



# Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India

*Emma Tarlo*

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## **Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India** Emma Tarlo

What do I wear today? The way we answer this question says much about how we manage and express our identities. This detailed study examines sartorial style in India from the late nineteenth century to the present, showing how trends in clothing are related to caste, level of education, urbanization, and a larger cultural debate about the nature of Indian identity.

Clothes have been used to assert power, challenge authority, and instigate social change throughout Indian society. During the struggle for independence, members of the Indian elite incorporated elements of Western style into their clothes, while Gandhi's adoption of the loincloth symbolized the rejection of European power and the contrast between Indian poverty and British wealth. Similar tensions are played out today, with urban Indians adopting "ethnic" dress as villagers seek modern fashions.

Illustrated with photographs, satirical drawings, and magazine advertisements, this book shows how individuals and groups play with history and culture as they decide what to wear.

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