

# STUDY OF DESIGN & SILHOUTE INNOVATIONS IN INDIAN WEAR FOR COMFORT ENHANCEMENT

Mohammed Gofran

Assistant Professor, School of Fashion Design and Technology, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab, 144411, India

**Abstract:** Indian Subcontinent has seen the change in clothing preferences of Indian women suiting to the new needs of the new work environment and lifestyle. The major elements that characterized these clothing is a comfort, functionality, fit (that is termed as smart) and ready availability. This led to a major change of preference from Indian wear to western wear, particularly in younger Indian females. This led to the entry and expansion of major women western wear brands in India pushing Indian traditional wear market to be seen as occasion wear mainly for weddings and festivals at one point of time. The gap continued to grow here also with a constant increase in mobility, speed and dependence on gadgets like mobile that had become everyone's companion. But last decade saw the emergence of some Indian traditional brands innovating themselves to keep up with the demands of the new market. The Present study is a general overview discusses design adaptations in Indian traditional wear with reference to women's kurta and bottom to meet the new needs of the new market and the factors that facilitated these changes. It also discusses the shift in choice of fabric, use of new design elements, surface treatments and fit in the Indian wear to add comfort and functionality in design. Study insights further scope of improvement and inherent limitations in Indian wear to fully address these issues.

**Keywords:** *Indian wear, Functional design, Active lifestyle, Fit*

## 1. Introduction

Indian Subcontinent has seen the change in clothing preferences of Indian women suiting to the new needs of the new work environment and lifestyle. In the fast and adaptive social culture, the clothes have ceased to be just a layer of protection or an object of adornment. The major elements that characterized these clothing is a comfort, functionality, fit (that is termed as smart) and ready availability. The fashion has always been able to tackle these demands with necessary inclusions in designs. But inclusions mainly happened at established western brands who had enough resources to experiment with designs and products. Indian traditional wear has largely remained same as it was mostly custom-made garments made by tailors who had little resources to experiment. At the advent of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the choice of garments for work and outer wear started shifting from Indian wear to western wear in working women's mostly in metro cities as social acceptability increased for western wear in these regions. The Indian wear was mostly used at home and occasions. But the idea of modesty and cultural acceptance remained in the mind of women coming from different smaller cities and interior regions of the country and favoured Indian wear. Their emerged a gap between the between what was desired and what the market offered. This created a gap in the market that led to emergence of brands like W that slowly experimented with Indian wear created line for this market. The paper reviews the evolution of Indian Kurtis and bottom wear in this section and tries to identify the improvements happened with shift in choice of fabric, use of new design elements, pattern and fit to add comfort and functionality in design.

## 2. Literature Review

Early research and literature in this field pattern adaptation Indian wear is very limited as research paper but there is data on consumer behaviour and fashion trends that are available on the internet. The Indian tropical climate has influenced the evolution of Indian silhouettes with loose garments for covering the whole body in order to maximum convective and evaporative heat loss with the available air movement across the clothing worn<sup>[9]</sup>. But now with much of the Younger generations living indoors and in controlled environment. This has diminished the need of Indian silhouettes and are attracted towards western wear for their ease and functionality. Because of the innovation in fabrics the dependency on the Indian fill covering silhouettes is not compulsory. Indian clothing has evolved in 4000 years and has noticed significant changes though the ages because of demand and innovations in the society<sup>[1]</sup>. We can find many articles urging Indian masses to adopt Indian clothing to preserve our culture and traditions. This will only happen if the designers and brand adopt Indian clothing to the demands and needs of the current generations. The changes are necessary to give the Indian wear life and keep up their demand in the market. There are many brand that are evolving according to the current demands and this study is important to pave the road for the future of Indian wear.

## 3. Methodology

The methodology adopted for the paper in exploratory based research and mainly relied on market research and literature survey. As the traditional Indian wear is vast in variety and it is not possible study all the types of Indian wear and capture the development of each category. So the study has been restricted to only kurti and bottoms as they are more widely used and acceptable form of Indian wear across the region. Observations were made for the design and

technical changes that facilitated improvements in their performance and adaptability to the needs of the current lifestyle.

After analysis of all criteria for observations, the following four criteria were finalized for the observation to register the adaptations in the garment design.

1. Fit and pattern
2. Addition of design elements in the garments to improve functionality.
3. Choice of fabrics
4. Changes in fastening system

## 2.1 Fit and pattern

The introduction of western brands introduced to the new concept of pattern and fit to the women's wear. This led to the comparison with the existing fit and pattern of Indian wear. The attributes of fit and pattern of Indian garments were mostly dictated by climatic conditions of India and what can be considered modest according to Indian culture. For example a fitted Punjabi Kameez is paired with dupatta to cover the silhouette upper body and salwar uses gathers and voluminous fabric to get loose fit.

