Anthropologists have debated at what stage in human evolution people began to wear clothes. Almost certainly the first clothes were animal skins. More contentious is when people started wearing animal furs, presumably initially for warmth. One aspect that is difficult to determine is the extent of body hair of early men like Neanderthals. Man’s transition from hairy to hairless and the development of clothing are critical stages in both biological and cultural evolution.

Clothing was a major step in the human experience. It was an enormous step in the expansion of human inhabitation and the appearance of culture. The key activity to early humans became food production, but the production of clothing became the second most important activity. Determining when people began fashioning clothes is of interest to anthropologists because it represents a cultural step of huge importance. Once people began creating clothing it expanded the environments which they could exploit. It also meant the beginning of fashion, affording people to convey information about tribal identity, social status, fertility, and other matters – in fact all important cultural matters.

Clothing down the ages

The ancient dressing styles of the warm climate of the eastern Mediterranean basin made it necessary for the people to wear free-flowing, loose-robed, and minimal garments. The basic dress of the ancient Egyptians was a loincloth wrapped around the hips. Later, a long garment called a kalasiris was introduced. Worn with a cape, it became the standard dress for all ancient Egyptians. The Hebrews, Assyrians, and Babylonians all wore a long, sleeved garment similar to a nightshirt. The long dominance of Egyptian and Middle Eastern dress was eliminated by the style of the Greeks and Romans, who sported extremely simple clothing. The chiton, worn short by the men and
ankle length by the women, was a long rectangle of cloth pinned at the shoulders and belted. The early Romans wore a shirt like tunica and the toga, an oval of cloth draped in complicated folds. During the Roman Empire, hose and trousers were adopted from the conquered northern European tribes. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire in AD 476, invasions from the north introduced fitted tunics and hoods. In the 500s the Byzantine Empire adopted Oriental traditions of dress. Byzantine clothing appears unique in the Western tradition as having developed with no apparent concession to sexual attraction or to utility. After Charlemagne became Holy Roman emperor in 800, a relatively uniform style of dress appeared in Europe. Charlemagne's everyday attire consisted of an under tunic and an over tunic, with breeches cross-gartered to the knee. Records show other European monarchs wearing similar styles. Court ladies wore long tunics, under super tunics hitched up to show the tunics beneath. A cloth veil concealed the hair. These garments made up the basic wardrobe of the European aristocracy throughout the middle Ages (5th century to 15th century). In the 1100s the Crusades had a startling effect on fashion, as crusaders brought back luxurious Oriental fabrics and new styles. The Oriental bliaut, a long, trailing garment, was introduced. The tunic was increasingly tailored in the 1300s and evolved into the doublet, which survived into the 1600s as the basic male outer garment. Its modern derivation is the waistcoat or vest. The period also produced an early form of the corset for women. Throughout the middle Ages, long skirts reached to the floor to hide women's ankles.

Outside the Western European sphere of influence, clothing tends to be traditional. Where non-Western cultures have come into conflict with Western ideas, traditional garments have often been displaced. In Africa, the Middle East, and the Far East, however, many aspects of traditional dress have survived. Traditional clothing in Asia and Africa fell into the draped tradition. It varied from the loincloth to the elaborately patterned robe. A Middle Eastern influence can be detected in clothing patterns in parts of Africa. The clothing of the Middle East shows a mixture of influences from ancient times. In recent
decades, however, the forms of Western dresses rapidly displaced much of the traditional handmade dress-forms.

On the Indian sub-continent it is increasingly apparent that before the Muslim conquests of the 1500s, the people of India seemed to have worn only variations of the draped clothing of the hot-climate ancient world, including the loincloth or dhoti and the sari. It was during the reign of the Mughal Empire that the Middle Eastern influences came to India. Clothing in Southeast Asia presents an unusual extension of draped clothing—trousers, combined with an open-sleeved coat or sleeveless waistcoat. The aristocracy and royal families developed ceremonial dresses of impressive elaboration. In the orient, including China, Japan, and Korea, silk and a light cloth made of finely woven fibers was used in square-cut, open-robe garments that could be layered against the cold weather. After the Chinese revolution of the early 1900s, the dress of the old empire largely disappeared. The post-World War II industrialization of Japan and along with it came the Westernization of the nation’s customary dress.

