

An unfair dress code!



The other day, I was scanning through the local daily when I was startled to spot a news item that said, "A lady in a saree disallowed entry in popular discotheque!" I read on to find to my amazement that the saree was not found to be an 'appropriate' dress to be worn to such a place. I sympathised with the female concerned for some time and thought to myself, "Well, this is what the world's become nowadays. The amazing grace and serene elegance that a saree so efficiently donates to a woman are considered as nothing as compared to the unabashed flesh exposure facilitated by the modern and fashionable apparels adorned by the women of today. The skimpiest of clothes or even the lack of them is considered to be much more attractive than the ever so graceful saree." I must admit that I definitely find women, especially Indian women, to be much more attractive when they are dressed in those magnificent sarees- the 'Benarasis', the 'kanchipurams', the 'kotas', the 'dhakais' and what not! But my love for the saree is not the reason behind my writing of this piece. I write to express my feelings of disappointment with the biased mentality of the Indian society towards anything that is western or rather, against anything that is Indian.

Yesterday, I too, found myself on the receiving end of this bias. Along with two of my other friends, we were on our way to meet an official of a very prominent company. We being third year engineering students had to get ourselves a live project for our final year and hence this visit. I was neatly dressed in a pair of white, spotless, and ironed 'kurta-pajama'. On reaching the place, I was amazed to find that the person concerned started getting mad on me and my friends for not abiding to the 'dress code' of his office! Obviously the conversation, which you can call as 'one sided outbursts', dealt more on our dresses instead of our live project and was of very little use to us. We politely left.

I know that some of you might feel that I was definitely wrong to not adhere to the well-known and commonly adopted dress code for such official meetings. You might also think, "Ah, this guy is nothing but a stubborn fellow who doesn't want to accept his mistakes and instead he's hell bent on proving others wrong." Well, nothing could be farther from truth. Let me first of all clarify by admitting that it was definitely wrong on my part to go outside the official dress code in spite of being well aware of it. But, hang on; I have something more to add. Although I find myself guilty of not going along with the system in practice, I question the very existence of the system itself. One of my other two friends retorted, "Cut the crap, man. You yourself say that you were wrong to go outside the system, that's the end of the matter. You do not have the right to doubt the system that has existed for decades." My answer to this would be to draw an analogy to the widespread corruption prevalent in almost every department of the Indian society. Every time we make a mistake and the law-enforcers catch up with us, we promptly get away by paying them some underhand money. Now, this is a very common phenomenon these days. We all indulge in it and hence follow this practical system. But, don't we all know that whatever is being done is absolutely wrong. Don't we raise our questions about the filthy system that is in practice? Yes, we do. And, that's exactly what I'm trying to do here. I'm not even trying to revolutionize the system, what I'm doing is just provoking your thoughts in this regard.

I do not blame the executive who shouted at us. I blame the 'dress code' based on which he acted in that manner. Have you ever wondered why we are forced to wear

a formal shirt, a tie, a blazer and a trouser just in the name of this sick 'dress code'? In Indian society and going by Indian traditions, can anything be more 'formal' or 'official' than a pair of 'kurta-pajama'? Was the meeting between the Prime Minister of India, Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee and the then president of the United States of America, Bill Clinton, when he came down to India, any less 'official' than any of the so called official meetings that we have today, including the one I told you about? In fact the meeting between the highest representatives of the world's two leading countries is the highest example for terms like 'official' and 'formal'. It is needless to mention that our prime minister attended the meeting in a spotless white pair of 'dhoti-kurta'. It is also worth a mention that the U.S president was attired in the very same formal configuration, which we are being forced to wear too. He wore it because it was the formal attire of his nation, his country and his people. That is precisely the reason why the companies in the U.S and the European world have prescribed such a dress code for their official meetings. Similarly we should have adopted the formal attire of our own people, our own country, as our 'official dress code'. How many of us go to attend formal functions, ceremonies and meetings dressed like a salesman? Instead we use the 'kurta-pajama' regularly at such events. Leave India out; think of an Arabian nation like Saudi Arabia. They attend all their important meetings in their white attires with a black band on the head, something so typical and symbolic of the Arab Sheikhs and their culture. You will find no meeting taking place in a western dress code.

But this is where we Indians show that we are the most spineless race on the face of this earth. We neither care nor value our culture and traditions. In fact, we are only interested in blindly aping the west and their culture. We have not only sacrificed our musical taste for their music, our cuisine for theirs, our mannerisms for theirs but we have also stooped down to sacrifice our dressing habits for theirs. Is it not a known fact that even our local languages are dying because of our insistence on using English as our 'unofficial' language apart from using it as our official language? We hypocritical Indians have managed to prostrate ourselves in front of the west. I'll do it too because I can neither reform the system nor go outside it. I cannot abide by a dress code, which I feel doesn't come naturally to me but is forced on me. Sadly, my predicament is that I'll have to abide by the dress code next time round if I'm serious about bagging my final year live project. I'm sure that the woman too who dared to come to the discotheque wearing a saree will come dressed (or rather undressed) in some tight, revealing western outfit to gain entry to the discotheque the next time round. Well, that's the way things run here in India.

Sab chalta hai!