But as the roles in the social circle revived and so the change in definition of acceptability and modesty. The working women wanted the clothes to reflect confidence, smartness and agility. The kurti whose pattern was either too fitted or loose was meticulously altered and experimented throughout the decade. The fit of kurti that arrived was neither too tight that nor too loose with apt use of dart at front and back in woven (mostly inspired by women's formal shirt). The contours were made modest which also boosted confidence and necessity of dupatta was slowly removed to allow efficient movement. The sleeves at shoulders were made for comfort fit and girth allowed free movement of hand. The length also rarely went above the wrist and opening was made small. This allowed fast movement without obstruction. The length and volume also are designed to ease of daily activities.

The common types of bottoms are generally salwar (that was very voluminous) and churidar (fitted legging with gathers at ankle). But these common types of bottom required handling in movement and inhibited free movement. These bottoms evolved over a decade making it more fitted with improvement in crotch and fit. The volume and ankle girth reduced. The recent introduction of bottom inspired from pattern of a trouser with improved fit and less handling has been quiet preference with women. Use of fabrics with better drape and stretch ability also improved fit and patterns.

## 2.2 Addition of design elements in the garments to improve functionality.

Many design elements were explored in the kurtis and bottoms to add functionality in the garments of which some were quiet successful.

**2.2.1.** The most common is the integration of pockets in kurtis and bottoms. The constant need for carrying wallets and gadgets like mobile and increased mobility of the women demanded pockets in all their garments as carrying an extra purse is not always possible. Different types of pockets are now common in kurtis. Bottoms are also experimented with different types of pockets, most common of which is side pocket and with reduction in volume and better fit of the Indian bottoms it has become easy to integrate pockets without compromising drapability and fall of the bottoms.

**2.2.2. Necklines and collar-** Use of clean and conventional necklines have become more popular than stylised and heavy embellished necklines. Mandarin and shirt collar have been added in kurtis to give it formal look and acceptability at workplaces. Also, it gives better neckline and shoulder fit and adds to the durability of the garment.

### 2.2.3. Cuffs and straps

Use of cuffs has also been observed in Kurtis with many variations. Cuffs hold the sleeves to the body and makes the movement easier with better hang. We have also observed use of straps/loops giving it ability to be folded as and when needed.

In addition to above there are many other design elements are being experimented like use of belts at waist, etc.

## 2.3 Choice of fabrics

Traditionally Indian wear were mostly based on woven fabric that are mostly variety of cotton and silk and their blends. Also the fabric is seen with heavy ornamentation. These fabrics though are good according to the climatic conditions of India but are not easy to maintain and care. Also the performance of the fabric not that great and is prone to wrinkles. Now the choice of fabrics for Kurtis and Indian bottoms have shifted to fabrics that are easy to maintain and gives good fit and drape. Knits and viscose has become the choice of today's Indian brands and other fabrics are being chemically treated for softness and comfort. Also heavy ornamentation has been replaced with innovative dyeing and printing to reduce the bulk of the garment. The churidar has now been replaced with knit legging with lycra (spandex) that is easy to wear and maintain and also gives comfort and fit. Now Kurtis are also using knits with lycra that is easy to maintain, gives good fit and improves performance parameters.

## 2.4. Changes in fastening system

Traditionally the Kurtis and Indian Bottoms used strings as fasteners to hang the garment to the body. This was important as the garments are very loose fit, change in fit, pattern and fabrics allowed the Indian wear to be experimented with different fastening methods that are easy to use, consumes less time and are more reliable. Use of elastics,

spandex, hooks, buttons and zippers have replaced drawstrings as primary method of fastening Indian wear. These have improved the fit, performance and comfort of Indian wear.

#### 4. Conclusion

In the observation it was found that there had been considerable adaptations in Indian outfit and increased experimentation with fit and design by new Indian wear brands have increased the acceptability of Indian Kurtis at different spaces of life. The comfort, fit and user friendly being the new inspiration for the development of new designs. There have been meaningful inclusions in the design making a bridge between Indian cultural essence and purpose. But still there is a long road ahead and there are many inherent limitations such as, the Indian brands are not that resourceful as global brands and their market is limited to the Indian subcontinent. Also the standard Indian anthropometric size chart is not available making it difficult to produce good fits and develop standard methods. Experimentation and development of new fabrics in India is very low. Indian wear brands are not as organised as we

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