

## Head in chiffon clouds

It's amazing how the clothes we wear, so seemingly utilitarian and mundane, has superpowers. Now, before getting told off for a dramatic choice of word, allow me to elaborate —

The right outfit can boost one's mood, make him/her stand taller, and walk with newfound confidence. By the same token, the wrong choice of clothes can dramatically impact one's mood and impression.

Clothes have the ability to express one's personality tremendously; many social dealings come with their own set of dress code, namely interviews, where one's choice of clothes has a direct influence on selection. Clothes can also have a profound, lasting impact on one's memories when a particular kind of attire brings into mind a direct association with the person favouring it.

Great works of art and literature have relied heavily on characters' choice of attire to give readers an understanding and an insight into their psyche. Clothes are a means for storytelling, in all its forms. Truman Capote's Holly Golightly gallivants around New York City in a chic black sheath, chasing dreams that were never to be fulfilled. The dress is a ruse; it symbolises Holly's lofty, ambitious personality, giving off a cool, classy vibe while its black fabric effectively masquerades the wear and tear of her dress, as well as her battered soul.

In Anna Karenina, Anna's opulent gowns are used as imagery to portray the state of her mind; she chooses a black gown, even though Kitty urges her to wear lilac, highlighting her rebellious standing against the society.

Speaking of art, cinema has long been the most favoured artistic form of the masses. It is fantasy, drama, escape and reality all rolled into one. Silver screen has been a major influence in our lives way before influencers even became a thing!

Street style has always been heavily impacted by the movies, especially in our part of the world. Glamorous heroines, with their doe-eyes, captured audience's heart, pulling them by invisible strings to theatres.

Young men loved them, young women wanted to be them!

Bollywood movies have been a major part of popular culture in Bangladesh since the early sixties. Actresses like Hema Malini, Sharmila Tagore and Mumtaz were heartthrobs on this side of the pond. These heroines, clad in tightly draped chiffon saris in pastel hues, paired with bouffant and winged eyeliners were the stuff dreams were made of, influencing women of erstwhile East Pakistan to pick up this imported material. Soft, sensuous and stylish, French chiffon became all the rage among the swish set!

Solid colours were mostly favoured then, apart from small floral prints. Many of our grandmothers wore chiffon saris with a small teep and a long braid — their sepia-tinted photos reminiscent of their fashion acumen.

Then came the seventies, when young, suave actresses like Dimple Kapadia and Zeenat Aman sported chiffon saris in psychedelic colours, floral, and oversized polka dots, which were immensely popular at that time. Perhaps the most enduring and alluring were heroines of Yash Chopra films. In his movies, heroines were depicted as pious, pure creatures of ethereal, unearthly beauty, and he used clothes as a tool to tell their stories of life and love.

Chopra's heroines were his muses, bringing his artistic vision to life and how! Screen goddesses Rekha and Sridevi blossomed against the Swiss Alps and Nordic Tulip fields in white chiffon, forever shaping ideas of beauty and grace and poise. These leading ladies immortalised the allure of chiffon saris, on screen as well as in real life. Us eighties' children can vividly recall our mothers glued to the TV screen, clutching the VCR remote, taking in all the fabulousness, and trying to incorporate them in their own wardrobes!

Solid, pure colours such as white, powder blue, baby pink and primrose yellow were staples for most, but prints got equal love and adoration. Florals were a perennial favourite; the bigger the better!

Floral chiffons were the mainstay of every fashion-

able woman's wardrobe, and it was paired with mid-length sleeved blouse, low-heeled shoes and simple jewellery. A lot of us remember our mothers in this attire, simple yet stylish, so modern yet so classy.

When speaking of class, another lady who truly had loads of it was Maharani Gayatri Devi of Jaipur. Considered the most beautiful woman in the world in the sixties, she took the European royal circuit by storm in her French chiffons, made to order in sari length for her in Lyon, France. Her style, again, was simple colours and floral prints, paired with subtle jewellery like pearls and diamond studs.

My own mother was a huge fan of her style, and to this day, chiffon saris remain her most favourite; most treasured.

Our mothers are our moral compass, our guiding force. Small wonder then that we want to be like them in every possible way. Trying to emulate their style comes naturally to us, but by making it our own. If you are raiding her closet, bear in mind that you must style it by letting your own self shine through.

A solid chiffon sari can be paired with a sleeveless, or off-shoulder blouse, in similar or contrasting colour, to give it a modern spin. For florals, keep the blouse simple and let the print be the focus.

A bun may have been your mother's go-to hairstyle, but choose soft curls or bouncy waves for yourself. Pearls and diamond studs may have been her staples, but update your look with a statement necklace or earrings. An oversized cocktail ring works too. Play with acces-

sories. Sport an emerald green purse with a pink chiffon or a navy one with a chartreuse sari. She may have just swiped some lipstick and called it a day, but do go all out with a smoky eye or a bold lip.

How about a pair of strappy high heels



to take things up a notch? Whichever direction you go, flaunt your mother's sari with élan, but follow your own heart when doing it!

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