**Stitched Garments: Sewing and Tailoring Hubs**

Sewing and tailoring, process of joining together, by needle and thread, pieces of fabric or other materials to make clothing, household furnishings, and other items. The material is cut to the desired shape and size, often by means of an overlaid pattern, and then sewn together by hand or by machine. Today industry relies heavily on computers to aid in patternmaking. Sewing is used in constructing items such as vehicle seat coverings, sails, tents, and sleeping bags. Tailoring is a highly skilled handcraft that requires knowing how to measure, cut, and fit garments to conform to a person's body.

The sewing machine, developed in the 18th century, is today capable of making thousands of stitches per hour, with hundreds of stitch designs
possible. The basic principle of the sewing machine is relatively simple. It feeds
cloth under a needle at a regulated rate, pushes the needle through the cloth,
joins two separate pieces of thread together to make a stitch, and then tightens
the stitch. In addition to sewing straight or curved seams, most modern
machines also make buttonholes, sew on buttons, make gathered or pleated
seams, and do decorative embroidery.

Home sewers need assorted needles, thread in a variety of colors, and a
selection of buttons. Fabric shops carry patterns and materials. Patterns, sold
according to size, are available for everything from T-shirts to stuffed toys. A
steam iron, an ironing board with a well-padded covering, and tailor’s chalk are
essential for home tailoring. Clothes forms adjustable to individual body
configurations are also available to the home tailor.

The History Angle - What is Fashion?

Fashion is a language of signs, symbols and iconography that non-
verbally communicate meanings about individuals and groups. Fashion in all
its forms from a tattooed and pierced navel, to the newest hairstyle, is the best
form of iconography we have to express individual identity. It enables us to
make ourselves understood with rapid comprehension by the onlooker.

How we perceive the beauty or ugliness of our bodies is dependant on
cultural attitudes to physiognomy. The accepted beautiful female form that
Rubens painted is subliminally undesirable nowadays, if we are to be thought
beautiful in a way that the majority accepts in the 21st century. Today an
inability to refashion and reshape our bodies whilst constantly monitoring the
cultural ideal may well leave us failing the fashion test. Those that pass this
test invariably spend their lives absorbed in a circle of diet, exercise, cosmetic
surgery and other regimes. This also to a large extent includes the rigors of
shopping in search of the ultimate garb.
An innate characteristic of human beings is the desire to strive for
differentiation. The removal of rigid dress codes has enabled the individual to
use fashion as a means to identify clearly the many different roles that a person
plays in any one day. Roles are continually learned and rehearsed and
relearned. They are also shared, because like the actors on a stage, fluid
interaction only occurs if all the performers know the behavior expected. For
centuries individuals or societies have used clothes and other body adornment
as a form of nonverbal communication to indicate occupation, rank, gender,
sexual availability, locality, class, wealth and group affiliation. Fashion is a form
of free speech. It not only embraces clothing, but also accessories, jewelry,
hairstyles, beauty and body art. What we wear and how and when we wear it,
provides others with shorthand to subtly read the surface of one's social
situation. Group affiliation is our prime concern with regard to fashion. It is the
sense of belonging marked by how we fashion ourselves that gives us the tribal
connection. As long as some group similarity is identified within the group, our
personal fashion whether current or dated can belong to any tribe.

**Occupation, Status and Purpose of Clothing: Class Stratification**

The state of a person's clothes is synonymous with self respect and is a
sign of respectability. It also adds another sign that the person has sufficient
status in society to maintain at the cost of time and money, laundering, dry
cleaning and repair. To be respectable some expense has to be incurred in the
maintenance of cleanliness and neatness. Those with high status occupations
will wear the clothes they think others expect them to wear. They will not wish
to experience role conflict by wearing the incorrect clothing. It is from the
clothes a person wears that we get our first impression of personality. They
provide mental clues to a person's status and occupational role, as well as
being a means of conforming to peer group expectations.

