women from low-income homes. "Our collection includes western wear, Indian wear and accessories for newborns all the way to 16-year-olds. We strive to be a zero-waste company. Our necklaces, hairbands and hair-ties come out of these fabrics."

THE USP: "Socially responsible capitalism is what we strive for. Our sales contribute to social initiatives like children's education and feminine health and hygiene."

THE TIPPING POINT: "We started as an online brand, but within six months we were part of exhibitions where we sold out."

THE HIT: "Our Mari Beach tunic for mums and daughters. We have them in over 30 prints."
Thestorybrand.in

"I WANTED TO CREATE A BRAND THAT FUSED FRENCH STYLE WITH MY RESPECT AND LOVE FOR INDIA"
- ELODIE LE DERF, BORN

FOR SHOES

ARIA + NICA

Where: Mumbai

THE LOW-DOWN: After training under Gregory Viboud, a renowned footwear specialist in Provence, Aastha Mahtani, the creative director and mum of two, decided to start her label that spans footwear for girls and boys till their teens.
THE USP: "Comfort and quality."
THE TIPPING POINT: "Being recognised as the country's leading children's shoe brand."
THE HIT: "Anything with unicorns."
Arianica.in

FOR BEDTIME BASICS

DANDELION

Where: Mumbai

THE LOW-DOWN: With Dandelion, Samyukta Nair wanted to address the lack of stylish and comfortable sleepwear in the market.
THE USP: "Customising your sleepwear. Choose your print in the silhouette of your choice, add a monogram or match with a loved one. We also customise maternity sets to make pregnancy dressing a little easier."
THE TIPPING POINT: "Collaborations with young designers and illustrators for capsule collections. Our first one, called The Lover, The Lunatic & The Poet, with BOBO Calcutta, was a success"
THE HIT: "Our matching notched-collar PJ sets."
Dandeliondreams.co

ORIORI KIDS

Where: Delhi

THE LOW-DOWN: Diksha Kaur's collections—the Naturalist, the Dreamer, the Adventurer, the Artist—are based on personality rather than prints, to encourage and inspire children.
THE USP: "We're environmentally conscious. Each part of our packaging forms a colouring play mat and an inbuilt learning activity that is reusable. We've also quickly gained a reputation for having the softest, snuggle-worthy fabrics," she says.
THE TIPPING POINT: "We launched a year ago, and have been recognised by various outlets, including *Vogue India* for our work."
THE HIT: The Mondrian SleepBox from the Artist collection, which comes with a night-suit print inspired by the works of Piet Mondrian. It is made from our softest cotton."
Oriorikids.com

FRANGIPANI

Where: Mumbai

THE LOW-DOWN: The label was founded in 2012 by two mothers, Mansi Kilachand and Sunaina Patel. "As young mums, we sensed a growing need for an indigenous brand that offered high-quality kids' clothes at affordable prices," says Kilachand.
THE USP: "We use the highest quality organic cotton, teamed with our signature prints that kids and mums love," she adds.
THE TIPPING POINT: "We started this business out of our homes, and now we have grown organically into a well-established and globally recognised brand."
THE HIT: "Our cotton pyjamas."
Frangipani.co.in

FOR COOL TEES

LADORE

Where: Mumbai

THE LOW-DOWN: Prachi Saraf, a Wharton Business School graduate, wanted to provide mothers and children with comfortable, quality



Frangipani



Dandelion Dreams



OriOri Kids



Coo Coo



Pochampali



Ladore

"MY HUSBAND'S AUNT IS THE LEGENDARY REVIVALIST SURAIYA HASSAN BOSE. I HAD THE IDEA OF USING THOSE LOVELY IKATS, LINENS AND COTTONS WE WOULD GET FROM HER TO MAKE CLOTHES FOR CHILDREN"
- NEHA HASSAN, POCHAMPALI

clothing at competitive prices, with the backing of her family's export house.
THE USP: "Everything is created in-house. We are proud of our all-women workforce—we have 1,200 women at our factory."
THE TIPPING POINT: "Convincing Zara to work with us through our parent company, GTN exports."
THE HIT: "Our polo- and crew-neck tees."
Ladore.in

FOR IKAT PRINTS

POCHAMPALI

Where: Mumbai

THE LOW-DOWN: A Delhi girl married into a Hyderabadi family, Neha Hassan decided to put family connections into play for her label. "My husband's aunt is the legendary revivalist Suraiya Hassan Bose. I had the idea of using those lovely ikats, linens and cottons we would get from her to make clothes for children. Our fabrics are completely organic and spun and dyed in Pochampally, Andhra Pradesh."
THE USP: "I think our customers love the sense of fun that Pochampali has. With two daughters, I know I want them to feel comfortable and look stylish."
THE HIT: "Our summer co-ord set with pom-poms and ikat kurtas for the boys."
Pochampali.com

FOR CLASSIC STYLES

COO COO BY PALLAVI SWADI

Where: Mumbai

THE LOW-DOWN: Like many on this list, Pallavi Swadi is another mum who discovered a scarcity of quality, classic designs in the Indian market and launched COO COO with a nod to nostalgic styles.
THE USP: "Classic design, fabric, comfort and quality, and customisation. We are known for our personalisation through monograms and brooches. We have also created an exclusive 'return gift' service called the Dress Up Closet, where we create a unique gifting experience of our products at children's birthday parties."
THE TIPPING POINT: "Despite limited experience in the sector, Swadi has managed to create a well-established children's wear label as well as her eponymous label for women."
THE HIT: "Our monogrammed dresses and tops for girls and our indigo cotton shirts for boys."
Cooceo.in ■