

# Clothing and fashion

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Every person nurtures an innate desire of looking good and feel ‘ accepted’ in the socio-economic circle. The word fashion instantaneously brings to mind a flash of colour with a dash of glamour. Women are taking to fashion in a big way, and are experimenting with different looks, styles, and textures. Fashion plays an increasingly important role in an individual’s life because it is considered as a means of self-expression. The garments and accessories that man or women wear, help them to identify with a group of others- whether it is a lifestyle, profession, a religion, or an attitude.

Thus, the term ‘ fashion’ has become synonymous with the overall growth of the country as well. Several factors contribute to the evolution of fashion as a whole. It is a widely accepted fact that the rich and the famous, and the political figures and royalty have always moved the seasonal trends of fashion. The advertising media also contributes equally to update us about the daily style checks. Fashion in India, a land rich in culture and tradition, has evolved through the centuries. This country, rich in culture represents a kaleidoscope of changing trends and traditions.

Here, clothes perform different functions depending on the occasion. Be it festivals, parties, profession, or just a matter of reflecting attitude ... fashion is simply ‘ in’. Right from women who sport a dash of vermilion in the parting of their hair, to professionals on the go who wield the ladle and the laptop with equal ease, fashion forms an integral part of their lives. Today, fashion does not necessarily mean glamour, or the urge to follow the current trends. It is more a way of life, a reflection of inner beauty, where the intellect shines through, complete with comfort quotient.

Fashion not only highlights the social history and the needs of person but also the overall cultural aesthetic of the various periods. The evolution of fashion dates back to several hundred years and as our attitude and culture change, fashion comes along with it. In India, the fashion scenario was different in different political periods. During the British rule in India, the fashion trend within high society was strongly influenced by the British fashion style and western clothes became a status symbol in India.

Again during 1930s, emergence of different ideologies like communism, socialism and fascism imparted a more feminine and conservative touch to the women's fashion. However, the period also witnessed the predominance of body hugging dresses with dark shades. The foundation of the Indian cinema also proved to be the strongest influence on revolutionising the fashion scene in those days. 1940s was a decade marked by the second World War and the ensuing independence of India. Hence, the period portrayed relatively simple yet functional women's clothing.

During 1950s, the advent of art colleges and schools led to popularity of narrow waist and balloon skirts with bouncing patterns. Also, the adoption of khadi by Mahatma Gandhi made khadi garments a rage among women. In the 1960s, the sweeping changes in fashion and lifestyle resulted in highly versatile fashion trends. In 1970s, the traditional materials were exported in bulk to other nations. Thus, excess of export materials were sold within the country itself, which resulted in popularity of international fashion in India. During 1980s and 90s, the advent of television and other advertising means gave a new edge to the Indian fashion scene.

Influenced by ideas of several foreign designers, new design and pattern were introduced into garments. During these periods, power dressing and corporate look were the style statement. The revival of ethnicity was also witnessed in these decades. Fashion trends keep changing and most fashion divas and models are the one to make them. The youth is a major follower of fashion trends. Fashion trends also get influenced from Bollywood as well as Hollywood. Metros like Mumbai and Delhi witness the quick changes in fashion especially in college going crowds.

India has a rich and varied textile heritage, where each region of India has its own unique native costume and traditional attire. While traditional clothes are still worn in most of rural India, urban India is changing rapidly, with international fashion trends reflected by the young and glamorous, in the cosmopolitan metros of India. Fashion in India is a vibrant scene, a nascent industry and a colourful and glamorous world where designers and models start new trends every day. While previously a master weaver was recognised for his skill, today a fashion designer is celebrated for his or her creativity.

Young urban Indians can choose from the best of East and West as Indian fashion designers are inspired by both Indian and western styles. This fusion of fashion can be seen Fashion in India is also beginning to make its mark on the international scene, as accessories such as bindis (red dots worn on the forehead), mehendi (designs made by applying henna to the palms of the hands and other parts of the body) and bangles, have gained international popularity, after being worn by fashion icons, like the pop singers Madonna and Gwen Stefani.

In India, fashion has become a growing industry with international events such as the India Fashion Week and annual shows by fashion designers in the major cities of India. The victories of a number of Indian beauty queens in International events such as the Miss World and Miss Universe contests have also made Indian models recognised worldwide. Fashion designers such as Ritu Kumar, Ritu Beri, Rohit Bal, Rina Dhaka, Muzaffar Ah, Satya Paul, Abraham and Thakore, Tarun Tahiliani, JJ Valaya and Manish Malhotra are some of the well-known fashion designers in India.

In India, fashion covers a whole range of clothing from ornate clothes designed for wedding ceremonies to pret lines, sports wear and casual wear. Traditional Indian techniques of embroidery such as chikhan, crewel and zardosi, and traditional weaves and fabrics have been used by Indian designers to create Indo-western clothing in a fusion of the best of East and West. Traditional costumes in India vary widely depending on the climate and natural fibres grown in a region.

In the cold northern state of Jammu and Kashmir, people wear a thick loose shirt called a phiran to keep them warm. In the tropical warmth of south India, men wear a sarong like garment called the mundu, while women drape 5 metres of cloth around their bodies in the graceful folds of the saree. Sarees are woven in silk, cotton and artificial fibres. Kanjivaram, Mysore, Paithani, Pochampalli, Jamdani, Balucheri, Benarasi, Sambalpuri, Bandhini are some varieties of beautiful sarees from different regions of India.

In the dry regions of Rajasthan and Gujarat men wrap and twist a length of cloth in the form of a dhoti around their lower limbs and a shirt-like kurta above. Colourful turbans complete the picture. In the northeastern regions

the tribal communities such as Khasis, Nagas, Mizos, Manipuris and Arunachalis wear colourful woven sarong-like clothing and woven shawls that represent the identity of each tribal group. In urban India the salwar kameez and the churidar kameez, are commonly worn by women and the saree is worn on formal occasions.

Men wear kurtas and pajamas, or a sherwani for formal wear. Men commonly wear western wear such as shirts and trousers across India. The young and the young at heart wear Jeans, T-shirts, capris, Bermudas and various kinds of casual clothing, which are the trendsetters of fashion in India. Comparing the past and the present, fashion for people in India has changed over the decades. Not only India, but also the whole world has witnessed changes in fashion statements for both men and women.