The Edwardians were socially stratified into those who wore tailor made
clothing down to those who wore other people's cast offs. The poor simply
looked poor, because their raiment betrayed them. Whilst the rich and nouveau riche displayed their wealth through an iconography of signs and symbols that enhanced their body image in the eyes of those that saw themselves as socially inferior.

The person with whom a purchaser interacts affects the final purchase and this applies to any fashion dominated item from interior furnishings to choice of cars. Likewise the purchase of fashionable clothes, fabrics, or accessories becomes a visual currency and speaks volumes silently. The tools of fashion provide the signs and symbolism that function as an information service for the role-set.

People are so aware that others make judgments about them through their clothes and accessories that many run up huge debts to appear to belong to a particular lifestyle. Frequently the rest of their role-set are doing likewise. Members of the role-set often encourage them. Only individuals with a strong sense of self identity stick their necks out and admit to wearing items that others might consider dubious or passé.

**Power dressing and the Occupational Uniform**

Some people instinctively know how to appear respectable to the majority through their clothing. Others are less obviously successful in attaining consistently reliable grooming. The rise of the corporate uniform adopted by banks and similar institutions in the 1980s reinforced the image. It indicated how important the uniform is as a means of distinguishing one person from another instantly. Uniforms provide us with mental clues. They provide distinctiveness and are harbingers of solidarity in any particular group. Wearing an occupational uniform puts an employee in the position of being a visual metaphor. We learn quickly to associate different uniforms with different role conceptions and different role expectations. We connect the policeman or security guard's uniform with authority, law, order and help. Likewise we
associate the nurses or paramedic's uniform with help, care, protection and
health care delivery. The uniform of the Pizza Hut, McDonald's and KFC
conjures images of happy times spent with friends. When people put on a
uniform they adopt what they think it symbolizes, but even people who don't
wear a specific occupational or leisure uniform tend to know vaguely what to
wear. Those who adapt their wardrobe to “fit in” with their company, succeed
much faster in terms of upward job mobility.

Mass Youth Uniform

Young people in particular adopt the uniform of their peer group. However the uniform must be the peer group’s uniform, not one imposed on
them by adults. Fashion in the form of a mass youth uniform can create a
sense of belonging to the peer group and a feeling of identity as the adolescent
personality reaches maturation. Faded jeans, skin tight Tees and pastel shaded
over shirts add to the magic of the group bonds even as ankle showing capris
and bumble bee sun-shades add to the aura of youth and vigorous energy.

For the majority, an old status symbol, be it a brand, a logo or attitude
accessory is old-fashioned the moment is loses favour within the group. An up
to date status symbol cries out to some "I must have it now". The mobile
phone as a belt accessory was a perfect example of this. As new products
develop, last year's non WAP mobile phone version is soon passé as a
(wearable) iPod or other electronic gadget gains more approval by being newer
and more novel. By being the latest in a line of personal wear gadgets it gives
unspoken signage about a person of the 'latest' style statement and therefore
again by association some deeper meaning about (spending ability or know
how) of that person. It is essential to have the latest fashion accessory, to gain
instant peer approval. Mass youth uniform can also work against individual
groups of wearers, as in the case of banning Burberry caps in city pubs or
clubs because of associations with fighting and the anti- social behavior of
some persons who adopt a distinctive fashion which can become like a group uniform.

Youth Cult in the Global World

The youth cult of the teenager in the 1950s became a major force in the 1960s. Other contributing influences were the glamour of the cinema, the television in ordinary homes and a change in attitudes and values after the introduction of the female birth pill. Global coverage of the mood of society was absorbed from the cinema, television and magazines. The world had instant access to the latest trends and fashions as fast as the picture could be transmitted.

Today what people see in their homes on television or when surfing the Internet soon becomes accepted very quickly as normal and everyday. In the comfort of one’s own home the television monitor scales down the stark newness of an idea, especially the impact of a fashion concept and this makes it easier for us to accept more quickly when worn by others even if we can’t see ourselves wearing a similar item.

