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The long and short of *kurta* craze in men's wear

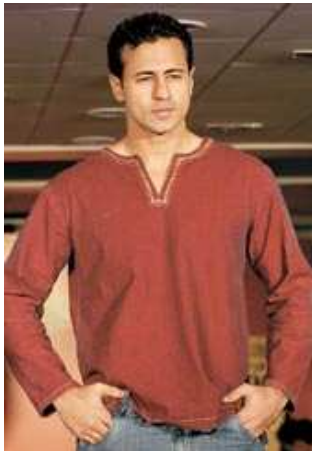
ZEESHAN JAWED



It's what a father-son duo answering to the surname Bachchan occasionally rules the ramp in. It's what diplomats and do-gooders brush shoulders at social dos in. It's what the college crowd and the party people love to be seen in?

The *kurta* is growing trendier with every passing season. To hell with the *jhola* image, the *kurta*, casual or chic, paired with *churidar*, jeans or *dhoti*, is as hot and happening as it gets. Bury the geriatric association with the apparel, for GenX has made it its own. And if you just think white and cream when you think *kurta*, just open your eyes and take a look at the guys. In shades deep or light, in solids, checks or stripes, colour today rules the *kurta* counters.

From when did *kurtas* become a style statement? The trend of wearing *kurtas* started picking up in the late-90s. The fashion has taken root among the urban youth more recently. The intricate weaves and the comfortable fabrics have caught the fancy of the youngsters. My clients are mostly in the 18-to-40 age-group, says designer Sharbari Datta.



The growing *kurta* clamour has seen the emergence of some busy ethnic menswear stops. The popular picks range from short *kurtis* for the hot and humid months to the heavy and elegant pieces for the wedding seasons. The price range packs in everything from Rs 300 to Rs 1,00,000-plus.

Till the 1980s, ethnic wear was perceived as the dress of the elderly. But the general acceptability of *kurta* has increased tremendously among the youth in the last four years, reveals a spokesperson for Orly. The Upper Wood Street store that started with a small section dedicated to ethnic wear in the early 1990s now specialises in it.



Easy availability and good packaging are other factors responsible for *kurta* becoming such a fashion favourite. The *kurta* trail, earlier meandering through the streets of Gariahat or Rabindra Sarani, has now reached the plush comforts of Forum and City Centre. And the supply chain is far more organised. From sourcing the fabric to weaving to packaging, everything is done under one roof and by skilled hands, says Raju Duggar, owner of **Gatha** in Forum and City Centre. The organised approach has helped both traders and customers. This helps in providing the best *kurtas* at optimum prices, he adds.

If a Big B or a King Khan slipping into a *kurta* to set the screen ablaze helps push up *kurta* sales

Models and celebrities cool off in kurtas in the run-up to summer occasionally, weddings and festivals through the year ensure that the *kurta* never goes out of fashion. From Holi to Diwali, *kanyadaan* to cocktails, ethnic men's wear begins and ends with the *kurta*.

Then there is the flexibility factor. Take it from screen star Jeet, who is most comfortable in them. "Though I wear quite ornate *kurtas* in my movies I really go in for the casual variety for my personal wardrobe. My designer picks up my *kurtas* from Fab india because they have a vast range of casual yet ethnic *kurtas*. For everyday wear, I really like to wear small *kurtis*."

Stocking something for everyone seems to hold the key. "From silk for weddings to cotton to suit the tropical weather, one can pick and choose from various fabrics and weaves. Hand-woven is more in demand than machine-woven and youngsters are no longer awkward about wearing *kurtas* with embroidery and *zardosi* work," says Pallabi Basu of Fab india.

So, if you're in a *kurta*, stay cool. If you're not?

KURTA BASICS

The age bracket:

Peak demand among 20 to 40

Style statement:

Short kurtis for hot and humid months Ornate kurtas for weddings and festivals

Colour plus:

The brighter the better. Blue, green, red, golden...

Price range:

Rs 300 to Rs 1,00,000-plus



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