

**To what extent has Bollywood cinema been affected by the western world and had an effect on India's popular fashionable clothing during the 80's and 90's?**

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India, where Bollywood was created, is also a place where the history and culture have created many clothing styles that are completely distinct from western clothing. But, Indian cinema and designers have borrowed styles and trends from the western culture throughout history and it is still happening. We see it in movies, music videos, and the people around us. Much of this has been because of the hundreds of years of Mughal rule and British rule in India, when Indians were filled with inferiority of their own culture and traditions. Indians were made to think that the west was superior in many ways, and so, Indians ignored their own culture's exclusivity. Not just clothes, but we see this borrowing from the western culture in language, slangs, music genres, food etc. But, as much as Indian designers and artists have borrowed from the western world, the western world has also had inclusivity of beauty standards, patterns and colors, and ideas of values of India's culture in its clothing. There is sharing between the two very different worlds and it brings us into a world of people with exposure, understanding and/or knowledge of cultures and traditions that they were not born into. The popular fashions in India went hand in hand with what was put up on the big screen, especially through the 70's, 80's and 90's, and the clothes/costumes that were seen in Bollywood cinema were usually styled or created by Indian fashion designers and stylists. India was moving towards clothing with functionality and ease but it was between the late 70's and the 90's that we see a great amount of change in the fashions of the character costumes in Bollywood cinema and the common people of India.

Classic or wildly popular movies in India like, 'Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge,' 'Kuch Kuch Hota Hai,' 'Dil to Pagal Hai,' etc., all of which belong to the 90's have the characters' costumes that are not traditional Indian wear. A transition of costumes from traditional

Indian wear to western can be seen as early as the 1940's but isn't prominent up until the 70's, which is one of the most fashionable years in Bollywood, where both the different cultures are united and designers work on costumes that are familiar to the Indian audience yet have a twist to them. The era of consumerism and status through the 80's and 90's in the west also takes Bollywood fashion along with it. Most of the popular movies in the 80's and 90's that were released seem to have a definite purpose behind the costumes the characters wear. The brand logos and names on these costumes, which included Gap, Tommy Hilfiger, U.S. Polo, Calvin Klein, DKNY etc. and were usually all sportswear added a sense of coolness to the character or perhaps the high-end clothing brands on these characters' costumes made us think of them as cool. Either way, there is a certain level of passing on of the societal and cultural ideas relating to clothing of the western world, like status wealth, and brand awareness, through the use of Bollywood film and characters. The fact that certain characteristics were associated with certain types of fashions and styles somewhere created a want for these clothes in common people. Especially when Bollywood started switching to a realistic approach in filmmaking, contrary to the dramatic genres it stuck to in the past, where the costumes would be glamorous, embellished, and adorned or have completely moody colors so that they could be used as a literary device for the plotline and most importantly ideally traditional, the fashions also became more relatable and contemporary and therefore, were adaptable by common people a lot more. The fashions from these more realistic movies would be iconic amongst the Indian audience.

Right along with the iconic 90's Bollywood fashions were my parents in their 20's who had great interest in staying in style all the time. Despite being from small towns in

India, my parents were very fond of clothes and fashion. To them, it was about looking cool and stylish. Bollywood movies did affect my parents but the roots of their fashions were different. My father told me that he used to listen to Elvis Presley, Stevie Wonder, and countless others, and loved Hollywood films. He mentioned that he used to watch, not even Oscars, but Grammy's on television and remembers that Lionel Richie sang *All Night Long* at the 1984 Olympics. He was one of the very few ones to have such an interest for American culture. I think his interest in the west was something that directly affected his style choices, and why I see the pictures of his 20's with him dressed up distinctively than the rest. The first image is of my father, Naveen Gupta, and mother, Julie Gupta in the 90's. My father wears a shirt, a pair of grey dress pants, a sweater tied around his neck and white sneakers. My mother wears a fitted knee length denim skirt, a blouse, and a sweater tied around her neck as well. I was intrigued when I saw the picture because they were wearing clothing that was not traditionally Indian and secondarily because the garments themselves and styling are more complex than a pair of jeans and a simple blouse or a shirt. The styling of the sweater around the neck is something that I have seen repeatedly in the 80's Hollywood films, one of my father's deep interests. So, there were direct influences of the American culture on the Indian people, not just through Bollywood, but due to the growth of Hollywood and pop music etc. and people's personal interests in the culture from all around the world.