The Concept of Dress

Fashion and clothing have, to a large extent, depended on the means of the individual who is to ultimately wear the clothes as well as those of the fabricator. The economic systems of the ancient Mughal Empire and of present day India are entirely different. Transportation, technology, and a global economy are just a few of the extreme differences between India of the past and India of the present. Many different aspects of commerce and trade are different from those during the Mughal Empire but some still remain the same. These no doubt had their impact on the form of clothing being adopted by the royalty and the hoi poloi in those days. Nevertheless the trends in the duplication of the royal clothing of those times goes to show how expensive an affair it must have been even then to attire the royal personages of those times.
And this is despite the fact today's mechanical means and state-of-the-art technology has made the fabrication of the multi-piece ensemble a much more creative exercise that it ever may have been before.

The idea that over the centuries fashion has no longer remained the sole bastion of the fairer sex in India is a myth that needs elucidation. The men and the women of yore were equally conscious of their appearance and how certain raiment sat on them. They took pains to adorn themselves in particular dresses and ornaments to appear appealing to their consorts, and subjects alike. Fashion was very much an important part of the thought process and social fabric that people tended to copy the very essence of the garment and ornamentation which had been put forth by a particular personage or couturier. A case in point is the lady Noor Jehan who was known for her beautifully embroidered muslin jamas and elaborately dabka worked or embossed wire twirls in precious metals and stones overcoats. Her fine veils were a coveted asset by the lesser royals. Her iters or fragrances were legendary and have carried down to the present day. From times immemorial men have been making a fashion statement that has made an impact on the entire country.

Even to this day Indians as a nation are noted for wearing garments that are unstitched, like the lungi, dhoti, sari etc. But with the advent of modernization certain changes in the dressing habits of men have undergone innovation. Within a span of just twenty years the readymade garment industry has grown munificently.

New brand names fray almost every season along with men's wear boutiques springing up in every nook and corner. Names like Ensemble, Glitterati, Intermezzo Linea, Anja San, and Mutiny are geared to the affluent up-market buyer whose preference is for the exclusive high-priced garment. There is a remarkable growth in men's wear and which can be attributed to foreign influence, the Indian film scene and the spurt in trained designers and fashion
houses. Every man on the street is aware of the fashion today and although women’s wear sells more, men are increasingly becoming more and more aware of fashion. The Indian male is still considered conservative by western standards and requires a gentle nudge to be a bit adventurous. Men’s wear in India can be divided into two distinct groups - Indian and Western. The former has made rapid progress in the business on the formal side while the latter is further sub-divided into formal suits and casual wear.

Indian Wear has seen several revival of a renewed interest in the grandeur of the bygone eras and a search for one’s roots. The attention is almost always focused on high fashion Indian wear. Resplendent with the splendor and style of the ancient Maharajas and Mughal emperors, India’s rich sartorial heritage has not only moved to centre stage but has at times even swept the West off its fashionable feet by their sheer majesty. The sherwani, the Prince or Jodhpuri coat, the Budni or Nehru jacket as well as the kurta-churidar have all returned to the forefront of fashion. At the height of the British Raj formal wear was totally western in concept. It seemed to be the done thing for Indian princes to wear the most elaborate of suits. With the coming of Independence it was the return to classic Indian wear in handspun fabrics. Today western wear competes fiercely with Indian wear as the country’s ancient culture and fashion has gained momentum. The sherwani is one of the most traditional of Indian garments. Its extra long length [up to knee level] structured silhouette makes it a streamlined garment. The colours are usually muted to dark and the fabrics are observed to range from brocade to ordinary terrywool. The sherwani is normally teamed with churidars or Aligarh pants which are a combination of churidars and trousers.

Even the colour preferences of the Indian male’s have changed. Since early nineties colours like purple, pink and mint green are in great demand among the Indian males. Whereas earlier such colours or their darker variations were most liable to label an average young man as a veritable peacock, today he conceptualization of colour is more in the sense of axuding
the metrosexual personality. These preferences, no doubt, have been fired by the imagination of the designers who work on the dresses and attire of the film stars and sports idols. This is because the larger part of the youth brigade tends to follow the trends being set by these present day cine heroes.

The growth in the Indian men's wear market in the past decade itself has lured most of the international brands like Benetton, Wrangler, Pepe to try their hand at capturing a part of the business. Bombay Dyeing had launched their Vivaldi shirts while the Raymond's house has been successful with their Park Avenue men's range or ready made garments. They were followed by the VXL group of mills comprising Digjam, OCM and Jiyajee with their line of Hagger men's wear.

**Fashion Houses Volte Face**

Fashion houses that just about a decade ago catered to the rich and famous decided to give the common man a chance. Ensemble opened an affordable ready-to-wear outlet at Crossroads reserving the Lions Gate one for Haute Couture. The Designer Studio added on Studio Pret section to its high fashion segment that stored only Kotwara and Ravi Bajaj. Ravi Bajaj on the other hand was one of the first Indian designers to go pret with his Raviver label for men's shirts, trousers and jackets that were more pocket friendly.

Even prize winning Bollywood designer Neeta Lulla realized that dressing up the stars was not the only business course. She teamed up with Biba the ready to wear label and launched the Neeta Lulla for Biba line of pret garments in lower price ranges of Rs 900 to 3000 at Pyramid and other department stores. Ritu Beri after knocking on international doors and bagging the coveted post of head designer for Jean Louis Schemer's pret division felt that designing exclusive bridal wear in India did not make sound business sense. She began supplying to the ready-to-wear section of BE and thus reached out to touch the larger Indian mass market.
Industrialist, suiting tycoon and creator of Raymond, Gautam Singhania, opened BE, a chain of stores stocking pret wear. BE has top designer labels like Ritu Beri, Manju and Bobby Grover, Manish Arora, Anshu Arora Sen. Even the czar of fashion design Rohit Bal had to admit that pret was the in thing and what was most likely going to sell. Therefore, he launched Balance, his ready-to-wear line at BE with hopes of catering to the pan-India market. The retailing business is also willing to give designer pret a chance. Shoppers' Stop has a separate Designer Gallerie with Krishna Mehta, Nahid Merchant, Priyadarshini Rao and Anita Dongre while another retailer, Westside, have Monapali, Krishna Mehta and Wendell Rodricks among their exhibited labels.

The Prêt Revolution and the Indian Middle class

However, even though the department stores and designers are thrilled with their new born synergy between the two, the Indian buyer who frequents these stores cannot differentiate too much between designer labels and the mass market unbranded labels on sale at these outlets. At times prices are compared and the unbranded garments score over designer ones. The Indian common man/woman is not too thrilled paying a few extra rupees for a designer’s name.

Over the years the Indian buyer has become wiser, more price conscious and demands value for money. Gone are the days when the novice buyer was enamored by the Indian designers’ name and didn't question the hefty price tags they paid because they felt that is what a designer garment was worth. With the advent of the 21st century and with plenty of style education available the discerning buyer is aware of the real price of a garment and will reject inflated price tags, forcing designers to come down from their high horses. Added to this is the fact that new designer talent available the market does not hesitant to lower their price tags and cater to the masses instead of classes. Where the designers haven't got their priorities right is in the pricing and design of the garments. A prêt garment has an affordable price tag because of fabrics and minimal styling but there should be no compromise on
finish and quality. It is the last aspect that Indian designers overlook when they try to create an affordable garment.

What are the reactions of retailers to designer prêt efforts? Are they getting their money’s worth? To many retailers Indian prêt still has to be reworked. Which woman will pay a sizeable for a pret garment in India and see ten other women wearing it? At that price she demands exclusivity. The pret revolution in India has also changed the way Indian women choose to dress. A decade ago the ratio between ethnic and western wear was an awesome 80/20. In 2003 it showed a 50/50 breakup of ethnic and western wear proving the fact that prêt offers more western alternatives which in turn have influenced the convenient and changing way Indian women dress. Embroidery which plays a major role in the choice of a garment may still be prevalent for ethnic wear but it is happily overlooked when it comes to western attire thereby bringing down the price considerably. So no matter what the style gurus may say the Indian fashion conscious is ready for prêt but at sensible prices.

Corporate Dressing

Corporate dressing is coming of age in India. Globalization and the extended coverage that fashion receives in the media has made the Indian business fraternity spruce up their act. Globalisation and the media aside, there are other factors that are making Indians ever more conscious of what they wear to work. The importance of looking good has never been as important in the Indian workplace. Besides, business travel to foreign shores has increased rapidly over the last few years. Reflecting the transformation in dress codes is a retailing market that offers quality and variety comparable to the best in the world.