Image 1: Naveen Gupta (on the left), wearing a shirt and dress pants from Woodland, India, sweater from Monte Carlo, India, and sneakers from Reebok, and Julie Gupta (on the right), wearing a blouse and denim skirt from Bachoomal Sons, India, and sneakers from Bata, India.



Image 2: Julie Gupta wearing a shirt from Bachoomal Sons, a clothing store in India, in the 1990's

The sweater styling on my mother is also similarly surprising, and additionally because it was primarily seen as a men's styling option. The skin showing, through the denim skirt in this image, was in fact not taboo in India anymore, which contrasts with the thoughts I had when I first saw the image and learnt its time period; I was expecting to see a setting in a culture where skin showing would not be common. So, a lot of the cultures from around the world were in sync when these images are analyzed. The second picture is of my mother in the 90's wearing a waist length navy shirt with shoulder pads and big cloth buttons. These features come clearly from the 80's and it was fascinating to see these small details from the western culture to come on a shirt of a small clothing store called Bachoomal Sons in a small city called Agra in a totally different country; it shows that even though countries were apart, fashions never stopped at the edge of the ocean. It was something that synchronized throughout the world. Globalization and mass manufacture helped in spreading ideas and art but there was still something more to it; an individual interest, remnants of other countries' cultures, and global, although limited, communication through television and magazines.

Indian cinema used a lot of silhouettes and garments from western wear, and there were also small details that were done differently or jazzed up in traditional Indian wear through the use of western wear elements. The corset blouse paired with the Indian Sari, which was brought by Suneet Verma in 1992 in one of his fashion shows, became one of the most prominent styles in the 90's in India. The corset was later paired with other traditional Indian garments like the Lehenga and even skirts and jeans, which can also be seen in Bollywood in the 90's. The complexities of the western clothing forms and the traditional Indian wear together with exciting prints and bright colors were explored

throughout the 90's, in film and on runways. Some designers picked up on minimalism when every designer was going all out with their designs on traditional Indian wear as well as western wear. Simple Kurta's with pintuck, pleats, and classic forms made headway in a time period where more is more would have been the saying. Manish Malhotra, a very well-known designer of Indian Traditional wear, styled an actress Urmila Matonker in the movie Rangeela in 1995. Saris that were popular before this, in the 80's, were heavily embroidered, but after Malhotra brought the delicate sari look, it was a promotion and somewhat introduction of simple and contemporary designs for traditional Indian wear. Saris made with chiffon, georgette, satin and net fabrics with solid striking colors or pastels were popularized.

Earlier, before the 80's, Bollywood's main interest was to bring drama and intensity in most movies, and therefore the characters would wear garments that would correspond and respectively bring the same mood. As time passed, there was a shift from drama to realism. Many movie directors and designers reached a place, although at different paces, with contemporary options: characters, costumes and plotlines for former and colors, silhouettes, and themes for latter. A few individuals became more exposed to the western world, which also led to them choosing non-traditional styles and making it their own. For India, western fashions with Indian twists and the combination of western fashion and traditional Indian wear have been explored, although not fully. Playing with different themes and bringing the Bollywood costumes to popular fashion, like Hollywood Costumes in the 30's, could be next step for India's popular fashions and maybe creating a way into fine Indian couture. Although Bollywood and Hollywood in the 80's and 90's provided people with a different understanding of a modern look, which was largely

sportswear, as time passed, people themselves started looking for simple and contemporary options.



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