The ground rules for modern corporate dressing are straight forward. The look for men is clean and simple: shirts, jackets, trousers and suits that fit the body snugly. Fitting silhouettes call for some degree of freedom from the
Establishing a synergy between color and design is essential to get the best of corporate looks, and this is an aspect where women are far ahead of their male counterparts. Coordinating her clothes, handbags, shoes and jewelry comes almost naturally to an Indian woman. Men seem satisfied with just matching their tie to their shirts and trousers. Accessories like socks, shoes and belts are never given enough attention, to the detriment of the overall look. Another drawback (and this affects both sexes in the country) is a lack of knowledge about the latest trends while in Europe, America and some parts of South East Asia the awareness of trends is tremendous.

The right accessories are important to complete the corporate dressing code. Watches have gradually become style statements, while optional accessories like tiepins, cufflinks and pens are being used to convey power, position and class. That’s as far as men are concerned. For women the corporate dressing rules undergo a drastic revision.

In India work clothes for women have graduated from sarees to salwar kameezes, from westerns to what have graduated to be called Indo-westerns. The comfort factor is crucial in this regard. Given the weather conditions ranging from cold to warm, hot and humid the accentuation on comfort is understandable. This is also one of the reasons why western outfits are popular across the age board among women. The emphasis is on fuss-free, wash-and-wear clothing.

In western clothing the focus is on a clean and clear style. The look is vibrant yet understated. Jackets, popular with older women, are getting shorter and more flattering to body contours. Flat-front trousers, three-fourth-length tops, cotton-linen blended shirts in bright colours, multiple-function jacket suits,
and long wrap-around skirts are among the many options here. There is a
definite shift happening on this front. Women are experimenting with colours,
cuts, fabrics and styles. Fusion fashion has given the traditional salwar kameez
a new lease of life. Short kurtas, styled with trouser-like pyjamas, look chic and
very Indian. Stoles and short scarves have replaced difficult-to-manage
dupattas. Elaborate embroidery has been replaced with crystal buttons, slick
necklines and textured silhouettes. Sensible and comfortable shoes, in soft
leather and neutral colours, complete the corporate woman of today.

Permanence in Change in the Multi - Piece Garment

One certain thing in the fashion world is change. We are constantly being
bombarded with new fashion ideas from music, videos, books, and television.
Movies also have a big impact on what people wear. Ray-Ban sold more
sunglasses after the movie Men In Black. Sometimes a trend is world-wide.
Back in the 1950s, teenagers everywhere dressed like Elvis Presley. Who
dictates fashion? Musicians and other cultural icons have always influenced the
layers of clothing which we support, but so have political figures and royalty.
Newspapers and magazines report on which multi pieces the idols are wearing
and preferring to adopt as daily and formal wear are what are adopted by the
hoi polloi of the world. Even folks in the 1700s people pored over fashion
magazines to see the latest styles. Women and dressmakers outside the
French court relied on sketches to see what was going on. The famous French
King Louis XIV had said that fashion is a mirror.

There are many reasons we wear what we wear. "The apparel often
proclaims the man" had declared the great bard, Shakespeare in Hamlet. Some
of the reasons why we sport the clothes we wear are:

- Protection from cold, rain and snow: mountain climbers wear high-tech
  outerwear to avoid frostbite and over-exposure.
- Physical attraction: many styles are worn to inspire "chemistry."
- Emotions: we dress "up" when we're happy and "down" when we're
  upset.
• Religious expression: Orthodox Jewish men wear long black suits and Islamic women cover every part of their body except their eyes to help others avoid temptation.
• Identification and tradition: judges wear robes, people in the military wear uniforms, brides wear elaborate dresses.

It is, however, true that once identified, fashions begin to change. This aspect of fashion thus makes it a big business. Garment line in itself is big business. More people are involved in the buying, selling and production of clothing than any other business in the world. Everyday, millions of workers design, sew, glue, dye, and transport clothing to stores. Ads on buses, billboards and magazines give us ideas about what to wear. Consciously or subconsciously all human being are active participants in the world of fashionable clothing.
Glossary